

**Sensationalising the New Woman:  
Crossing the Boundaries between Sensation  
and New Woman Literature**

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‘[T]he hidden depths, of which it reveals a glimpse, are not fit subjects for a romance, nor ought they to be opened up to the light of day for purposes of mere amusement. But truth must always have a certain power, in whatever shape it may appear’.

Felicia Skene, *Hidden Depths* (1866)

‘We have plenty of opportunities of getting at the masculine point of view, but it is only in comparatively recent times, that we have had female writers who possessed ideas of their own, and dared to express them. [...] It mustn’t be forgotten that the work of those who thought for themselves will be invaluable documents for the social historian of the future’.

George Paston, *A Writer of Books* (1898)

‘To a small girl-child who may live to grasp somewhat of that which for us is yet sight, not touch’.

Olive Schreiner, *Dreams* (1900)

## **Abstract**

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My thesis seeks to conceptualise and explore the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction, two popular genres of the mid- to late-Victorian era, to investigate the extent to which Sensation literature is a forerunner to the early development of the New Woman novel; and consequently how the two genres blur, or cross, temporal and conceptual boundaries. Both genres challenged prevailing attitudes to gender, sexuality, morality and domesticity: Sensation fiction more implicitly by making the erstwhile Angel of the House the agent of domestic and marital upheaval and even crime, New Woman fiction explicitly by making the rebel of the house the rebel in society; here, she was more often positioned within the larger socio-economic setting for which her rebellion could have dramatic consequences. While previous comparisons of the two genres (although they are limited in number) have focused solely on the crossovers between the female protagonists, I seek to extend existing scholarship by investigating the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction through the two genres' response to contemporary legal and social debates, the characters, both female and male, Gothic literature, a mode both genres revisited, and their subversive endings. I argue that it is in challenging Victorian ideologies that Sensation and New Woman literature obscure and, to a certain extent, redefine genre paradigms.

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Last, but by no means least, thanks must go to my parents, Philip and Juliet, and sister, Hannah. Without their backing this PhD would simply not have been possible.

## List of Abbreviations

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- BB** Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book*, ed. by Jenny Bourne Taylor (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013)
- D** Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. by John Paul Riquelme (New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 2002)
- DW** Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Doctor's Wife*, ed. by Lyn Pykett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- GL** George Alfred Lawrence, *Guy Livingstone; or, 'Thorough'* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857)
- HFN** Florence Marryat, *Her Father's Name*, ed. by Greta Depledge (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009)
- HT** Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 2012)
- LAS** Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, ed. by Lyn Pykett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- MW** George Moore, *A Mummer's Wife*, ed. by Anthony Patterson (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2011)
- NBI** Florence Wilford, *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1869)
- NWTW** Rhoda Broughton, *Not Wisely, But Too Well*, ed. by Tamar Heller (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013)
- 'OD'** Charlotte Riddell, 'The Open Door', in *Weird Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. 27-58
- 'OHVW'** Charlotte Riddell, 'The Old House in Vauxhall Walk', in *Weird Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. 98-115
- 'OMJ'** Charlotte Riddell, 'Old Mrs Jones', in *Weird Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. 129-73
- PG** Florence Marryat, *The Prey of the Gods*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1871)

- ‘S’** Edith Nesbit, ‘The Shadow’, in *The Power of Darkness: Tales of Terror*, ed. by David Stuart Davies (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), pp. 169-78
- SAF** Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- UTF** Ouida, *Under Two Flags* (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2009)
- WA** Mona Caird, *The Wing of Azrael*, ed. by Tracey S. Rosenberg (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2010)
- WB** George Paston, *A Writer of Books* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899)
- WG** George Egerton, *The Wheel of God* (London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1898)
- WIW** Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. by Matthew Sweet (London: Penguin Books, 2003)
- ‘WTH’** Charlotte Riddell, ‘Walnut-Tree House’, in *Weird Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. 1-26

## Introduction

### New Sensations: Placing Sensation and New Woman Literature

Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel.

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (1859)<sup>1</sup>

I am not in so great a hurry to put my neck beneath any man's foot[.]

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)<sup>2</sup>

Published twenty-four years apart and belonging to separate novelistic genres, *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) use remarkably similar language to express Marian Halcombe's and Lyndall's dissatisfaction at women's treatment in marriage, in particular drawing attention to the brutality women expect to suffer. Wilkie Collins' novel, which is regarded as one of the founding texts of the Sensation genre, revolves around the story of the mysterious titular woman in white, Anne Catherick, and the secret she holds about Sir Percival Glyde, the abusive husband of Marian's half-sister, Laura Fairlie. Marian plays a central role in helping to expose Percival's secret and ultimately free Laura from his clutches. Olive Schreiner's novel, widely considered to be the first New Woman novel, follows its main protagonist, Lyndall, throughout her life as she struggles against restrictive Victorian gender conventions.

As exemplified by the two epigraphs, Marian and Lyndall both are independent and iconoclastic female protagonists. Lyndall, described by Elaine Showalter as the 'first wholly serious feminist heroine in the English novel', is a prototypical New Woman heroine who from a young age rejects Victorian ideals of

<sup>1</sup> Collins, *The Woman in White*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, p. 150.

passive femininity by demanding an education, dismissing marriage as a form of prostitution and refusing to marry the man she loves despite being pregnant with his child.<sup>3</sup> While Marian does not enter an unconventional relationship, she is unafraid to assert her voice and openly question the intentions of the men around her. This is evident when she demands to see the bruise of the blow which Percival has inflicted on Laura, declaring that ‘I want to see it, Laura, because our endurance must end, and our resistance must begin, to-day’ (*WIW*, 299). The political nature of Marian’s language mirrors that of Lyndall who similarly observes that the ‘difficulty is not to speak; the difficulty is to keep silence [sic]’ (*SAF*, 162). Both Marian and Lyndall, albeit to differing degrees, refuse to be oppressed by the men surrounding them because of an unwavering conviction of their right to equality with men.

Mary Ellen Snodgrass argues that it is *The Story of an African Farm*’s ‘independent heroine [and her subversion of] taboos against agnosticism, transvestitism [sic], abortion, and unmarried sex’ that mark this as the first New Woman novel.<sup>4</sup> Yet, most of the features that Snodgrass considers to be feminist traits of Schreiner’s novel had already featured in Sensation literature of the previous two decades. Indeed, contemporary readers would have already been familiar with the cross-dressing heroine (Florence Marryat’s *Her Father’s Name* [1876]), the inclusion of extramarital sexual relations (Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* [1861]) and the subversively rebellious female protagonist (Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* [1862]). Moreover, Schreiner’s feminist text also contains distinctly sensational elements: the woman who steals her best friend’s lover, the man who dons women’s clothes and the unwed mother whose shame kills her child and who

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<sup>3</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Writers, from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago Press, 2009), p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literature* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), p. 520.

then subsequently starves herself to death. It is this largely uncharted relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction that I seek to explore by investigating how key themes and tropes circulate and develop across the two genres.

Both Sensation and New Woman fiction were popular modes of literature which dominated the mid- to late-Victorian era. However, critical discussion regarding the first phase of each genre has remained within strict time boundaries; 1860-1880 for Sensation fiction, and 1880-1900 (this is sometimes extended to 1910/1920) for New Woman literature. Equally, Sensation criticism has tended to focus on the genre itself, examining its main themes, such as the devious and criminal wife, and bigamy and murder plots. In contrast, New Woman studies has placed the genre in relation to other *fin-de-siècle* movements, for example decadence and first-wave feminism, but has not paid much attention to links with earlier developments. Thus, in all but a few academic studies, these two genres have been treated as largely separate developments.<sup>5</sup> I seek to conceptualise and explore the connections between Sensation and New Woman fiction, investigating the extent to which Sensation literature is a forerunner to the early development of the New Woman novel; and consequently how the two genres blur, or cross, temporal and conceptual boundaries.

The largest distinction between Sensation and New Woman fiction is usually considered to be the introduction of feminist politics in the later decades. Lyn Pykett

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<sup>5</sup> As will be discussed in the section 'Conceptual Framework and the Field: Recent Critical Engagement in Sensation-New Woman Comparisons' these include Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992); Greta Depledge, 'Sensation Fiction and the New Woman', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 196-209; Lyn Pykett, 'Sensation and New Woman Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*, ed. by Linda H. Peterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 133-43; and Lisa Hager, 'Embodying Agency: Ouida's Sensational Shaping of the British New Woman', *Women's Writing*, 20.2 (2013), 235-46.

in *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1992), the first, and virtually only, modern study to situate the two genres alongside one another and draw direct comparisons between them, summarises the argument of many other critics when she states that, while Sensation fiction reproduced the 'anxieties and tensions generated by contemporary ideological contestation of the nature of woman, and of women's social and familial roles', New Woman writers were directly associating themselves with the woman question and the contemporary women's rights movement.<sup>6</sup> Pykett interprets the difference between the genres to reside in the authors' political intention, viewing Sensation works to be complicit with contemporary social and sexual politics rather than representing a campaign for change. In part the later feminist rhetoric and ideological position of New Woman fiction is symbolised by the term 'New Woman'. It emphasises New Woman fiction as literature unified and defined by its concern regarding women's rights (both for and against), a rationale Pykett contends is missing from Sensation fiction.

The term 'New Woman' is associated with the year 1894 and the publication of 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' by Sarah Grand in the *North American Review*, as well as the response by Ouida (pseudonym of Maria Louise de la Ramée) who extrapolated the phrase for the title of her reply, 'The New Woman'. However, this distinction, and Pykett's statement, was superseded by Michelle Tusan in 'Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the Fin-de-Siècle' (1998) and Ann Heilmann in *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (2000). Heilmann reveals that the phrase was in circulation much earlier in the decade: 'the term "New Woman" was used in its capitalised form as

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<sup>6</sup> Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p. 7.

early as 1865, when the *Westminster Review* branded the subversive heroine of the new sensation novels as the “New Woman...no longer the Angel, but the Devil in the House”.<sup>7</sup> Although the term had not yet gained its later, specifically political meaning, its entrance into the English language during the Sensation era is significant. The *Westminster Review* uses the phrase in connection with rebellious heroines in literature, very much as it would be employed later in the period by satirical magazines such as *Punch* to define women pushing the boundaries of Victorian gender conventions.

Significantly, the article in the *Westminster Review* also references the ‘New Man’ who in Sensation literature ‘with the cruel look, and the stern pitiless smile [...] rules everybody, especially the women’.<sup>8</sup> This earlier use of the term ‘New Man’ contradicts Tara MacDonald’s statement that ‘critics did not begin using the term “New Man” until after the capitalized term “New Woman” was coined in 1894’.<sup>9</sup> While the New Man referenced in the article is markedly different from his late-Victorian nephew, the figure and phrase associate him with the New Woman movement, and interestingly the Old Man type. In New Woman literature, the New Man offered an alternative to the current model of Victorian masculinity in that he acknowledged and supported women’s equality. The New Man presented in the *Westminster Review* varies from the later New Woman ideal but the introduction of the terminology in reference to Sensation heroes reinforces the connection I am proposing. It demonstrates an initial (and perhaps tentative) idea in Sensation

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<sup>7</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 22. The *OED* also associates the phrase with 1865, citing this as the year it entered the English language. *OED Online*, s.v. ‘New Woman’, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/276487?redirectedFrom=new+woman#eid>> [accessed 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016].

<sup>8</sup> ‘Belles Lettres’, *Westminster Review*, 28.2 (1865), 568-84 (p. 568).

<sup>9</sup> Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2015), p. 2.

literature being developed into a fully fledged feminist strategy by New Woman writers.

Cultural responses to the woman question are rarely placed in the context of the Sensation period, but the early capitalisation of ‘New Woman’ and ‘New Man’ indicates it was a concern acknowledged in literature, and recognisable to the reading public. Thus, in contrast to Pykett, I argue that Sensation authors did adapt their work to contemporary discussions, not merely reproducing them, but using them to expose and comment on inequality in society. To explore these ideas further, the focus in this thesis will primarily be on novels published by British and Irish authors. Narrowing down the selection of texts will enable greater attention to be paid to the historical context of the Victorian women’s movement. However, this study will simultaneously push the boundaries of each genre, going back to 1857 with George Alfred Lawrence’s *Guy Livingstone; or, ‘Thorough’* (1857) and forward into the 1900s with Edith Nesbit’s ‘The Shadow’ (1905) and George Moore’s *Albert Nobbs* (1927) to establish the fluidity of both genres as well as demonstrate the need to challenge prevailing assumptions regarding the rigidity of genre boundaries.

This Introduction considers the parameters of Sensation and New Woman fiction in order to establish the basis for the arguments to follow in the subsequent chapters. By first examining the genres’ essential features, separate definitions for Sensation and New Woman fiction will be established to reveal connections not previously considered, as well as note important differences. These definitions will be used throughout my thesis to reinforce the crossover between the genres. In ascertaining the relative lack of modern academic comparative studies of Sensation and New Woman fiction, I will use the next section to situate my work within both

scholarly fields and provide context to the importance of critical comparison. In the subsequent section an exploration of Sensation fiction's influences will provide some context to the genre's earlier development. Finally, a literal link between the genres will be established using Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864) and George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* (1885). Both adaptations of *Madame Bovary* (1856) by Gustave Flaubert, these two novels contain defining features of their genre while pushing the boundaries to interlink Sensation and New Woman fiction.

