

Stories about New Avenues to Do Research, Part III

Jeroen Staring

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Abstract

This (third and final part of a three-part) case study loosely examines the results of several new ways of doing research — through sites such as Amazon.com, Ebay.com, Google.com, PriceMinister.com, Trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper, Used.addall.com, and Worldcat.org.

Key Words: *New avenues of conducting research. Beatrice Moses Hinkle; Florence Nightingale; Mary Jane (née Grant) Seacole. Frederick Matthias Alexander.*

Introduction: A Correction of the Early History of F. M. Alexander’s Career(s)

The second part of this three-part article (Staring, 2020) ended with a story of the purchase via Ebay.com of a typed letter dated October 16, 1923, signed by Sir Algernon Methuen Br., founder and owner of Methuen & Co. publishing house in London. In his letter to Miss Ethel M. Webb — close associate of F. Matthias Alexander, founder of the Alexander Technique — Sir Algernon Methuen Br. (1923) acknowledged the transfer of copyrights from Mr. F. M. Alexander to Miss E. M. Webb. Since nothing in the Alexander Technique literature sheds light on whether Alexander ever sold and/or repurchased copyrights, the contents of the letter may lead to an investigation into an interesting question, “Who exactly owned the copyrights of Alexander’s books, at which moment, and who owns them at this moment?”

As a historian of the Alexander Technique, the author’s goal is of course to investigate as many artifacts as possible about Alexander and his Alexander Technique. According to literature, the career of F. M. Alexander started in 1892, after winning the Dialogue Award at the Victorian Amateur Competitors’ Association in Melbourne, Australia. Two years later, in 1894, Alexander’s (theatre) career culminated in a theatre tour of Tasmania and the start of a second career as an elocution and voice teacher in Hobart, Tasmania. In fact, these two careers formed a joint first springboard for his later career as a breathing teacher and even later his final career as a teacher and teachers training instructor of the Alexander Technique.

Almost eighteen months ago, the author of this article wrote: “Distorted history seems to be inextricably linked to Alexander, his technique, his writings, and to stories and writings of his followers” (Staring, 2018, p. 93). Until now, the story of winning the 1892 Dialogue Award seemed to have escaped this observation. However, winning the award not only led to Alexander’s later careers, but it also already had a specific distorted history. Tomonori Ikeda (2019), an Alexander Technique teacher from Japan who is preparing a biography of Alexander, wrote the author he discovered at Trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper — an Australian online site for old newspapers — that the story about Alexander winning the 1892 Dialogue Award, as recounted in the Alexander Technique literature, does not cover all the facts.

A November 18, 1892 letter in the Melbourne *Herald* tells a different story:

Sir, — Will you kindly give publicity to the circumstances under which the dialogue award was claimed at the recent competition of the Victorian Amateur Competitors’ Association. The prize was awarded by Dr Nelid to us (Misses H. and E. Moses) but the unsuccessful competitors (Miss Malingren and Mr Alexander) immediately entered a protest, on the ground that the scene rendered by us was humorous.

The contested piece was the scene from *Much Ado About Nothing* in which Beatrice exhorts Benedict to kill Claudio and vindicate her cousin’s honor, which, to our minds, had no comic aspect whatever. It was given at the preliminary, where it gained place, and was advertised previous to the final contest.

Miss Malingren and Mr Alexander found no protest necessary previous to the awarding of the prize to us by the judges. Miss Malingren and Mr Alexander may claim the award by accident, not by merit. (Moses & Moses, 1892).

So there is a mean spot in the glorious story of winning the award that initiated Alexander's theatre career. Five days later, his side of the story appeared in the *Herald*:

Sir, — Permit me to reply, on behalf of Miss C. Malingren and myself, to the Misses Moses' letter re the dialogue rendered by us at the recent competition. The prospectus issued by the committee distinctly states that the dialogue should be non-humorous, and despite this fact the competitors in question chose a scene from Shakespeare's beautiful comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*.

I sought the opinion of the best critics in Victoria (a letter from whom I enclose for your perusal), and all are unanimous in declaring that the portion of the comedy chosen could not possibly be accepted as non-humorous. I also presume that the committee, before deciding to disqualify, took professional advice on the matter.

