



## Influential Force: Shafts and the Diffusion of Knowledge at the Fin de Siécle

<http://www.firstlight.cn> 2006-12-31

The feminist journal Shafts, which ran from 1892 to 1899, edited by Margaret Shurmer Sibthorp, was an important forum for the discussion of women's oppression and liberation at the fin de siècle - though it has received comparatively little scholarly attention. In this article I outline the significance of Shafts' sometimes contradictory contribution to the social and political debates of the period, focusing in particular on the convergence of enlightenment and anti-enlightenment discourses in its pages. The relationship of these discourses is knotted together around the concept of 'influential force', which is of signal importance to the argument of the opening article of the journal's inaugural issue, entitled 'Shafts of Thought'. I contend that, to the main contributors of Shafts, the metaphorical significance of the notion of 'influential force', which draws on contemporaneous scientific and spiritualist theories, lies in its capacity for reconceptualising the social and intellectual relations that obtain, at the end of the nineteenth century, among the readers of a progressive periodical.

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