### **'Monstrosity of fiction': Defining Sensation and New Woman Literature**

In the preface to her novel *Veronique* (1869), Florence Marryat uses the phrase 'monstrosity of fiction' ironically to encapsulate the negative critical reception of Sensation fiction.<sup>10</sup> Later in the century, Sarah Grand applied a similar term to dissociate herself from the 'vulgar creature' she believed the New Woman to have become in cultural criticism of her time.<sup>11</sup> However, like Marryat's phrase, Grand's term can also be applied to the literature which reproduced this figure. The monstrosity that Marryat and Grand associate with their own genres through these phrases implies hybridity. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen claims that monsters' 'incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions'.<sup>12</sup> Although not writing with reference to the Victorian period, Cohen's view affirms the argument I am proposing. If the terms 'bodies' and 'monster' are replaced with 'texts' and 'genre', Cohen's statement could be applied to Sensation or

<sup>10</sup> Florence Marryat, *Veronique*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1869), vol. 1, p. vi.

<sup>11</sup> Athol Forbes, "'My Impressions of Sarah Grand'", *Lady's World*, 1900, pp. 880-3', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 257-60 (p. 259).

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 6.

New Woman literature: incoherent texts resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the genre is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions. Thus, in representing hybridity—Sensation in its elusiveness as a genre, New Woman fiction in its aims—Sensation and New Woman fiction can be perceived as a kind of dangerous monstrosity that refuses to fit within socially defined limits. Consequently, it must be questioned what is Sensation fiction? what is New Woman fiction?

### What is Sensation Fiction?

Published in 1869, *Veronique* was part of an already well established and popular, yet controversial, literary genre. Marryat uses her preface to critique the vilification of Sensation fiction by critics such as Henry Mansel and in doing so reveals a problem at the heart of applying a precise definition to the genre.<sup>13</sup> She laments the word ‘sensational’ becoming ‘so twisted from its original meaning by the cant of what, in this age, we term criticism, that it has become difficult to know in what sense it should be applied’.<sup>14</sup> Novels that were viewed unfavourably were often associated with the Sensation genre even if they had few sensational aspects and thus it became increasingly difficult to identify a ‘true’ Sensation novel. This is borne out in a satirical review of anti-sensational criticism in *All the Year Round*:

if anyone writes a novel, a play, or a poem, which relates anything out of the ordinary experiences of the most ordinary people [...] he is straightaway met with a loud exclamation of ‘Sensational!’ This foolish word has become the orthodox stone for flinging at any heretic who is bold enough to think that life has its tremendous passes of anguish and crime, as well as its little joys and little sorrows—its strange adventures

<sup>13</sup> H. L. Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Quarterly Review*, 113.226 (1863), 481-514.

<sup>14</sup> Marryat, *Veronique*, vol. 1, pp. v-vi.

and vicissitudes [...]. It is very easy to cry ‘Sensational!’ but the word proves nothing.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, the confused Victorian application of the term ‘Sensation fiction’ has made it hard for modern critics to define the genre.

Winifred Hughes in *The Maniac in the Cellar* (1980) and Patrick Brantlinger in his essay ‘What Is “Sensational” about the “Sensation Novel”?’ (1982) were two of the first modern-day critics to reinvestigate and define the genre that until then had been neglected in academic criticism. Brantlinger positions Sensation fiction as a ‘minor subgenre’ of Victorian literature that ‘stands midway between romanticism and realism, Gothic “mysteries” and modern mysteries, and popular and high culture forms’.<sup>16</sup> Although Brantlinger’s definition acknowledges Sensation fiction’s inherent hybridity, it simultaneously negates the need to impose a strict definition because of the existing definitions of the other genres he mentions. Hughes, on the other hand, states that the Sensation genre is at ‘once instantly recognizable and [at the same time] hard to define with any precision’.<sup>17</sup> She conceptualises Sensation fiction as a ‘violent yoking of romance and realism’ whose subject matter ‘struck at the root of Victorian anxieties and otherwise unacknowledged concerns’.<sup>18</sup> Andrew Mangham in a more recent assessment of Sensation literature echoes Hughes by asserting that the ‘more we look into this genre with an eye to noticing patterns and discernible boundaries, [...] the more we notice those patterns and consistencies fade

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<sup>15</sup> ‘The Sensational Williams’, *All the Year Round*, (13<sup>th</sup> February 1864), 14-17 (p. 14).

<sup>16</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, ‘What Is “Sensational” about the “Sensation Novel”?’ , *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37.1 (1982), 1-28 (p. 1); *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Winifred Hughes, ‘The Sensation Novel’, in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Patrick Brantlinger and William Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 260-78 (p. 260).

<sup>18</sup> Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton and Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 16; *Ibid*, p. 5.

away'.<sup>19</sup> However, recent criticism of Sensation fiction has begun to dispel the impression of Sensation as a genre written only to fulfil the reading public's desire for 'strong and instant entertainment' and re-establish it as an important genre of the mid-Victorian period.<sup>20</sup>

The need to reassess and re-define Sensation fiction has become more central in Sensation criticism as critics come to acknowledge the shifting conceptualisations of the genre. Initiated by the second-wave feminist-led critical rediscovery of Victorian women writers, collections of Sensation literature, both primary and secondary, have recovered little-known authors and novels, as well as encouraged wider-ranging criticism.<sup>21</sup> Andrew Maunder's series *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890* (2004) and Pamela K. Gilbert's *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011) were central in re-introducing previously neglected writers and novels back into the literary consciousness and contesting the defined time boundaries of the genre. More recently, Anne-Marie Beller and Tara MacDonald's edited collection *Rediscovering Victorian Women Sensation Writers: Beyond Braddon* (2015) has further emphasised the diversity of Sensation fiction.

This recovery of important Victorian Sensation writers has also led to a reassessment of the most popular authors of the genre. *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context* (2000) edited by Marlene Tromp, Pamela Gilbert and Aeron Haynie and *New Perspectives on Mary Elizabeth Braddon* (2012) edited by

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<sup>19</sup> Andrew Mangham, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1-6 (p. 1).

<sup>20</sup> Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar*, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> The last forty years have seen a steady increase in the critical attention paid to Sensation literature. Large collections of criticism such as *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2013) edited by Andrew Mangham as well as smaller and more focused reinvestigations of Sensation fiction including *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* (2006) edited by Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina have aided the understanding of the genre and, like Maunder's series, have re-introduced lost authors and works.

Jessica Cox are examples of critical work turning away from conventional readings and texts to analyse Braddon not as a sensationalist, but as a broader Victorian writer. These two collections of essays explore lesser-known work by Braddon such as *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), *Joshua Haggard's Daughter* (1876) and *The Fatal Three* (1888), as well as provide alternative readings of her most famous work, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). This relatively new wave of literary criticism has consolidated a sense of the importance of reassessing the genre and finding a broader definition to fit its expanding boundaries.

Nevertheless, the most prominent features of Sensation fiction are typically identified by using the genre's three founding novels: Collins' *The Woman in White*, Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. These three novels follow a similar paradigm with a central rebellious heroine refusing, albeit to differing degrees, to obey patriarchal rule: Marian from *The Woman in White* refuses to accept her sister's fate meted out to her by her abusive husband and is instrumental in discovering his illegitimate birth; in *East Lynne*, Isabel Carlyle runs away with her younger lover abandoning her husband and children; Lucy Audley marries another man while, at first unbeknown to her, she is still married and goes to extreme lengths to maintain the secret of her first husband's existence. Within these plots are multiple subplots which address topical and often controversial issues: Collins examines the asylum system and a woman's position in marriage; Wood introduces the perils of having children out of wedlock and the disjunction between a wife's role as child bearer and a husband's desire for an intellectual companion; and the story of Braddon's criminally minded heroine is set against the backdrop of marital desertion and the economic plight of abandoned wives (it is necessary to note that Lucy is pushed into criminal actions only after she is hunted down).

Given that these three novels have traditionally shaped critical understanding of Sensation literature, definitions of the genre have largely been influenced by their central features. For example, Hughes argues that in a ‘genuine sensation novel it becomes in effect an obligation to incorporate a liberal amount of seduction, bigamy, or even prostitution, preferably in connection with the heroine’.<sup>22</sup> Brantlinger similarly contends that the ‘sensation novel was and is sensational partly because of content: it deals with crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes of bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings’.<sup>23</sup> At first glance these definitions might seem applicable; however, when other novels are considered, they become more problematic. Charles Reade produced several Sensation novels, including *Griffith Gaunt, or Jealousy* (1866) and *Hard Cash* (1868), from which bigamy and prostitution are absent and the central character is male not female. Similarly, *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (1868) by Florence Wilford contains no criminal characters or acts, and instead focuses on a woman’s autonomy from her husband. Thus, I contend that seduction, crime, bigamy and prostitution are not the central characteristics of Sensation fiction as Hughes and Brantlinger postulate. Rather, for me the most important defining features of the genre are its challenge to middle-class Victorian ideology and an implicitly polemic and provocative rhetoric within a plot structure that foregrounds secrecy and revelation.

Moving away from the foreign fantasy locations of earlier Gothic literature and the urban settings of early nineteenth-century Newgate novels, Sensation fiction focuses on the middle-class Victorian home and its inhabitants. According to contemporary critic Henry Mansel, situating the action within recognisable settings was the ‘great element of sensation [because...] a tale which aims at electrifying the

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<sup>22</sup> Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar*, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Brantlinger, ‘What Is “Sensational” about the “Sensation Novel”?’ , p. 1.

nerves of the reader is never thoroughly effective unless the scene be laid in our own day and among the people we are in the habit of meeting'.<sup>24</sup> By exposing the 'secret theatre of home', Sensation fiction destabilises Victorian gender, class and domestic ideology by lifting the veil on middle-class society and suggesting that a 'stratum of secret vice underlies the outward seeming of society'.<sup>25</sup> Braddon actively addresses the deceptiveness of domestic appearances in *Lady Audley's Secret* when Robert Audley, Lucy Audley's nephew through marriage, questions 'what do we know of the mysteries that may hang about the houses we enter? [...] Foul deeds have been done under the most hospitable roofs; terrible crimes committed amid the fairest scenes, and have left no trace upon the spot where they were done' (*LAS*, 123-4). Thus, the middle-class home was positioned as a space where secrets and even crimes prospered.

Katherine Newey argues that by exposing the secrets hidden behind the respectable exterior of middle-class homes, Sensation fiction 'offered [female] readers the vicarious [...] chance to fantasize about breaking out of conventional roles and ordinary lives'.<sup>26</sup> Opportunities for women outside the home during the height of Sensation fiction's popularity were limited and thus the decision by Sensation authors to associate women's power with the domestic sphere is significant. The house, which by contrast frequently represents a place of female entrapment in New Woman fiction, becomes the source of women's power in Sensation literature. Sensation novels show their female protagonists inverting the control that a woman's confinement to the domestic sphere was intended to reinforce

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<sup>24</sup> Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', pp. 488-9.

<sup>25</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Basil*, ed. by Dorothy Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 64; Margaret Oliphant, 'Novels', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 102 (1867), 257-80 (p. 260).

<sup>26</sup> Katherine Newey, 'Popular Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1830-1914*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 147-61 (p. 156).

by using the limited power and space available to them to gain control and disrupt gender hierarchy and hence the social structure. The ostensibly harmonious exterior appearance of the middle-class house in Sensation literature is created to deceive, because inside, Victorian conventions are broken down, making the domestic space an important part of understanding the transgressive power of Sensation fiction.

Compared to the extraordinary plots of the texts, Sensation characters are themselves relatively ordinary. They are typically from respectable middle-class families who to the outside world embody Victorian gender ideals. However, like the houses, this public appearance is revealed to be a façade. Despite looking like Pre-Raphaelite ‘Angel in the House’ heroines, the female protagonists of Sensation fiction subvert the ideological premise that middle-class women should be submissive, virtuous and sexless.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, these seemingly reputable members of society are portrayed going to extreme lengths to maintain secrets and advance their social position. For example, as will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Two, Lydia Gwilt from Collins’ *Armada* (1866) uses her stereotypical feminine appearance to manipulate the men around her as she attempts to obtain a fortune through (a bigamous) marriage. Similar to its treatment of the Victorian house, the Sensation genre peels back the outer layer to reveal the hidden secrets at the heart of middle-class society.

Unlike writers from the previous decades such as Charles Dickens who had associated the criminal class with the working class, sensationalists inverted this by depicting crimes perpetrated exclusively by the middle class. Margaret Oliphant

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<sup>27</sup> Victorian notions of ideal femininity (as represented by the figure of the Angel in the House) advocated that a woman should be a ‘good house-mistress, a judicious dispenser of the income, [and] a careful guide to her servants’, as well as a self-sacrificing wife and mother. Eliza Lynn Linton, ‘Womanliness’, *The Girl of the Period: And Other Social Essays*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), vol. 2, pp. 109-18 (p. 114).

expressed her shock that the ‘class thus represented does not disown the picture—that, on the contrary, it hangs it up in boudoir and drawing-room—that the books which contain it circulate everywhere, and are read every-where, and are not contradicted’.<sup>28</sup> The middle-class’ refusal to disown Sensation fiction could be related to that literature’s close connection with the popular newspaper reporting trend that witnessed an increase during the 1860s in the coverage surrounding sensational gossip and divorce and bigamy trials. For example, the trials of Maria Manning, Madeline Smith, and Constance Kent were greatly sensationalised and drew huge public interest: Manning was convicted in 1849 alongside her husband, Frederick George, of murdering her lover, Patrick O’Conner (whose body they buried under their kitchen floor); in 1857 Smith was tried but acquitted of poisoning her former lover; after huge public interest at the time (1860), Kent later (1865) confessed to killing her young step-brother.<sup>29</sup> Collins reportedly modelled Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale* on Smith, while Braddon was inspired by Manning when constructing Lucy Audley and the Kent case when writing *Aurora Floyd* (1863).