In one portion of the scene the young lady who impersonated Benedict made use of a most extravagant whistle, accompanied by certain gestures which were undoubtedly intended to provoke laughter and were eminently successful in doing so. I was asked by the assistant secretary whether Miss Malingren and myself were prepared to meet the disqualified competitors if they chose a serious selection. I replied in the affirmative, but heard no more of the matter. (Alexander, 1892).

This is a perfect example to illustrate that using search tools on government newspaper sites such as the [Trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper](https://www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper) site can yield findings that may even correct stories and histories of events that have long been misrepresented in literature.

A Search for Beatrice Hinkle's "Spinsters and Bachelors"

Nearly a year and a half ago, Professor Lois McFadyen Christensen and Professor Emeritus Jerry Aldridge of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Alabama and the author published an article about Beatrice Moses Hinkle and her influence on American progressive education, listing almost all of her writings (Staring, Aldridge & McFadyen Christensen, 2018). At least one writing by Hinkle was missing: "Spinsters and Bachelors." The history of Jungian psychotherapy expert Jay Sherry (2018, p. 97) from Brooklyn, New York, states in his *The Jungian Strand in Transatlantic Modernism*: "A complete bibliography of Hinkle's writings [is] a worthy project for the future...It will be interesting to find what she had to say in her article 'Spinsters and Bachelors'." It seems that Sherry had not found "Spinsters and Bachelors" when he wrote his book.

The author tried to find the text. Fortunately, search engines offer good help. For example, if you use Google.com, enter the keywords "Hinkle" and "Spinsters." One hit reveals an exact reference to a book called *Why Are You Single?* And a hit in the special illustrations section of the list of hits is a scan of the front cover of *Why Are You Single?* that says the book has a chapter written by Hinkle, "Spinsters and Bachelors." In 2020, book site Used.addall.com showed that there were nearly 20 copies for sale on various book sites.

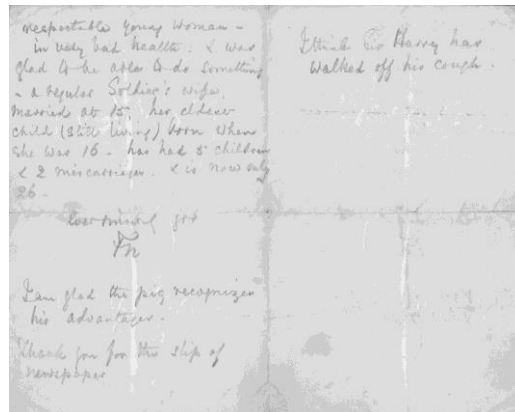
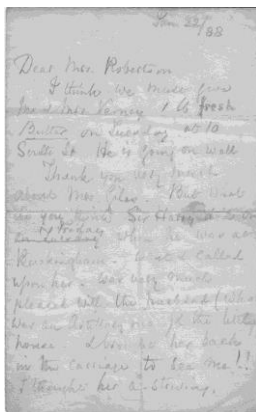
This story shows that nowadays it is rather easy to find literature by using search engines like Google.com, especially of course when the author and title are known, or when the researcher knows a line or a few consecutive words of the text to be found, and then searches Google.com for the line, or the consecutive words — typed in quotes.

Florence Nightingale

Collecting letters and *cartes de visite* (CDVs) from famous people is a common hobby. The first article of this series already indicated that the author shares this hobby with many others. Among other things, he collects letters and CDVs from Florence Nightingale (1820-1910). It is interesting to see that in recent years several letters from Florence Nightingale to Mrs. Robertson have been put up for auction on Ebay.com. The author is one of the winners of such auctions (see *Figures 1 and 2*). Note that Mrs. Robertson worked for Nightingale's brother-in-law Sir Harry Verney. Nightingale gave Mrs. Robertson free medical advice and paid her for visits to a doctor in London. Around September 1887 — according to Professor Joyce Schroeder MacQueen (2007, p. 38) of Laurentian University (Sudbury, Ontario, Canada) — Florence Nightingale arranged with her sister Parthenope

[...] for Mrs. Robertson to go to London and be fitted for a truce...Nightingale described several doctors for Robertson to choose from and offered to pay the doctor's fee rather than have Mrs. Robertson attend the outpatient clinic at St. Thomas's Hospital. She arranged doctor's appointments in relation to train times and arranged Mrs. Robertson's stay in London, including taking her meals at Nightingale's home.