Yellow press sensationalism was mirrored in the literature of the period as Sensation fiction imitated the events and adapted protagonists from the pages of the periodicals and magazines in which it was published. Mansel accused sensationalists of finding the ‘materials for sensation [...] hot and strong in the “Newgate Calendar”’, but Reade used this association to defend his novels. After a critical review in *The Times*, Reade wrote to the editor insisting that his fiction was based on fact found within the pages of their very magazine, stating that ‘for 18 years, at least, the journal you conduct so ably has been my preceptor, and the main source of my

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<sup>28</sup> Oliphant, ‘Novels’, p. 259.

<sup>29</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970).

works'.<sup>30</sup> Marryat also made a similar statement in her preface to *Veronique*. She claims that the 'most unlikely scenes depicted [...] have happened, and are drawn from life; it is a remarkable fact, that those incidents in my novels which have incurred most abuse or ridicule at the hands of the public press, have invariably been those gained from the same source'.<sup>31</sup> It is arguable that the connection between Sensation fiction and the periodical press served to increase sales; however, this close relationship to real-life events also had other implications. By (subtly) commenting on contemporary events, Sensation authors were able to impose judgment on their protagonists which at times was more sympathetic and understanding than that presented in the newspapers. The basis of the protagonists' rebellion, not the extent, was founded on issues haunting society, making the actions caused by their desperation relatable to many of the readers. In addition, the agency and vitality of Sensation heroines would arguably have appealed to Victorian women who strove for more opportunities and independence.

The most important premise for my categorisation of the Sensation genre is its intended purpose. This element, in comparison with New Woman literature, has previously been overlooked and has consequently created a large distinction between the two literary genres. Like many other critics, Pykett asserts that 'few (if any) of the female sensationalists could be regarded as either feminist or progressive'.<sup>32</sup> Claiming Sensation writers had feminist sympathies is indeed problematic in part due to the lack of an explicit rationale adopted by contributors to the genre. In contrast to New Woman literature, Sensation fiction had no outspoken collective aims and thus critics steer away from attaching them now. Equally, Sensation writers

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Reade, *Readiana: Comments on Current Events* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1896), p. 323.

<sup>31</sup> Marryat, *Veronique*, vol. 1, p. vi.

<sup>32</sup> Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p. 5.

were not actively involved in social or political campaigns. However, Pykett's statement that sensationalists did not hold progressive views is one I dispute.

In an attempt to define the Sensation novel, Kathleen Tillotson contends that it is a 'novel-with-a-secret'.<sup>33</sup> Like Tillotson, Jenny Bourne Taylor also identifies secrecy to be a distinguishing feature of the Sensation genre: 'what was particularly exciting was that the pleasurable process of unravelling itself involved revealing a secret identity which in turn disclosed not a truth, but another set of questions and dissemblances which hinge on the transgressor's position within the family'.<sup>34</sup> I argue it is the exposure of Victorian women's (and certain men's) dissatisfaction with their position in society that is the defining feature of Sensation literature and that consequently demonstrates the progressive nature of the genre Pykett refutes.

Alongside probing socio-political expectations of gender, other societal problems are frequently addressed in Sensation literature. These include the law regarding women's rights in marriage and divorce (under the new civil proceedings from 1858), regulations governing lunatic asylums, women's education and the limited opportunities for unmarried women. In associating these issues with the central secret or mystery of their novel, Sensation writers were able to confront controversial and provocative political issues that would later be addressed overtly by New Woman campaigns. One such example has already been given in the epigraph to this chapter. By having Marian question women's lack of influence in the choice of a husband and in turn a husband's right to rule his wife and her body, Collins verbalises a sentiment that became a key trope and plot element in New

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<sup>33</sup> Kathleen Tillotson, 'The Lighter Reading of the Eighteen-Sixties', in Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. by Kathleen Tillotson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), pp. ix-xxvi (p. xv).

<sup>34</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 7.

Woman novels. The crucial difference is that here it is a female relative, while in New Woman fiction it is the wife herself who indicts marriage.

I do not consider that Collins' decision to have Marian voice her discontent with the limited prospects of a woman's life is accidental; rather, I argue that Collins, and other Sensation authors, exploit the disquietude surrounding these topics to expose the true nature of the problem. Although there is evidence that some authors of Sensation literature did engage with, and use their fiction to uncover, social problems, I am careful about attaching a political campaign element to the genre's exposure of gender inequality.<sup>35</sup> Instead, I suggest that Sensation authors engaged with socio-political discussions and contemporary debates arising from the emergence of the first women's movement during the 1860s (such as Langham Place, the Victoria Press and the *English Woman's Journal* [1858-64], increasing employment opportunities for middle-class women and the political lobbying to have women included in the Second Reform Act that saw the establishment of the first suffrage societies) in order to bring attention to social injustices.

An engagement with controversial subject matter is a defining and undisputed feature of Sensation literature that arguably played a role in the genre's success. However, up until recently, the sole purpose behind the provocative nature of Sensation fiction has been misread as a desire to entertain. In defining the Sensation genre I suggest adapting Tillotson's statement to conceptualise the Sensation novel as a novel-*revealing-a-secret*, or perhaps more aptly, secrets. In placing revelation at the heart of my definition, I aim to show that the authors' dialogue with social debate and change, particularly in relation to women, is vital to

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<sup>35</sup> Sensation fiction's inclusion of plots based on contemporary legal and social issues will be explored in greater detail in Chapter One.

understanding the importance Sensation fiction played in illuminating the domestic secrets of the middle classes. I maintain that Sensation authors used their novels to expose contemporary social and political injustices, thus making revelation an important intention of the genre.

### What is New Woman Fiction?

Like Sensation fiction, New Woman literature evades a simple definition. In the first of the two articles in the *North American Review* from which the term and its meaning were adopted, Grand put forward her manifesto arguing for a new direction in the woman question. She points to women's previous reluctance to contest social hierarchies and their absence from the education system as the basis of women's current position. However, significantly, her ideal of female liberation did not seek to disrupt Victorian gender norms. Interviewed in 1900, Grand summarised her intended effect in initiating the campaign:

all I meant by the term 'New Woman' was one who, while retaining all the grace of manner and feminine charm, had thrown off all the silliness and hysterical feebleness of her sex, and improved herself so as to be in every way the best companion for man, and without him, the best fitted for a place of usefulness in the world.<sup>36</sup>

Grand was keen to reassure the readers of 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' that 'true womanliness is not in danger, and the sacred duties of wife and mother will be all the more honourably performed when women have a reasonable hope of becoming wives and mothers of *men*'.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, she repeatedly emphasises the need for men to 'grow up' and accept women as their equal partners, arguing that

<sup>36</sup> Forbes, "My Impressions of Sarah Grand", p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Sarah Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', *North American Review*, 158.448 (1894), 270-6 (pp. 274-5). Emphasis in the original.

their denial of this basic right has made them effeminate. Grand argues that it is only through men's acknowledgement of women's rightful place at their side that women will begin to view men as worthy of them.

In the second of the two commentaries published in the *North American Review*, Ouida reacted vehemently to Grand's article. She criticised Grand's New Woman for wanting to get the 'comforts and concessions due to feebleness, at the same time as she demands the lion's share of power due to superior force alone' in expecting men to remain chivalrous while demanding a change in gender relations.<sup>38</sup> Instead, Ouida perceived the home to be vital to women gaining power. She invokes rhetoric by those such as John Ruskin who in 'Of Queens' Gardens' (1865) positioned the home as central to a woman's role by encouraging women to cultivate the 'immense area which lies open to her in private life'.<sup>39</sup> In arguing that a woman's 'influence on children might be so great that through them she would practically rule the future of the world', Ouida draws attention to the important influence women can have in moulding children's minds and thus identifies what she believes are neglected opportunities for women to gain influence in the external world.<sup>40</sup> The contrasting views presented in Grand and Ouida's articles help to establish the vastly different ideas that the New Woman campaign was built on.

This contradictory nature of views is further expanded by the authors of New Woman fiction: Grand believed women should be protected from sexually infectious husbands but strongly supported marriage and motherhood (while creating protagonists who thrive only when they leave their husbands); George Egerton

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<sup>38</sup> Ouida, 'The New Woman', *North American Review*, 158.450 (1894), 610-9 (p. 612).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 614.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 613. In making this argument, Ouida draws on a strategy previously used in Sensation fiction as she similarly deconstructs middle-class domestic ideology and positions the home as a source of female agency. Arguably, of course, by the time Ouida was writing, this was a standard anti-feminist argument.

(pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright) produced feminist stories but refused to be associated with the New Woman; and Grant Allen wrote literature ostensibly in favour of women's rights but also penned articles instructing women that their main role in life was to have children.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, Eliza Lynn Linton wrote essays and novels criticising the New Woman movement and opposed female suffrage, but proclaimed she was in favour of women's rights.<sup>42</sup>

Modern critical studies of the New Woman reflect this contemporary diversity in their conceptualisation by acknowledging the instability of the category. Heilmann questions 'who or what was the New Woman? A literary construct, a press fabrication and discursive marker of rebellion, or a "real" woman? A middle-class daughter eager to study for a career, a married woman chafing against legal inequality, a woman-loving spinster, a reluctant mother, a sexual libertarian?'<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Sally Ledger accesses the 'multiple identit[ies]' of the New Woman who could variously be a 'feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women's movement'.<sup>44</sup> Yet the instability of the category of New Woman simultaneously

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<sup>41</sup> Allen argues that women should give birth to at least four children in his article 'Plain Words on the Woman Question', *Fortnightly Review*, 46.274 (1889), 448-58.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Hamilton states that in her early career Linton 'supported equal but separate education for women, women's property rights, and women's rights to their children'. Susan Hamilton, 'Eliza Lynn Linton: Biographical Note', in *Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. by Susan Hamilton (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995), pp. 179-80 (p. 179). Nancy Fix Anderson argues the 1850s were a turning point in Linton's anti-feminist beliefs, quoting from her earlier novel *Amygone* (1848) to demonstrate its concern with women's rights. The heroine, Aspasia, demands a 'more free and a more equal standing-place for women, and [to] no longer see them the mere puppets which they now are, mindless and without will, living a formal life devoid of any higher intention than to give yet another slave to their husbands', Eliza Lynn Linton, *Amygone* (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), cited in Nancy Fix Anderson, 'Eliza Lynn Linton, Dickens, and the Woman Question', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22.4 (1989), 134-41 (p. 134).

<sup>43</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 1. Other critically important (re)investigations of the New Woman include Gail Cunningham's *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (1978); Ann Ardis's

provided authors with an opportunity to address a wealth of topics, all of which were deemed important to the campaign. New Woman writers focused on a variety of different areas, bringing attention to a large spectrum of issues instead of narrowing the focus to a few central topics. Additionally, New Woman fiction could also be written for anti-feminist purposes increasing its variability. Despite the inconsistency of New Woman fiction, I maintain that an overt engagement with the socio-political women's campaign (whether positive or negative) characterises the genre and distinguishes it from Sensation literature. More specifically, pro-New Woman fiction is marked by an advocacy for change, engagement with the public sphere and a sympathetic portrayal of the rebellious heroine.

Consistent in all pro-New Woman novels is an active engagement with public discourse and an advocacy for reform. As an extension of the public campaigns (these will be explored in Chapter One), New Woman fiction 'opened up a largely gynocentric space for the discussion and dissemination of feminist thought' by introducing the growing (female) reading public to the women's movement.<sup>45</sup> Writing in 1884, Katherine Bradley (one of the two women who wrote under the pseudonym of Michael Field) suggests that writers of that period are using fiction to reveal the 'high feminine standard of *the ought to be*' by presenting an alternative to (or by questioning) the current way of life.<sup>46</sup> Novels became the chosen medium many activists used to bring their campaign into the heart of Victorian society. Heilmann argues that by appealing to a female mass market, the 'social function of

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*New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990), Barbara Caine's *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (1997), and *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (2001) edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis.

<sup>45</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, and Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Katherine Bradley, *Works and Days: From the Journal of Michael Field*, ed. by T. and D. C. Sturge Moore (London: J. Murray, 1933), cited in Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, p. 151. Emphasis in the original.

popular literature, to “both stimulate and allay social anxieties”, was thus inverted by writers who directed women readers’ desires and fantasies not towards domestic or sentimental closure, but towards feminism’.<sup>47</sup> Although entertaining plot lines were important for attracting readers, this was not the main aim of the genre. New Woman literature sought to expose the social inequalities and prejudices affecting women by offering new perspectives from which to view them, and consequently, to demand change. Drawing on their knowledge of public debates (from newspaper articles) and campaign rhetoric (from engagement in political campaigns) in their fiction, New Woman writers gave birth to what Heilmann views as the ‘feminist protest novel’.<sup>48</sup> I argue it is this protest element that defines New Woman fiction and is evidence of the progression from Sensation to New Woman literature.

Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) is an example of a New Woman protest novel. It includes multiple subplots, with one strand focusing on the marriages of Evadne Frayling and Edith Beale. After her military husband’s sexual past is revealed to her moments after their wedding ceremony, Evadne refuses to live with him and although she eventually consents to return to him, she continues to refuse to consummate their marriage. Evadne’s decision is later contrasted to Edith’s death and the disfigurement of her child due to their infection with syphilis from Edith’s husband. The exposure of these two women to venereal disease and Edith’s dangerous ignorance about her husband’s life before their marriage are used by Grand to confront the problem of women’s ‘innocence’ and disclose the patriarchy’s conspiracy of silence. Grand also criticises the double moral standard that required women to remain chaste but did not require men to do the same. Moreover, she

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<sup>47</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstrates that women who contracted syphilis should not be condemned, but rather that it was the contagious middle-class husband who deserved punishment.<sup>49</sup>

Grand perceived women's absence from the political system to be the largest impediment in their efforts for gender equality.<sup>50</sup> This is demonstrated when in *The Heavenly Twins* she shows men, the creators and enforcers of the Contagious Diseases Acts, to be ignorant or indifferent to the role they play in spreading the disease (arguably, Grand does also explore the ignorance of society in regards to sexual disease transmission). In including this theme and the messages surrounding it in her fiction, Grand challenges the idea that women were the sole carriers of venereal disease. Although the Contagious Diseases Acts were repealed in 1886, women continued to be blamed for the spread of syphilis and were castigated as the source of contagion. Thus, Grand uses her novel to draw attention to this contemporary issue and show that governmental rhetoric was wrong.

The inclusion of plots that allowed commentary on societal problems, as well as offering a solution to them, gave the authors the opportunity to illustrate how Victorian society should be regenerated. Novels became a bridge linking the *New Woman's* non-fiction articles to the real world. They revealed to readers, particularly women, social injustices based on gender and pointed to possible resolutions in the way the heroines manoeuvre social conventions. *New Woman* literature was written with the intention of changing Victorian society and therefore was purposefully political. Not only did *New Woman* writers use their novels to engage in topical

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<sup>49</sup> Syphilis and its representation in *New Woman* fiction will be examined in Chapter Four.

<sup>50</sup> Interviewed in 1896, Grand argued that there should be a separate House of Ladies with political power to redress social ills: 'it has often occurred to me that a chamber composed of women qualified to watch legislation as it affects their own sex, and to report their ideas to the House of Commons, would be doing more useful work on behalf of the general community than the present House of Lords'. Sarah A. Tooley, "'The Woman's Question: An Interview with Madame Sarah Grand'", *Humanitarian*, 1896, vol. 8, pp. 161-9', repr. in *Sex and Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 220-9 (p. 224).

discussions and critique the law, they were also politically active. Several writers, including Mona Caird, whose essay ‘Marriage’ (1888) gained her instant notoriety when she criticised the patriarchal structures of the institution, publicised social injustices through non-fiction writing. Others, such as Schreiner, Grand and Elizabeth Robins, joined political organisations to campaign for change.<sup>51</sup>

Another defining feature of New Woman fiction is its movement away from a consideration of the Victorian home in Britain. New Woman literature swapped the domestic for foreign, often liberating, locations and a commentary on women’s situation in the public sphere. Schreiner in *The Story of an African Farm* situates the action in the Karoo region of South Africa, while others turned to Italy (Caird’s *The Pathway of the Gods* [1898] and Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* [1895]) and France (Caird’s *Daughters of Danaus* [1894]), or further afield including India (Victoria Cross’ *Anna Lombard* [1901]) and China (Grand’s *Ideala* [1888]; although China is not depicted as such, its traditions and influence are discussed at length after *Ideala* returns to Britain). In part this is a reflection of the many New Woman authors who lived in British colonies and were consequently situating the novels in settings familiar to themselves (for example, Grand lived for a time in South East Asia). New Woman writers also travelled more, giving them greater knowledge of different cultures they could draw on in their writing.

However, the main protagonists in nearly all New Woman novels are British. In an effort to shock British readers, New Woman authors used foreign locations to expose the injustices upheld by the British in their own community against the

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<sup>51</sup> All three were active members of the Women’s Writers’ Suffrage League (WWSL). Robins was a leading literary voice in the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) and wrote the hugely successful suffragette play *Votes for Women!* which was first performed in 1907. Robins’ novel *The Convert* (1907) was based on the play. Angela V. John, *Elizabeth Robins: Staging a Life, 1862-1952* (London: Routledge, 1994).

backdrop of similar occurrences by indigenous people. Yet, these foreign locations were also used as sites of liberation to illustrate the role the British political system played in repressing women. This long-standing literary tradition is present in earlier nineteenth-century literature including *Aurora Leigh* (1856) by Elizabeth Barrett Browning where the heroine travels to Italy through France to gain new inspiration to write. Similarly, in New Woman fiction relocation to continental Europe marks an opportunity for the female protagonist to experience social freedom and seek individual fulfilment in life. A move to Paris allows Hadria Fullerton (by then Temperley) in Caird's *Daughters of Danaus* to pursue the musical career that is presented as unattainable in Britain. Hadria's relocation to France and involvement in social circles there also signals another important aspect of New Woman literature's rationale. By depicting their heroines developing fulfilling and enriching lives in the public world, New Woman novelists sought to undermine the anti-feminist rhetoric that warned women that only harm could result from their rejection of the home-is-the-women's-sphere mentality and present the public world as the new battle ground for women's rights.

Yet, not all New Woman literature abandoned the domestic sphere of the English home as its main setting. Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897) is one such example and offers an interesting, and conflicting, presentation of the marital home. *The Beth Book* centres on the life of Elizabeth Caldwell, known as Beth, and her marriage to Daniel Maclure, a doctor in a local Lock Hospital. At first believing that this marriage will offer her freedom, Beth soon comes to realise her disillusionment as 'Dan gradually revealed himself [...] trait by trait' (*BB*, 382). Dan's controlling and condescending behaviour is reflected in the claustrophobic and suffocating atmosphere of their marital home which becomes a metaphorical prison for Beth.

However, Grand also depicts her heroine attaining individual agency through gaining possession of a secret ‘room-womb’.<sup>52</sup> Recognising that her husband views her as an object he has purchased, Beth expresses her desire for ‘some corner where she would be safe from intrusion’ (*BB*, 364). Upon discovering such a room during a survey of the house, Beth realises that this was ‘exactly what she had been pining for most in the whole wide world of late, a secret spot, sacred to herself’ (*BB*, 365). Ultimately, it is Beth’s possession of this room which enables her to become an independent woman and, mentally at least, escape the confines of her marriage. Although a very different sort of power is associated with the domestic sphere in Sensation novels such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* (interestingly, Lucy Audley also inhabits a secret room), Grand can be seen drawing on the earlier genre to represent the home as a place of female agency.<sup>53</sup>

Transgressive protagonists are essential to every New Woman novel; however, it is the intradiegetic narrative response to them which characterises the genre. Judgement is infrequently cast during the first two thirds of a New Woman novel regardless of the heroine’s actions, and if it is, it originates from those characters representing old-fashioned patriarchy. The difference between Sensation and New Woman fiction’s approach to rebellious female protagonists becomes apparent when comparing a similar plot line in Caird’s New Woman novel *Daughters of Danaus* and Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Lucy Audley is deemed to be wicked in part because she abandons her child (and absent husband) for another life. Yet, although Hadria in *Daughters of Danaus* similarly leaves her husband and

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<sup>52</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> Lucy’s apartments are made up of a series of rooms that culminate in an ‘octagon ante-chamber hung with oil-paintings’ (*LAS*, 56) (it is here that George first discovers his wife is not dead) and can be locked to cut off all access from the rest of the house. It is within these rooms that Lucy plots how she might escape from the clutches of her past life and those trying to expose her. Yet these rooms, in an act laden with sexual symbolism, are also penetrated by Robert and George via a secret tunnel.

children to begin a musical career in France, she does not suffer the same treatment as Lucy nor is she presented as a criminal. This difference lies in the two novels' narrative viewpoints. While little insight is given as to Lucy's perspective and why she chose to leave her marital home until the concluding chapters of the novel, Caird focalises the readers' vision through Hadria in order to create understanding and sympathy for her heroine's actions.<sup>54</sup>

New Woman writers utilised several techniques to prevent their heroine being associated with criminality. As exemplified by Caird's *Daughters of Danaus*, a sympathetic or non-judgemental narrative tone and perspective are often employed to win the readership over to the protagonist and her actions. After all, readers needed to understand the heroine's actions in order to respect her. By providing a rationale for their actions before, not after the event, the transgressive heroines of New Woman literature become relatable and so escape harsh reader judgement. For example, when Viola Sedley in another of Caird's novels, *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), kills her husband, readers are left with an understanding of why she committed the crime because they have witnessed his brutality and the suffocating effect of Viola's marital home. This technique also helped to inspire sympathy with the real-life women who rebelled, encouraging the public not to see them as wicked, but to understand and perhaps relate to the factors leading to their behaviour.

In another contrast to Sensation literature, the focus in New Woman fiction transfers from a single rebellious heroine to multiple women intent on breaking out of the restrictions of patriarchal society. This was intended to show that a collective rebellion was more successful because when women join together to defeat injustices

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<sup>54</sup> Sympathy towards Lucy due to George's abandonment is expressed in *Lady Audley's Secret*; however, because it comes after her crimes, it does little to alter the readers' perception of her.

the effect is increased. In *Ideala*, the eponymous heroine comes to recognise that women ‘work too much for themselves, each trying to make their own life happier’.<sup>55</sup> Instead, she argues that if the aims of the women’s movement are to be achieved women must ‘learn to take a wider view of things, and to be shown that the only way to gain their end is by working for everybody else, with intent to make the whole world better’.<sup>56</sup> In including such a message in their fiction, New Woman authors pointed to the need for and effectiveness of a widespread public campaign for women’s rights. Happy endings rarely occur in New Woman literature but when they do it is typically because a collective rebellion has been adopted as the way forward.<sup>57</sup>

However, not all of the literature published during the New Woman period had feminist sympathies. At the same time as novels were being used to advance the women’s rights movement, they were also being used to reaffirm Victorian gender norms. As Lucy Delap and Valerie Sanders’s anthology, *Victorian and Edwardian Anti-Feminism* (2006), demonstrates, the non-fiction press was full of articles ridiculing the women’s movement. Margaret Oliphant, Eliza Lynn Linton and Mary Ward were three of the most prolific and vehement voices in opposing the New Woman movement. Together they produced numerous essays published in popular newspapers and periodicals in which they attacked various aspects of the campaign in an attempt to maintain the existing social hierarchy.

Linton and Ward, the latter of whom was instrumental in the anti-suffrage campaign, also turned to fiction to enhance their anti-feminist message. Anti-feminist New Woman fiction captured the main tropes of the genre and used them in

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<sup>55</sup> Sarah Grand, *Ideala*, ed. by Molly Youngkin (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008), p. 184.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of the endings of New Woman (and Sensation) fiction see the Conclusion.

an attempt to counteract pro-New Woman literature and stop an advancement in women's rights. Most notably anti-New Woman literature indicts the figure of the New Woman and satirises her and the folly of her actions. For instance, in Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* (1880), the New Woman character is portrayed as grotesque and masculine with the 'look of a dummy in a third-rate shop-window'.<sup>58</sup> Yet Perdita Winstanley, the protagonist of *The Rebel of the Family*, can also be seen as a sympathetic New Woman. Perdita is a wavering figure who starts as a timid New Woman but then turns into an Old Woman by embracing traditional Victorian values and marrying. In comparison, the heroines of feminist writers sometimes move in the opposite direction. For example, the protagonist of Grand's *Ideala* begins the novel as a conservative thinker and later becomes a radical.

In another of Linton's novels, *The One Too Many* (1894), Effie Chegwin, the 'pronounced product of the age, the girl *fin-de-siècle* from head to heel, athletic in body, instructed in mind, indignant with nature for having made women what they are', is a distinctly sympathetic New Woman heroine.<sup>59</sup> Contrasted to the 'weak and helpless' Moira Brabazon, Effie is frequently portrayed as the more desirable woman whose independent spirit Moira eventually comes to covet.<sup>60</sup> However, as in Sensation novels such as Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* where the rebellious heroine is ultimately domesticated, Linton's novel concludes with Effie recognising the error of her ways as she marries and adopts a domestic role. Thus *The One Too Many* gives voice to the New Woman only to curtail her agency at the end. Although the endings of Linton's novels reaffirm gender stereotypes, they simultaneously demonstrate a

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<sup>58</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, *The Rebel of the Family*, ed. by Deborah T. Meem (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, *The One Too Many*, 3 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1894), vol. 1, p. 207.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 224.

significant crossover between feminist and anti-feminist approaches reinforcing tension to be an important characteristic of anti-feminist New Woman fiction.