MacQueen (2007, p. 47) based her account on the contents of September 1887 letters from Florence Nightingale to Dr. Philip Benson and to her sister Parthenope (*née* Nightingale) Verney. Nightingale's letters to Mrs. Robertson auctioned at Ebay.com must be from private owners, most likely from Mrs. Robertson's relatives. Since the existence of these letters has long been unknown, they may provide new insights into the life and (nursing?) work of Nightingale. Research on the author's Nightingale letter (Nightingale, 1888), combined with research on a letter still on sale on Ebay.com and Nightingale letters to Mrs. Robertson already known, for example, at the Center for the History of Medicine at Countway Library, Boston, Massachusetts, USA (n.d.), can add motivating information to the knowledge of Nightingale's life events, or colour them.



**First page (Figure 1) and second & third pages (Figure 2) of January 22, 1888, Florence Nightingale letter to Mrs. Robertson (Nightingale, 1888; © Jeroen F. Staring, 2020; Jeroen Staring Collection).
Figure 3: Sir Henry Storks (Jeroen Staring Collection).**

Mary Seacole

In addition to some research into the life and work of Florence Nightingale the author also explores the life and work of Mary Seacole (??-1881), a Jamaican 'doctress' who in 1855 opened 'British Hotel' near Balaclava, Crimea, some sort of provision store annex restaurant, during the latter part of the Crimean War (1854-1856). She would also care for and advice injured officers and soldiers. In 2013, the author purchased via Ebay.com a letter from a rare books and manuscripts dealer in London, England, written by Mary Seacole (1857a). This letter, addressed to Sir Henry Storks (see *Figure 3*), formed the basis for research that led to two published articles (Anionwu, Staring-Derks, & Staring, 2013; Staring-Derks, Staring, & Anionwu, 2014), which in turn led to firm responses from Florence Nightingale expert Professor Emerita Lynn McDonald at the University of Guelph (Guelph, Ontario, Canada).

McDonald (2014, 2015) gives the impression she is also a Seacole expert. She seems to think she is in fact the Seacole expert whose job is to correct nearly everyone who writes about Mary Seacole. However, there are more than a few comments to make. For example, the following two lines open Chapter I in her *Mary Seacole: The Making of the Myth*:

Mary Seacole was a real person. She was born in *Jamaican* [*sic*; italics J.S.] in 1805 (although she lied about her age in two UK censuses) and lived her retirement years in London, where she died in 1881. (McDonald, 2014, p. 1).

No, McDonald's book is no fairy tale, as the first line suggests. The book should be a true biography of Mary Seacole and also critically analyze the writings of Seacole's admirers.

Interestingly, as early as in the second line of Chapter I, McDonald's story already derails. For one, a country called "Jamaican" does not exist. In addition, McDonald accuses the main character of her

biography of lying. It is a very uncommon way to open a biography. Especially since the date of birth of Mary Jane (*née* Grant) Seacole is unknown, even though Wikipedia.org indicates (without reference) it is November 23, 1805. In July 2006, the author conducted research in archives in Spanish Town and Kingston, Jamaica. He has found no evidence that Seacole was born in 1805 (see Staring-Derks, 2007, pp. *cxiv-cxcv*). How can McDonald tell if Seacole lied; where is the evidence of her exclamation? So, can McDonald’s story be trusted? Perhaps it can, if she refers to her sources and if these references are correct. However, the level of referrals to her sources is and remains at a sloppy and implausible level throughout her biography; the bibliography that concludes McDonald’s book is no exception.

A. The first section of ‘References’ called “Seacole’s Memoir in English” mentions six editions of *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (McDonald, 2014, p. 237). Note that the last two of the six references lack the place of publication. Note further that this section omits the 1858 English edition (Seacole, 1858; see *Figure 4*).

B. A section called “Translations” referring to the Dutch and French translations of Seacole’s autobiography follows the section “Seacole’s Memoir in English.”

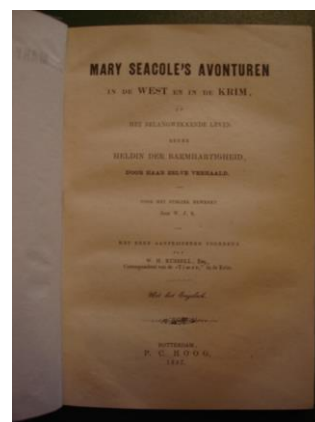
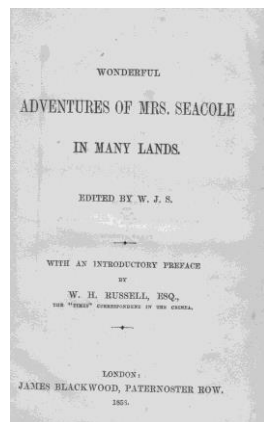


Figure 4: Title page of 1858 edition of Seacole’s *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (Seacole, 1858; Jeroen Staring Collection). **Figure 5:** Title page of 1857 Dutch translation of Seacole’s autobiography (Seacole, 1857b).

B1). McDonald’s references to the Dutch translations (see McDonald, 2014, p. 237).

B1i). McDonald’s first reference is:

“*Mary Seacole’s Avonturen in de West en in de Krim*. Rotterdam: 1857.”

*** Note that the title is not complete. The title is: “*Mary Seacole’s Avonturen in de West en in de Krim, of het belangwekkende leven eener heldin der barmhartigheid, door haar zelve verhaald.*” The subtitle is: “*Voor het publiek bewerkt door W. J. S. Met een aanprijzende voorrede van W. H. Russell, Esq., Correspondent van de ‘Times,’ in de Krim. Uit het Engelsch.*” (Seacole, 1857b, title page; see *Figure 5*).

*** McDonald’s reference lacks the publisher’s name — ‘P. C. Hoog.’

B1ii). McDonald’s second reference is:

“*Mary Seacole’s Avonturen in de West en in de Krim*. With W. H. Russell voorede. Nijmegen: Ingraal 2007. New ed.”

*** Note that the title is not complete. The title of the book is: “*Mary Seacole’s Avonturen in de West en in de Krim, of het belangwekkende leven eener heldin der barmhartigheid, door haar zelve verhaald.*”

*** In reality, this 2007 Dutch edition has *no* subtitle which, as McDonald says, reads: “With W. H. Russell voorede,” where ‘With’ is an English word that would not be used in a Dutch title page, and ‘voorede’ is a gross spelling mistake of the Dutch word ‘voorrede.’

*** The publisher is *not* called ‘Ingraal,’ as McDonald says, but ‘Integraal.’

*** Furthermore, McDonald’s list of Dutch translations omits the Dutch second edition of the book, published in Rotterdam in 1858 by Hoog & Trenité (see Brinkman, 1859, p. 96; *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, 1859, p. 23).

It is clear: McDonald has not conducted any research into Dutch editions of Seacole's autobiography; she never had an 1857 or a 2007 Dutch copy of the book in her hands.

B2). McDonald's references to the French translations (see McDonald, 2014, p. 237).

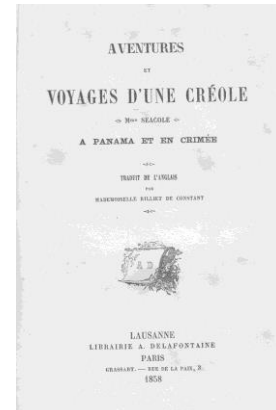
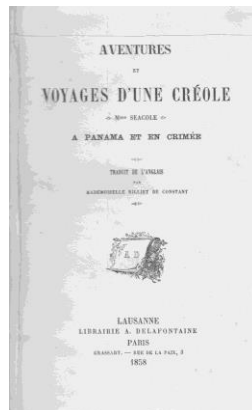
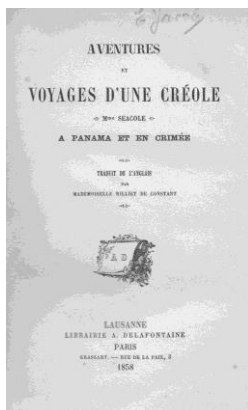
B2i). McDonald's first reference is:

"*Aventures et voyages d'une Créole à Panama et en Crimée*, trans., Victorine Rilliet de Constant Massé. Lausanne: Delafontaine 1858."

*** McDonald delivers an incorrect title; the title should read: "*Aventures et voyages d'une Créole, M^{me} Seacole, à Panama et en Crimée*."

*** McDonald's reference only mentions the book's Swiss publisher; it lacks the name and place of its French publisher — 'Paris: Grassart.'