Returning to pro-New Woman literature, advocacy for change is indisputably its defining feature and the point of progression between Sensation and New Woman fiction. In light of my adaptation of the definition of the Sensation novel as a novel-revealing-a-secret, I contend that the New Woman novel can be viewed as a novel-with-a-purpose, a phrase Grand herself used to describe the genre.<sup>61</sup> These definitions of Sensation and New Woman fiction have informed the choice of novels used throughout this thesis. However, before these definitions can be used to probe the relationship between the genres, it is necessary to position my approach within the wider field of Sensation and New Woman studies.

### **Conceptual Framework and the Field: Recent Critical Engagement in Sensation-New Woman Comparisons**

Pykett's *The 'Improper' Feminine*, the starting point for this thesis, was the first critical study to acknowledge the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction, as well as to argue for the important space both genres occupy in the cultural and literary world. Pykett claims that both genres 'actively contested, or implicitly

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<sup>61</sup> Sarah Grand, '[From] Letter to Professor Viëtor, Nizza, 15 December 1896, in Ernst Foerster, *Die Frauenfrage in den Romanen Englischer Schriftstellerinnen der Gegenwart*, Marburg, N.G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907, pp. 56-8', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 190-1 (p. 190). Several contemporary reviewers also applied the term to Grand's work. An anonymous reviewer of *The Heavenly Twins* used the phrase in reference to the novel in "'Some Books of the Month", *Review of Reviews*, 1893, vol. 7, pp. 543-55', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 425-31 (p. 425). The phrase is also mentioned in "'Fiction", *Athenaeum*, 15 September 1916, no. 4609, pp. 420-1', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 546-50 (p. 546) and Charles Whitby, "'Sarah Grand: The Woman and Her Work", written for inclusion in the *Sarah Grand Miscellany* (compiled by Gladys Singer-Bigger and published privately in 1933 under the title *The Breath of Life*)', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 327-44 (p. 334).

(but nevertheless shockingly) challenged the dominant definitions of “woman” and her prescribed social and familial roles, and both generated critical controversies which became a focus for broader socio-cultural anxieties, particularly for contemporary anxieties about gender’.<sup>62</sup> She goes on to argue that Sensation and New Woman authors

participated in a rewriting of this script of the feminine, as in various ways and to varying degrees, they self-consciously explored or implicitly exposed the contradictions of prevailing versions of femininity, or developed new styles and modes through which to articulate their own specific sense of the feminine.<sup>63</sup>

In her exploration, Pykett links the genres through their anxiety about gender and what was meant by ‘woman’. I seek to expand Pykett’s arguments to bring a new perspective to this area of academic study by arguing that Sensation literature, in many different aspects, was an influence on New Woman fiction. It is important to note here that I am not arguing that the authors of Sensation fiction are feminists, but that they engaged with the emergence of political feminism to expose the condition of women, focusing on the domestic realm to do so. Consequently, New Woman writers built on this literary momentum to effect social change and introduce a feminist rationale into literature. While New Woman writers were not the first feminist writers, this was the first time there was a collective feminist movement in literature that paralleled the political women’s movement.

Although Pykett contends that both genres were ‘produced by, and productive of, controversy’, she limits the scope of Sensation fiction by arguing for a

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<sup>62</sup> Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine*, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

fundamental difference in its literary status.<sup>64</sup> Pykett states that in comparison to New Woman fiction, which was connected with the campaign for women's rights, the 'woman's sensation novel was usually regarded as a low form, tainted by its association with a variety of familiar popular forms; it was an ephemeral, formulaic, mass-produced commodity'.<sup>65</sup> It is this distinction between the origins and deployment purposes of the genres (New Woman fiction as political literature and Sensation fiction as mass market consumerist literature) that has contributed to the lack of critical comparisons between the two genres. New Woman fiction was conceived as a means for the dissemination of feminist thought. Conversely, Sensation fiction was (and still is) dismissed for having been written for entertainment purposes and thus it has been argued that feminist aspects were either incidental or included as an afterthought. However, this view disregards the importance Sensation literature played in exposing the condition of women in Britain, even if this was not always the primary aim. This difference in mass-market versus ideological focus was partly due to the fact that the women's movement was in its infancy at the beginning of the 1860s, while by the later decades there was an established feminist discourse which writers could draw on, and thus their work seems to have more of a notable campaign element than Sensation fiction. This primary difference is one I acknowledge but work to move beyond, recognising instead both genres' challenge to accepted dominant codes of Victorian literature.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, I agree with Greta Depledge that an 'approach that looks to the popular genre of sensation fiction for a representation of New Woman ideologies is invited by a theoretic framework which sees popular appeal as essential to any novel that

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Pykett also cites this as the reason for her comparison: 'the New Woman novel, like the sensation novel before it, represented a threat to Art'. Ibid, p. 9.

raises issues surrounding the Woman Question'.<sup>67</sup> Thus, I argue that New Woman fiction employed popular tropes from Sensation fiction in order to make the novels more entertaining and attract more people to the campaign. After all, how could New Woman authors change public opinion and impact Victorian society without popular appeal?

Pykett's discussion centres on the popular and extensively analysed novels of the 1860s and 1890s by women writers (admittedly, in 1992, when Pykett's book was published, the majority of the novels were not as widely critiqued as they are today). Consequently, she fails to incorporate any work by a male author and although she justifies her decision to do this, it negates an important element of comparison.<sup>68</sup> While the literature and politics of these periods sought to secure women's equal position in society, it was not only women who took up this fight: men made an important contribution to social change as well. Male-authored Sensation and New Woman fiction brings a new and interesting dynamic to this investigation and consequently, this is why male-authored texts will be included in my project. Furthermore, Pykett's sole focus is on what have become canonical texts of the two genres. She does not place any attention on novels that may have had a significant impact at the time but have since slipped from public consciousness. By using a wider range of novels, including those that are rarely discussed today, I aim to reassess the two genres from new perspectives and with different voices.

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<sup>67</sup> Depledge, 'Sensation Fiction and the New Woman', p. 196.

<sup>68</sup> Pykett's reasoning behind her decision to exclude male-authored Sensation and New Woman fiction is in part because she views the genres to be inherently female, written for and by women. She also aims in exclusively using female-authored texts to 'show that the female sensationalists of the 1860s and the New Woman writers of the 1890s occupy an important place in the cultural history of the nineteenth century, and played an important part in the development of fiction'. Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p. ix. Pykett does address Wilkie Collins at length in her later study *The Sensation Novel: From The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994).

Apart from *The 'Improper' Feminine*, there are few notable critical explorations of the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction. However, two essays included in the *Cambridge Companion* series are an exception to this and thus deserve attention. Depledge's 'Sensation Fiction and the New Woman' (2011) uses late-Sensation female sleuth novels including Florence Marryat's *In the Name of Liberty* (1897) and Braddon's *Thou Art the Man* (1894) to argue that 'traits of New Woman and *fin-de-siècle* feminism can be seen in the later [Sensation] works, with writers tackling issues central to the social purity campaigns of the late nineteenth century such as male sexual profligacy, the vivisection debate and the position of women in marriage'.<sup>69</sup> Yet Depledge disregards earlier Sensation literature, claiming that the 'need to detect, to solve, is indicative of a growing sense of autonomy and independence among women that bears no relation to the iniquitous acts of their earlier sensation sisters'.<sup>70</sup> Unlike Depledge, my thesis draws on novels spanning both periods to argue that the emergence of issues central to the New Woman campaign are present throughout Sensation literature. The second essay of note in the *Cambridge Companion* series is by Pykett. In 'Sensation and New Woman Fiction' (2015) she develops the argument put forward in *The 'Improper' Feminine* by focusing on the representation of marriage and the female artist in the two genres to uncover a bleeding of sensationalism into New Woman fiction.<sup>71</sup>

Nearly all the existing Sensation-New Woman comparisons situate the female protagonists as their central discussion point and rarely stray from this narrow focus. While the heroines' similarities are hard to ignore and do offer the clearest comparison between the two genres, this singular focus on the female protagonists

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<sup>69</sup> Depledge, 'Sensation Fiction and the New Woman', p. 196.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>71</sup> Pykett, 'Sensation and New Woman Fiction', pp. 133-43.

has led to other points of comparison being neglected. Lisa Hager provides an exception in her essay ‘Embodying Agency: Ouida’s Sensational Shaping of the British New Woman’ (2013) by analysing the presence of the language of Sensation in Ouida’s New Woman writing (however, she does focus on Ouida’s female protagonist in order to demonstrate her argument). Using ‘The New Woman’ and *Princess Napraxine* (1884), Hager probes the bodily effect of Sensation fiction against the New Woman’s ‘psychological exploration of women’s specific social position in Victorian society’.<sup>72</sup> She argues that the ‘late nineteenth-century work of Ouida suggests a continued mobilization of sensational vocabularies of representation, specifically the power and danger of outside forces to overcome the individual, in order to locate agency or the lack thereof within the body’.<sup>73</sup> My own work draws on Hager’s analysis in using language to explore the legacy of Sensation fiction in New Woman literature; however, instead of using representations of the literal body as Hager does, in Chapter Two I turn my attention to the use of sensational language to capture the female experience of marital violence.

In this thesis I aim to extend existing scholarship by investigating the connection between Sensation and New Woman fiction through the two genres’ response to contemporary legal and social debates (Chapter One), the characters, both female (Chapter Two) and male (Chapter Three), Gothic literature, a mode both genres revisited (Chapter Four) and their subversive endings (Conclusion). By conducting a comparison of Sensation and New Woman literature across different genders, literary modes and key themes, I will probe the relationship between these literary genres from previously unconsidered angles. As my argument addresses the

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<sup>72</sup> Hager, ‘Embodying Agency: Ouida’s Sensational Shaping of the British New Woman’, p. 238.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-6.

foundations of New Woman literature, it is necessary to also briefly explore those of Sensation fiction.

### **Sensation Fiction and its Influences**

In one of the first critical rediscoveries of Sensation literature, Winifred Hughes maintains that the genre had ‘no perceptible infancy’ but instead ‘sprang full-blown, nearly simultaneously, from the minds of Wilkie Collins, Mrs Henry Wood, and M. E. Braddon’.<sup>74</sup> Unsurprisingly, Hughes’ view has since been challenged by numerous critics including Andrew Maunder who contends that it is ‘slightly questionable whether 1860s Victorian readers and critics were struck by the newness of these novels as forcefully as recent critics like to think’, given the prevalence of influential and to some extent similar material available in the preceding decades.<sup>75</sup>

With their focus on crime and strong female heroines, popular mass-produced literary forms of the previous decades including the Newgate novel, penny dreadfuls, silver fork novels and to some extent Gothic literature, in particular the female Gothic of Ann Radcliffe, are typically viewed as influencing (or as constituting early forms of) Sensation fiction.<sup>76</sup> However, fixing a novel or year as initiating the beginning of Sensation fiction remains widely debated.

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<sup>74</sup> Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew Maunder, ‘General Introduction’, in *Varieties of Women’s Sensation Fiction: 1855-1890*, ed. by Andrew Maunder, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), vol. 1, pp. vii-xxxi (p. xii).

<sup>76</sup> However, one contemporary critic saw a further connection between Gothic and Sensation fiction. Published in 1765 and reissued a year later with the subtitle ‘A Gothic Story’, *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole is generally regarded as the first Gothic novel and a defining text of the genre. Composed after a dream in which Walpole found himself in an ‘ancient castle’ on whose ‘uppermost bannister of a great staircase [he] saw a gigantic hand in armour’, *The Castle of Otranto* is littered with Gothic stereotypes such as ‘skulls and skeletons, sliding panels, damp vaults, trap doors, and dismal rooms’. A century later, in an article titled ‘The Sensation Novel’ (1874), E. B. uses these tropes to make the (improbable) claim that ‘without any doubt the “*Castle of Otranto*” is the first sensation novel’. E. B., ‘The Sensation Novel’, *Argosy*, 18 (1874), 137-43. The influence of Gothic fiction on Sensation (and New Woman) literature will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The 1850s have received the majority of the attention in the critical expansion of the genre's time frame. Along with Maunder, whom I have already identified as shifting the genesis of the genre to 1855, Anne-Marie Beller focuses on the relatively unconsidered area of middle-brow literature to argue that the genre's 'infancy' is perceptible during the 1850s.<sup>77</sup> She names Amelia B. Edwards' 1850s novels, including *My Brother's Wife* (1855) and *Paul Ferroll* (1855), and *My Lady* (1858) by an anonymous writer as precursors of the Sensation novel. Conversely, Pykett suggests that Collins' *Basil*, published in 1852, is the first Sensation novel because it has

many of the characteristics that were later labelled as sensational: a tale of modern life which begins on an omnibus, it revolves around a secret cross-class marriage, an adultery plot, and an inter-generational revenge plot in which the deeds of the fathers continue to reverberate in the lives of their sons.<sup>78</sup>

Pykett is not alone in claiming *Basil* as the first Sensation novel. Tamara Wagner identifies that *Basil*'s representation of the suburban has associations with the genre, arguing that Collins 'importantly transforms suburbs into sensational topographies, as the dissection of "modern life" promised in the subtitle [*A Story of Modern Life*] probes seemingly tranquil domesticity to engender some of sensation fiction's seminal features'.<sup>79</sup> Contemporary commentators were also quick to identify a connection between Sensation fiction and the previous decade's literature. George Alfred Lawrence's *Guy Livingstone; or, 'Thorough'* (1857) was frequently likened to the Sensation genre, in particular to Rhoda Broughton and her novel *Not Wisely*,

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<sup>77</sup> Anne-Marie Beller, 'Sensation Fiction in the 1850s', in *Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Mangham, pp. 7-20.

<sup>78</sup> Lyn Pykett, *Wilkie Collins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 91.

<sup>79</sup> Tamara S. Wagner, 'Sensationalizing Victorian Suburbia: Wilkie Collins's *Basil*', in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, ed. by Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), pp. 200-11 (p. 200).

*but Too Well* (1867). One reviewer in the *Athenaeum* even believed the authors to be the same due to the ‘peculiar heroes and very peculiar morality’ shared by both novels.<sup>80</sup>

However, it is in the preface and dedication of Marryat’s *Veronique* that clues of the main sources of Sensation writers’ inspiration are given. In her preface, Marryat quotes an ‘abler authority than [her]self’ to defend Sensation literature against accusations of exaggeration and fakery:

whenever you present the actual simple truth, it is somehow always denounced as a lie; they disown it, cast it off, throw it on the parish; whereas the product of your imagination, the mere figment, the sheer fiction, is adopted, petted, termed pretty, proper, sweetly natural; the little spurious wretch gets all the comfits, the honest lawful bantling all the cuffs.<sup>81</sup>

Although she does not name the source, this quotation comes from Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Shirley* (1849). Viewed as a social novel, *Shirley* tells the story of Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar and their lovers, Robert and Louis Moore.

*Shirley* is a novel largely unconsidered by modern critics as an influence on Sensation fiction. Oliphant drew some attention to it in her exploration of Sensation literature, arguing that when the ‘curate’s daughter in “*Shirley*” burst forth into passionate lamentation over her own position and the absence of any man whom she could marry, it was a new sensation to the world’.<sup>82</sup> Yet, the financially secure,

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<sup>80</sup> ‘*Not Wisely, but Too Well*’, *Athenaeum*, (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1867), 569 (p. 569). The hugely popular novel *Guy Livingstone; or, ‘Thorough’* was written by George Alfred Lawrence and published anonymously in 1857. The novel popularised the physically strong male protagonist, a characteristic which is visible in many Sensation heroes including Dare Stamer in Rhoda Broughton’s *Not Wisely, but Too Well*. Lawrence’s novel follows the story of several ill-fated lovers including the title character who, after getting engaged, is caught kissing another woman. When his fiancée discovers his disloyalty, she forecasts his early demise and death from her own deathbed. Given its sensational plot and tropes, *Guy Livingstone* will be treated as a Sensation novel in Chapter Three.

<sup>81</sup> Marryat, *Veronique*, vol. 1, p. vii.

<sup>82</sup> Oliphant, ‘Novels’, p. 259.

strong-minded and independent Shirley is also reminiscent of the century's later heroines. When Louis, the man she loves, proposes, Shirley is more concerned about the potential loss of her independence if she decides to marry than her happiness at finally receiving the proposal she wanted. Oliphant credits the novel as having created the fashion for women to refuse marriage because 'up to the present generation most young women had been brought up in the belief that their own feelings on this subject should be religiously kept to themselves'.<sup>83</sup> In comparison to Sensation literature which typically resorts to marriage in order to restore the previously disturbed order, Shirley's attitude is more similar to New Woman heroines who meditated on the consequences of marriage.

As a result of Shirley's refusal, Louis, in a gendered role reversal, is left lamenting his 'exquisitely provoking' mistress for 'putting off *her* marriage day by day, week by week, month by month'.<sup>84</sup> Significantly, Louis classifies it as 'her', Shirley's, marriage and not 'our' or 'his' marriage. This positions Shirley as the dominant partner in the proceedings and consequently places Louis as the silent and invisible partner, a position women would typically be expected to hold, thus reiterating the novel's influence on Sensation fiction. Sensation writers represented marriage as an event women could control and utilise for their own advantage. This is evident in *Lady Audley's Secret* when Lucy realises it is her beauty, and the use she can make of it, that will allow her the chance of a better life:

I had learnt that which in some indefinite manner or other every school-girl learns sooner or later—I learned that my ultimate fate in life depended upon *my* marriage, and I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any one of them.  
(*LAS*, 298, my emphasis)

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2009), p. 475. My emphasis.

Like Shirley, Lucy is depicted as the controlling force in her marriage through the use of a dominant pronoun.

Eventually Shirley consents to a day and in a joint ceremony with Robert and Caroline, she is married. However, the imagery towards the end of *Shirley* slips from the earlier assertion of female independence to a Victorian taming of the shrew as Shirley is depicted ‘conquered by love, and bound with a vow’.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, it is the proposal scene and her insistence to her uncle that she will marry whom she pleases that demonstrate Shirley’s inherent dominance over her lover. Her revelation that Louis was ‘whom *I* meant to marry’ all along, is reminiscent of another of Charlotte Brontë’s novels and Jane Eyre’s statement, ‘reader, *I* married *him*’.<sup>86</sup> Both Shirley and Jane use language to illustrate their control of the act of marriage. This is a trope sensationalists would also later employ in their fiction. Magdalen Vanstone in Collins’ *No Name* (1862) similarly utilises dominant pronouns to make evident her control in choosing a husband. Her statement, ‘*I* mean to marry him’, made in regards to her cousin Noel Vanstone, is reminiscent of Shirley and Jane’s statements but her intention is not.<sup>87</sup> Sensation authors adapted the purpose of women’s marital agency to explore how their heroines used it for their own advantage. In the case of *No Name*, Magdalen only wants to marry Noel to win back her lost inheritance after her parents die without leaving a will.

The depiction of a woman’s loss of individuality and strength of character at the end of *Shirley* is another defining feature of Sensation (and New Woman) literature. Despite Shirley’s previous reluctance to marry, by the end of the novel she

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 475.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 468. My emphasis; Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. by Stevie Davies (London: Penguin Group, 2006), p. 517. My emphasis.

<sup>87</sup> Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. by Mark Ford (London: Penguin Group, 1994), p. 277. My emphasis.

is 'conquered by love' and married.<sup>88</sup> The majority of Sensation novels similarly conclude by re-establishing the patriarchal order in order to restore a conventional Victorian ending to their previously transgressive narratives.<sup>89</sup> This is evident in Marryat's *Her Father's Name* (1876) which ends with Leona Lacoste's engagement. An adventurous cross-dressing heroine, Leona has previously refuted marriage as a form of 'slavery' she would 'never be such a fool as to barter' (*HFN*, 19-20) with any man for. However, like Shirley who reveals her intention was always to marry Louis, Leona disrupts the conventional Victorian ending by taking on a male role and proposing. Tension is created between agency and the loss of agency in these endings to Sensation fiction so as to counteract the final patriarchal dominance that on the surface they initially appear to imply.

Instead of *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) are more commonly associated with influencing Sensation fiction. *Jane Eyre* revolves around a bigamous marriage that the heroine is almost and unknowingly betrayed into, and although the marriage does not take place at this stage, this central theme is reminiscent of many Sensation novels. In comparison, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* follows Helen Huntingdon (who later takes her mother's maiden name, Graham, in an attempt to hide her past), ostensibly a young widow, whose secret flight from her abusive husband, Arthur, is slowly revealed through her diary. Helen also takes her child with her despite him, in legal terms, belonging to her husband (she later uses his illness to pressurise her husband into signing custody rights over to her). Through Anne and Jane, the Brontë sisters introduced female protagonists who did not conform to expectations of literary

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<sup>88</sup> Brontë, *Shirley*, p. 475.

<sup>89</sup> It is important to note that, as in the case of *East Lynne*, marriage is not always used to achieve this.

heroines. It is this central trope that Sensation writers can be seen advancing later in the century.

The influence of *Jane Eyre* on the Sensation genre cannot be overstated. Indeed, Oliphant cites the emergence of Sensation literature to have ‘beg[un] at the time when *Jane Eyre* made what advanced critics call her “protest” against the conventionalities in which the world clothes itself’.<sup>90</sup> In writing this novel, Charlotte Brontë introduced many of the tropes (secrets behind closed doors, middle-class family controversy), themes (bigamy, madness, domestic imprisonment) and character types (male deceit and manipulation, female agency and individualism) that would become central to Sensation fiction. Rebellious and transgressive heroines are a mainstay of Sensation fiction and it is through them that *Jane Eyre*’s influence on the genre is typically identified. Considered by Oliphant to be the original ‘bad girl’ of Victorian literature, Jane ‘dashed into our well-ordered world, broke its boundaries, and defied its principles’.<sup>91</sup> However, it is important to note that *Jane Eyre* also inspired the male characters of Sensation fiction as evidenced by the complicated ‘new’ man figure of Edward Rochester.

Anne Brontë’s novel also includes a heroine prepared to rebel against social conventions. Referred to as a ‘feminist manifesto of revolutionary power and intelligence’ by Stevie Davies, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*’s exploration of Helen’s abuse at the hands of her drunkard husband and her refusal to accept this as her fate is reminiscent of the violence suffered by women in Sensation literature.<sup>92</sup> Like Lucy Audley, Helen is presented as having little option but to carry out the steps she does

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<sup>90</sup> Oliphant, ‘Novels’, p. 258.

<sup>91</sup> Margaret Oliphant, ‘Modern Novelists—Great and Small’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 77 (1855), 554–63 (p. 557).

<sup>92</sup> Stevie Davies, ‘Introduction’, in Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, ed. by Stevie Davies (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. vii–xxxix (p. xi).

due to the limited opportunities for deserted or abused women.<sup>93</sup> However, Pykett maintains that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is an early Sensation novel not because of its rebellious heroines, but because it

included many of the ingredients of the sensation novel, especially as later developed by Collins: a dispersed narrative (made up of letters, a journal, and an editorializing commentary from its hero); a woman with a secret; and a preoccupation with the sufferings that women undergo as the result of the peculiarities and inequalities of the marriage laws and the laws governing the custody of children.<sup>94</sup>

Yet A. B. Emrys disputes the narrative techniques that Pykett identifies as defining Sensation fiction because ‘by no means [do] all sensation novels have such an overall structure; Collins himself wrote only three novels entirely in documents with collating narrators’.<sup>95</sup> In comparison, Jessica Cox states that ‘thematically [...] and indeed as a purpose novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* appears closer to the New Woman fiction of the late nineteenth century’ than to Sensation fiction.<sup>96</sup> Although a ‘dispersed narrative’ was not adopted by the majority of Sensation writers, Anne Brontë’s novel is important in advancing a social criticism that focused on rebellion as the only option available to women trapped in abusive marriages. Moreover, the engagement with the Married Women’s Property Act in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* presupposes a similar concern in Sensation fiction.<sup>97</sup> Arthur’s destruction of Helen’s paintings and materials because he cannot accept anything that is hers and not his, Helen’s need to smuggle her child out of the house and her inability to divorce her adulterous and abusive husband serve to expose the injustices of the law for women.

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<sup>93</sup> It is necessary to note that this remark is made only in terms of Lucy’s decision to begin another life after her husband abandons her, not in terms of her murderous intentions.

<sup>94</sup> Pykett, *Wilkie Collins*, p. 91.

<sup>95</sup> A. B. Emrys, *Wilkie Collins, Vera Caspary and the Evolution of the Casebook Novel* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2011), p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> Jessica Cox, ‘Gender, Conflict, Continuity: Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and Sarah Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)’, *Brontë Studies*, 35.1 (2010), 30-39 (p. 31).

<sup>97</sup> The influence of the law on Sensation fiction will be explored in Chapter One.

Yet as well as the Brontës, Marryat also identifies another key figure in the development of Sensation fiction: Charles Dickens.

Despite George Augustus Sala claiming in 1868 that critics had ‘failed to discover that among modern “sensational” writers Mr. Charles Dickens is perhaps the most thoroughly, and has been from the very outset of his career the most persistently, “sensational” writer of the age’, Dickens is now readily identified as the ‘father of sensation fiction’.<sup>98</sup> Dickens’ focus on illegitimate children (*Bleak House* [1853]), violence against women (*Oliver Twist* [1838] and *Dombey and Son* [1848]), powerful and plotting heroines (*Great Expectations* [1861]) and mysterious disappearances (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* [1870]) within the heart of middle-class society demonstrate his influence on Sensation fiction, and inclusion of key Sensation tropes. Dickens was good friends with many Sensation writers, including Collins and Reade, and published several of their stories in his magazine, *Household Words*. Indeed it was Dickens who commissioned Collins to write *The Woman in White* in an effort to draw attention to his new magazine.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, Dickens’ re-popularisation of the ghost story unquestionably influenced the wealth of Gothic short stories produced by the authors of Sensation fiction.