*** McDonald's reference states that Victorine Rilliet de Constant *Massé* (italics J.S.) translated Seacole's book. Worldcat.org (2020) also states that the translator's name is Victorine Rilliet de Constant *Massé* (italics J.S.), which again is consistent with McDonald's second reference to a French translation of Seacole's book — that is, her reference to the 2011 Nabu Press edition of the book, which states the translator is Victorine Rilliet de Constant *Massé* (italics J.S.). However, even though Worldcat.org (2020) only detects a mere 9 physical and electronic copies of the 1858 French translation of Seacole's book in libraries around the world, the author is aware of the whereabouts of three *more* physical copies of the 1858 French translation of Seacole's book to check McDonald's references. They are part of his personal library, and were purchased through Abebook.com and PriceMinister.com. All three copies of the *only* 1858 edition published in French mention that Victorine Rilliet de Constant translated the book — meaning: the translator was not married (see Figures 6, 7 and 8).



Figures 6, 7 and 8: Title pages of copies of the 1858 French translation of Mary Seacole's 1857 English autobiography (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Note as well that the *Catalogue Annuel de la Librairie Française pour 1858* states that Seacole's book was translated by "M^{lle} Rilliet de Constant" (Reinwald, 1859, p. 13). The influential *La France Littéraire, ou Dictionnaire Bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Quérard, 1859-1864, p. 421) also mentions that Victorine Rilliet de Constant translated Seacole's book. Quérard (1859-1864, p. 420) even explicitly stated Victorine Rilliet de Constant was not married: "M^{lle} Victorine."

B2ii). McDonald's second reference is:

"*Aventures et voyages d'une Créole, M^{me} Seacole, à Panama et en Crimée*, trans., Victorine Rilliet de Constant Massé. Nabu Press 2011 reprint."

*** McDonald's reference mentions an incorrect translator name; see also **B2i**.

*** McDonald's reference lacks the place of publication.

*** Finally, note that McDonald's list of French translations omits the 1994 French translation by Christel Mouchard (Seacole, 1994).

Clearly: McDonald has not explored the majority of French editions of Seacole's autobiography; she never held an 1858 French copy of the book, nor a 1994 French copy. Most likely she relied on information

at Worldcat.org (which, as noted here, is not entirely reliable) and / or on information in the 2011 French edition of Seacole's book mentioned by her. This is a perfect example of establishing that using physical books in combination with using search engines to check facts about research steps forming the basis of publications can yield firm results.

Conclusion: McDonald's referrals cannot be trusted, as is her Seacole biography.

As (also) an anthropologist, the author finds it fascinating that McDonald (2015, p. 10) in an article claims to know that Seacole "was three quarters white" — whatever McDonald's *quasi* skin colour genetics calculus may mean. It seems very interesting to McDonald (so much so that she apparently has to include such comments in her article), who, however, provides no evidence at all for her *quasi* skin colour genetics calculus. So, how does she know about the *quasi* genetics of Seacole's skin tone? McDonald (2015, pp. 10-11) adds: "For skin colour for herself [Seacole] preferred 'yellow' (Seacole pp. 27, 34, 78-9), 'brunette' or 'a little brown' (Seacole, p. 4)." Note that McDonald refers to Seacole twice. Note further that McDonald's (2015, p. 17) article mentions three editions of Seacole's book: the English 1857, the Dutch 1857 and the French edition from 1858. Since McDonald does not provide further reference, it is not clear to which edition she refers. Besides, we have already established, above, that McDonald has never seen any of these.



Figure 9: Can this be a photo of Mary (*née* Grant) Seacole? (Jeroen Staring Collection).

Ending this loose survey of new ways of conducting research, the author's question to the reader is: "Can the portrait of the young, about 40-years-old, lady in *Figure 9* perhaps be of Mary Seacole?" Remember Seacole's words about her skin tone, quoted above by McDonald. Tracy Robinson (1911, p. 122), in *Fifty Years at Panama*, adds the following; she tells about a guest at a ball given by the Captain and his officers on board of the *Reindeer*, in the Bay of Panama:

Among those present was the then rather widely known Madame Seacole, an Afro-English woman who had been, it was said, an assistant to Florence Nightingale in the Crimea. She wore a number of decorations, and patronized, more or less, those whom she knew. A queer, quaint, jolly, vain, self-important old brown woman, long since gone "where the good darkeys go." Said she, one day, to a lady: "If you could see me, madam, under my dress, you would be surprised how white I am. It is exposure to the air that makes my face and hands so brown." She had forgotten her curly locks and Dark Continent features.

Is not that striking?

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