Dickens’ impact on the formation of the Sensation genre has led critics such as Beller to argue for extending the time frame of Sensation fiction and beginning not with Collins, Braddon and Wood, but with Dickens. She claims that Dickens introduced into literature themes that would later be central to Sensation fiction and

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<sup>98</sup> George Augustus Sala, ‘On the “Sensational” in Literature and Art’, *Belgravia: a London Magazine*, 4 (1868), 449-58 (p. 545); Mirella Billi, ‘Dickens as Sensation Novelist’, in *Dickens: The Craft of Fiction and the Challenges of Reading*, ed. by Rossana Bonadei, Clotilde de Stasio, Carlo Pagetti and Alessandrio Vescovi (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2000), cited in Diana C. Archibald, “‘Of all the horrors...the foulest and most cruel’: Sensation and Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*”, in *Victorian Sensations*, ed. by Harrison and Fantina, pp. 53-63 (p. 53).

<sup>99</sup> Mangham, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

that his ‘often-quoted statement in the preface to *Bleak House* (1852–3) that he had “purposely dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things” could be applied with equal validity to any later sensation novel and might indeed be taken almost as a *modus operandi* for the later sub-genre’.<sup>100</sup> Tillotson likewise argues for the influence of Dickens on the Sensation genre. She cites one of the earliest uses of the term ‘sensation novel’ to have occurred in the 1861 September edition of the *Sixpenny Journal* that listed *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1861) as examples of the genre.<sup>101</sup> Unlike the Brontës who initiated a ‘new’ heroine in British literature, Dickens’ plots, in particular his focus on crime, establish him as an inspiration for many Sensation novelists.

Through analysing the fiction of Dickens and the Brontës, their significant impact on the emergence of this new literary phenomenon becomes evident. I argue that together they provided the largest influence in shaping the themes, characters and serialised format which would later come to define Sensation literature. It is indisputable that Sensation fiction did not suddenly emerge into the literary scene as Hughes claims, but took its inspiration from the century’s earlier literature and thus this is why this thesis draws on texts published before 1859 and *The Woman in White*. The question that underpins my research is to what extent the two genres are connected. Thus, while analysis regarding the connection between Sensation and New Woman fiction has so far focused on the genres’ surrounding circumstances and textual features, the next section will explore how a direct relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction can be illustrated in the comparison of two authors each typically associated with one specific genre.

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<sup>100</sup> Beller, ‘Sensation Fiction in the 1850s’, p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Tillotson, ‘The Lighter Reading of the Eighteen-Sixties’, p. xii.

### Crossing the Boundaries: Exposing Inter-genre Relationships

Michel Foucault contends that an author's name 'performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others'.<sup>102</sup> This is certainly true of Braddon and George Moore. With the publication (and popularity) of *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon's name became forever synonymous with Sensation fiction. Despite Braddon producing novels in other narrative modes, Albert Sears notes that the 'name "Braddon" and the attendant phrase "by the author of *Lady Audley's Secret*" exercise power over how her novels might be read, establishing an immediate context that circumscribes their reception'.<sup>103</sup> Likewise, Moore's name has come to be associated with, amongst other things (naturalism, Irish Revivalism, autobiography and art criticism), the New Woman genre.

One of the pioneers of naturalism, Moore's transgressive heroines in novels such as *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) and *Esther Waters* (1894) serve to address the 'vast discrepancies between the acceptable cultural images of women and what women actually experienced'.<sup>104</sup> Thus, Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864) and Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* (1885) invited certain expectations for contemporary readers in relation to their genre categorisation. This is signalled by the marketing strategy of *The Doctor's Wife* which when first published in 1864 did not contain Braddon's name on the title page but rather stated that the novel was by the 'author

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<sup>102</sup> Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. by Josué V. Harari and ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 101-20 (p. 107).

<sup>103</sup> Albert C. Sears, 'Mary Elizabeth Braddon and the "Combination Novel": The Subversion of Sensational Expectation in *Vixen*', in *Victorian Sensations*, ed. by Harrison and Fantina, pp. 41-52 (p. 43).

<sup>104</sup> Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminisms and the Novel, 1880-1920* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1979), p. xiv.

of “*Lady Audley’s Secret*,” etc. etc. etc.’<sup>105</sup> Even in 1880 when Braddon’s name appeared on the title page, she is still listed as the author of novels such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* (1863) which by this time had become synonymous with the Sensation genre.<sup>106</sup> These expectations have continued to reverberate in modern critical perceptions of these two authors. Furthermore, given that these novels were published during decades associated with either Sensation or New Woman literature, these expectations are heightened. However, in both these novels the authors resist generic categories of Sensation and New Woman fiction: Braddon satirises Sensation literature and reader expectations of her as an author of Sensation fiction, while Moore introduces defining features of New Woman fiction (such as the claustrophobic marital home) before adjusting New Woman tropes. I argue that it is this resistance that makes these two novels representative of the way in which the genres of Sensation and New Woman fiction blur and overlap.

As an avid reader of Braddon, Moore’s relationship with Sensation fiction is known to have been instrumental to his work. In *Confessions of a Young Man* (1889) he details his childhood discovery of her works. Finding his ‘imagination [...] stirred and quickened’ by his parents’ discussion of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Moore describes taking the

first opportunity of stealing the novel in question. I read it eagerly, passionately, vehemently. I read its successor and its successor. I read until I came to a book called ‘*The Doctor’s Wife*’—a lady who loved Shelley and Byron. There was magic, there was revelation in the name[.]<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Doctor’s Wife* (London: John Maxwell and Company, 1864), no page no.

<sup>106</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Doctor’s Wife* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald Publishers, 1880).

<sup>107</sup> George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1972), p. 50.

Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* is an adaptation of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856). The heroine of Flaubert's novel, Emma Bovary, becomes dissatisfied with her marriage and so begins disastrous adulterous affairs with two different men while also throwing herself into debt. *Madame Bovary* concludes with Emma committing suicide after her plea for financial help is rejected by her lovers. Similarly, in *The Doctor's Wife*, Isabel Sleaford marries the sensible doctor, George Gilbert, but becomes disillusioned with him because 'he could not give her the kind of life she wanted [...] No prince would ever come now; no accidental duke would fall in love with her [...] No; it was all over. She had sold her birthright for a vulgar mess of pottage' (*DW*, 110). Isabel aspires to have the romantic life she idolises from the books she reads and believes her chances to be over until she meets the handsome Roland Lansdell. They begin a platonic affair, but Roland's desire for her to leave her husband prevents it from being the idealistic relationship Isabel strives for. The novel concludes by subverting expectations of the genre by having Roland, instead of Isabel, die and Isabel become an early New Woman charitable reformer.

Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* is a clear influence on Moore's *A Mummer's Wife*, as is evidenced by his inclusion of several direct references to the novel. The heroine, Kate Ede, describes reading a novel that

concerned a beautiful young woman with a lovely oval face, who was married to a very tiresome country doctor. [A description of Braddon's novel follows.] The grotesque mixture of prose and poetry, both equally false, used to enchant Kate, and she always fancied had she been the heroine of the book that she would have acted in the same way. (*MW*, 61-2)<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Also see pp. 118-9 and p. 170 for references to *The Doctor's Wife*.

Like Braddon and Flaubert, Moore places a heroine unsatisfied with her marriage at the centre of his novel. Kate leaves her marital home to elope with the handsome actor, Dick Lennox; however, this has disastrous consequences for Kate. Tormented by jealousy and addicted to alcohol, Kate is ‘dragged down until there was between her and the lowest depths but one step. Even that she was obliged to take’ (*MW*, 389). In a clear reference to prostitution, Kate is abandoned by all and left to die.

Moore’s combination of sensational traits with his version of a New Woman novel serves to disrupt the definitions I proposed earlier in this Introduction.<sup>109</sup> *A Mummer’s Wife* is not simply a novel-with-a-purpose. It contains defining elements of Sensation fiction but was criticised and banned from circulating libraries for its frank portrayal of female sexuality. Moreover, despite working to earn her own income and being divorced by her husband, Kate’s status as a New Woman is conflicted. Indeed, the novel’s depiction of its heroine is not particularly positive. Instead, Kate is used as a case study to advocate the importance of ‘serious’ literature in giving women a realistic view of life and warn against the dangers of female day-dreaming and romance reading. Equally, Braddon’s *The Doctor’s Wife* unsettles the definition of Sensation fiction as a novel-revealing-a-secret. Unlike Braddon’s earlier works, the reader is given insight into Isabel’s behaviour and beliefs from the outset making them less judgemental of her actions. Moreover, Isabel does not follow her literary model; she does not disintegrate but rather becomes a precursor of the New Woman. Moore and Braddon’s novels cross the

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<sup>109</sup> Unlike *A Drama in Muslin*, *A Mummer’s Wife* is not a straightforward New Woman novel. The New Woman heroine is typically middle-class and educated and thus as a draper’s wife with little education (which proves to be her downfall) and who is overly romantic, Kate deviates from the more conventional New Woman female protagonists. Additionally, the exploration of class present in this novel is not typically a feature of the New Woman genre.

boundaries, blurring the distinction between Sensation and New Woman fiction, to demonstrate the relationship this thesis argues for.

Inspired by Flaubert's novel in which Emma's idea of romance is inspired by the books she reads, Isabel's and Kate's futures are similarly determined by the disillusionment caused by reading. Discussing Moore and Braddon's adaptations, Heilmann argues that 'Victorian anxieties about literary infection and contamination were reflected and ironised in later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives about women's transgressive reading practices'.<sup>110</sup> Set against the backdrop of critically approved Victorian realist fiction, Sensation literature's inclusion of devious and criminal heroines as well as bigamy and murder plots promoted questions concerning appropriate reading material for middle- and upper-class young women and the adverse effects these novels could have. The cautionary tale, 'What is the Harm of Novel-Reading?' (1855), verbalises this fear by portraying a young woman marred by her reading choices as the 'influence of this trashy reading was soon apparent in her looks, tempers, language, and manners'.<sup>111</sup> Braddon purposefully sets her novel several years before that 'bitter term of reproach, "sensation"' (*DW*, 11) had been invented in order to avoid the genre being blamed for Isabel's actions. Instead, Romantic literature, not Sensation fiction is shown to have caused Isabel's disillusionment with love.

Believing in a 'phantasmal universe, created out of the pages of poets and romancers' (*DW*, 253) and dreaming of the 'grand passion [of...] Lucy Ashton and

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<sup>110</sup> Ann Heilmann, 'Emma Bovary's Sisters: Infectious Desire and Female Reading Appetites in Mary Braddon and George Moore', *Victorian Review*, 29.1 (2003), 31-48 (p. 32). Moore also produced two short stories inspired by *Madame Bovary* and the cultural discussion surrounding the dangers of women's reading, 'Emma Bovary' (1902) and 'Priscilla and Emily Lofft' (1922).

<sup>111</sup> 'S.', "'What is the Harm of Novel-Reading?'", *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 78, 2, 5<sup>th</sup> series (October 1855), 932-4 [933-4], repr. in *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*, ed. by Andrew King and John Plunkett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 48-9 (p. 48).

Zuleika, with Amy Robsart and Florence Dombey and Medora' (*DW*, 103), Isabel out 'of the world of a three-volume romance' has 'no more idea than a baby' (*DW*, 253) of the realities of love.<sup>112</sup> Thus, unsurprisingly, she soon realises that her marriage to George is a 'mistake,—a horrible and irreparable mistake,—whose dismal consequences she must bear for ever and ever' (*DW*, 110). Even her relationship with Roland, the author of her favourite poetry, results in disappointment. Isabel laments, rather satirically, that their love does not stretch beyond bodily lust and that even in his admission of love, Roland 'wanted nothing that was poetical or romantic, and had not even mentioned suicide in the course of his passionate talk' (*DW*, 281). By showing the naivety of vision and detrimental disillusionment Isabel suffers as a result of apparently respectable literature, Braddon contests accusations of Sensation's negative influence on women readers.

Interestingly, unlike Isabel, Moore's heroine follows the downward spiral depicted in 'What is the Harm of Novel-Reading?' as the 'golden dreams of sinful pleasure—the creation of novel-reading—ended in disgrace, ruin, disease, a broken heart, and an untimely grave!'.<sup>113</sup> Kate eventually loses her beauty ('her beautiful black hair was now hanging over her shoulders like a mane' [*MW*, 343]), her lover abandons her and she dies in solitude. Moore portrays 'sentimental and unnatural' (*MW*, 61) reading material, including *The Doctor's Wife*, to be the cause of Kate's ruin by illustrating that her decisions are based on the false truths these novels give her. This is an argument Moore further articulates in his polemic pamphlet *Literature at Nurse; or Circulating Morals* (1885). He claims that novels about a 'pair of lovers

<sup>112</sup> Zuleika is the heroine of Byron's 'The Bride of Abydos' (1813), Amy Robsart is the female protagonist in Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* (1821) and Medora is a character in Byron's 'The Corsair' (1814). Lyn Pykett, 'Explanatory Notes', in Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Doctor's Wife*, ed. by Lyn Pykett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 405-31 (p. 412). Lucy Ashton is from Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) and Florence Dombey is the heroine in Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1848).

<sup>113</sup> 'S.', "'What is the Harm of Novel-Reading?'" , p. 48.

[...] separated by cruel fate, whose lives are apparently nothing but a long cry of yearning and fidelity, who seem to live, as it were, independent of the struggle for life' are the books that 'more often than any other lea[d] to sin; it teaches the reader to look to a false ideal, and gives her [...] erroneous and superficial notions of the values of life and love'.<sup>114</sup> Trapped in her sterile home where she has to look after her invalid husband and due to her Methodist mother-in-law having no other outlet for pleasure, Kate views Isabel's choices as the only hope of escaping her unfulfilling marriage: 'as the vision became more personal and she identified herself with the heroine of the book, she thought of the wealth of love she had to give, and it seemed to her unutterably sad that it should, like a rose in a desert, lie unknown and unappreciated' (*MW*, 69). Kate is disillusioned by the false sense of security created by the portrayal of Isabel's affair but Moore inverts this by demonstrating the real consequences of her actions. Kate's initial jubilation at escaping her claustrophobic marital home soon fades as she realises that it is not as she expected it to be: '[Kate] looked out on this world of work that she was leaving, and, [...] listened to the uncertain trouble that mounted up through her mind' (*MW*, 168). Kate eventually comes to realise that although 'she had done what she had so often read of in novels, [...] somehow it did not seem at all the same thing. [...] [T]he ideal did not correspond with the reality' (*MW*, 177). Moore's novel acts as a commentary on the failure of romance literature to show the reality of adultery for women.

Reading also has associations with female sexuality in Moore's fiction. In the short story 'Emma Bovary' (1902), Letitia O'Hara reads *Madame Bovary* in secret, hiding her fascination with the novel from her sister. Concealing the book in the

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<sup>114</sup> George Moore, 'Literature at Nurse or Circulating Morals', in George Moore, *A Mummer's Wife*, ed. by Anthony Patterson (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2011), pp. 415-30 (p. 430). It is also important to note that Moore only associates the disillusionment from reading with women.

‘pocket that she wore under her skirt [...] the book thumped her legs when she walked’ making it ‘difficult to get her purse’.<sup>115</sup> Heilmann debates the purse’s double meaning as a ‘receptacle close to her body containing her valuables and thus perhaps emblematic of a more intimate place’.<sup>116</sup> The concealment of the book under Letitia’s skirt is linked with sexual knowledge and arousal as the novel literally makes her aware of her sexual organs. While this awakening of her sexuality offers Letitia a kind of freedom, Kate’s character type quickly and dramatically changes from the moment of her first sexual encounter with Dick: ‘she felt his breath on her neck. Strong arms were wound around about her, she was carried forward, and the door was shut behind her’ (*MW*, 144). However, Kate’s sexual awakening does not signify empowerment as it does in other New Woman novels. Instead, sex is represented as directly resulting in a negative change in Kate. A desire for sexual satisfaction is rarely present in Sensation fiction (Rhoda Broughton’s *Not Wisely, but Too Well* is a notable exception) and therefore it is interesting that Moore uses it to mark the beginning of his heroine’s sensational trajectory. Yet Moore does not simply transform Kate into a heroine inspired by Sensation fiction; rather, he emphasises sensational traits to make them hyperbolic.

Kimberly Reynolds and Nicola Humble note that ‘perhaps the most radical feature of the sensation novel was its deconstruction of the ideal Victorian heroine’.<sup>117</sup> As ‘brandy drinking [becomes] an established part of Kate’s morning hours’ (*MW*, 306) and her behaviour grows ever more erratic, Moore draws on and subverts the pioneering work of Sensation novelists to depict a heroine startlingly

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<sup>115</sup> George Moore, “Emma Bovary”, *Lippincott’s Magazine* (May 1902), repr. in *The Collected Short Stories of George Moore: Gender and Genre*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, 5 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), vol. 5, pp. 183-8 (p. 185).

<sup>116</sup> Heilmann, ‘Emma Bovary’s Sisters’, p. 40.

<sup>117</sup> Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines: Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 105.

removed from the stereotypical Victorian woman. Marital violence is a central theme in *A Mummer's Wife*. Typically in New Woman fiction it is men who are charged with abusive power over women; Moore, however, sensationalises this aspect by positioning Kate, not Dick, as the perpetrator of physical violence. In a non-isolated incident Kate relishes the injuries she has, and can, inflict on Dick:

you see what I gave him last night, and he deserved it [remarking on a facial injury she has inflicted on Dick]. Oh! the beast! and I'll give him more; and if you knew all you wouldn't blame me. It was he who seduced me, who got me to run away from home, and he deserts me for other women. But he shan't, he shan't, he shan't; I'll kill him first; yes, I will, and nobody shall stop me. (*MW*, 341)

Reminiscent of *Lady Audley's Secret*, Kate uses physical brutality in a desperate attempt to regain control of her relationship. The threatening power of women is present, if not articulated, in much Sensation fiction. Indeed, Kate's speech could have been made by Lucy Audley upon discovering that her first husband is still alive. In inverting the gender of the domestic abuser, Moore invokes the violent heroines of mid-Victorian literature to emphasise the change Kate has undergone as a consequence of her adultery.

A similar transformation of the heroine occurs throughout Moore's three versions of 'Mildred Lawson' (*Lady's Pictorial* [1888], *Celibates* [1895] and 'Henrietta Marr', *In Single Strictness* [1922]). The short story, in its three variations, follows a central protagonist in her quest to learn the art of painting and find a vocation in life, however, the focus and construction of the heroine shifts to become more sensational by the 1922 version. In the *Lady's Pictorial* edition, Heilmann argues that 'Mildred is much more genuine and earnest in her desire for an education

and a purposeful life'.<sup>118</sup> Mildred Lawson states that she does not 'want to marry—to settle myself off—to know what my life will be for the next fifty years, till I die. [...] I should like to do some good'.<sup>119</sup> Likewise, Mildred in the 1895 revision laments the 'various possibilities that marriage would shut out to her for ever. [...] There was a nobler purpose in life than keeping house for a man. [...] She must educate herself'.<sup>120</sup> A desire for education and a life outside of marriage as depicted in both these versions has resonances with New Woman fiction. However, Mildred's reason not to marry in the 1895 version is suggested to be selfish as demonstrated by her subsequent affairs and her admission that she 'would do anything sooner than settle down with Alfred [her fiancé]'.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, in comparison to the 1888 version where Mildred's desire to work is aligned with the New Woman movement and its focus on improving the lives of women rather than helping the individual self, Mildred's quick decision to be an artist is shown to have little basis other than as a means to escape her limited life.

The final version, titled 'Henrietta Marr', is markedly different and can be seen drawing on tropes of Sensation fiction to 'alienate the reader from the protagonist'.<sup>122</sup> Inspired by Pearl Craigie, a woman with whom Moore had a turbulent relationship, Henrietta Marr, known as Etta, is selfishly fixated on gaining men's attention.<sup>123</sup> Etta relishes the power she can exert over men, claiming that 'she

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<sup>118</sup> Ann Heilmann, 'Introduction', in *Collected Short Stories of George Moore*, ed. by Heilmann and Llewellyn, vol. 1, pp. xxxiii-lxxii (p. xliii).

<sup>119</sup> George Moore, "'Mildred Lawson'", *Lady's Pictorial*, 18 February-17 March 1888', repr. in *Collected Short Stories of George Moore*, ed. by Heilmann and Llewellyn, vol. 1, pp. 265-300 (p. 269).

<sup>120</sup> George Moore, "'Mildred Lawson'", *Celibates (1895)*, repr. in *Collected Short Stories of George Moore*, ed. by Heilmann and Llewellyn, vol. 1, pp. 7-114 (pp. 8-9).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 8.

<sup>122</sup> Mark Llewellyn, 'Introduction', in *Collected Short Stories of George Moore*, ed. by Heilmann and Llewellyn, vol. 5, pp. vii-xlii (p. xxvii).

<sup>123</sup> Heilmann, 'Introduction', vol. 1, pp. xxix-xxx.

had never known a man who did not respond if she held up her little finger'.<sup>124</sup> Unlike Mildred in the two earlier versions, Etta does not lament the situation of women in marriage nor aim to have a higher purpose in life. Instead, she seeks relationships that will solely benefit her. Thus, Moore does not use sensational characteristics to expose social inequalities as I contend Sensation authors did, but to depict Etta's corrupt nature. Concerned as she is only with her appearance and powers of manipulation, Etta does not receive any narrative sympathy when she is found dead in an apparent suicide prompted by her lover's rejection. An inverted version of the progression I am arguing for, Moore's three versions of 'Mildred Lawson' nevertheless demonstrate the influence of Sensation literature on New Woman fiction as Mildred/Etta transforms from an autonomous heroine to a woman ruled by her vanity.

In *A Mummer's Wife*, the death of Kate and Dick's baby establishes the impact of Sensation fiction on Moore's novel. Pykett argues that sensational language is employed by New Woman writers to 'narrate those decisive moments in their plots of self-discovery when a female character has to battle with external, often irrational forces, such as dominant social beliefs, romantic feelings, or sexual desire'.<sup>125</sup> This is one such moment. Regardless of her duty of care to the baby, Kate drinks neat brandy for the first time as her reliance turns into a necessity. The brandy bottle is depicted as 'demonlike' observing the events unfold as the 'huddled forms in the dusky bed seemed as a vile world snoring, equally indifferent to life and to death' (*MW*, 298). Despite Dick's presence being acknowledged, no blame is ascribed to his inability to wake. Instead, all the imagery in this scene is pointed

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<sup>124</sup> George Moore, "'Henrietta Marr'", *In Single Strictness* (1922)', repr. in *Collected Short Stories of George Moore*, ed. by Heilmann and Llewellyn, vol. 5, pp. 117-65 (pp. 128-9).

<sup>125</sup> Pykett, 'Sensation and New Woman Fiction', p. 142.

towards Kate and her failure to be a good mother: ‘no smile of joy, nor tear of grief, changed the mild cruelty of the amber-coloured witch at the window: softly as a drinking snake, she drank of this young life. Thou shall be mine and mine only, she seemed to say’ (*MW*, 298). Associated with the colour of brandy, this ‘amber-coloured witch’ becomes a metaphor for Kate. Thus, Kate is depicted literally draining the life from her child suggesting that in the choice between her baby and alcohol, Kate’s selection of the latter is detrimental to the former.

However, the witch’s declaration that the baby ‘shall be mine and mine only’ also has other resonances. By this point in the novel, Kate and Dick’s relationship has already begun to break down considerably and thus this statement becomes evocative of child custody laws. Despite legal changes granting women improved access to their children, namely the 1873 Custody of Infants Act, because they are married, Dick would have had an indisputable legal right to their child. The moon, which in its ‘naked golden glory’ (*MW*, 298) is also reminiscent of the colour of brandy, is personified as a feminised force that, conjointly with the witch, is brought ‘face to face with the child’ (*MW*, 298) in its final moments. Protruding into the room, the moon, in an act evocative of vampirism, actively drains away the baby’s life: with ‘cold supernatural kisses’ (*MW*, 298) and a ‘blanching finger’ (*MW*, 297), the moon’s ‘white rays glorified the poetic agony’ (*MW*, 298) of death. Given the feminine symbolism of the moon, this imagery reiterates Kate’s culpability in the baby’s death. Her failure to overcome external forces, preferring instead to obey her bodily compulsion for alcohol, prevents her from experiencing the self-discovery of other New Woman heroines and ultimately results in her ruin.

While Kate is severely punished for her actions in neglecting their child, Dick evades narrative judgement. He removes himself from Kate’s life and the

situation by attempting to incarcerate her in a lunatic asylum and, ultimately, through a relationship with a wealthy patron. Despite the fact that Kate's immorality emerges only after Dick enters her life, no blame is placed on him for leading her astray. On the surface this lack of punishment and narrative judgement for Dick appears analogous to Thomas Hardy's treatment of his male protagonist as compared to his heroine in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). The inclusion of male-authored texts in this thesis necessitates the consideration of a gendered reading to determine the effect a male perspective had on New Woman fiction. Tess Durbeyfield is punished throughout the novel for the 'immeasurable [social] chasm' of her rape.<sup>126</sup> Despite Alec d'Urberville being the cause of her downfall, and her husband, Angel Clare, admitting that he had consensual sexual relations before their marriage, for which Tess forgives him, when she asks him to do the same, Angel states that 'forgiveness does not apply to the case. You were one person; now you are another. How can forgiveness meet such a grotesque prestidigitation as that?'<sup>127</sup> Abandoned by the man she loves, Tess is forced to live with Alec. However, despite this seeming narrative judgement on Tess, Hardy indicts society's rejection of Tess. This is signalled by the novel's subtitle, 'A Pure Woman', which destabilises the critique and implies that Tess is the innocent victim. Unlike female New Woman writers such as Caird and Grand who place the narrative blame solely on men (and to some extent the previous female generation), male New Woman writers subject their

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<sup>126</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. by Tim Dolin (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 74. Several critics including H. M. Daleski have argued that Tess' rape is 'so ambiguously presented as to invite the mutually contradictory readings' of rape or seduction. H. M. Daleski, 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Mastery and Abandon', *Essays in Criticism*, 30.4 (1980), 326-45 (p. 331). Like Margaret Higonnet, I do not consider Hardy to create any uncertainty that Tess is raped in part because 'when Tess returns home several weeks later, the narrator alludes to the serpent image in Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece", indirectly emphasising the idea of rape rather than seduction'. Margaret Higonnet, 'Sexuality and Desire in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*', *British Library*, <<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/sexuality-and-desire-in-tess-of-the-durbervilles>> [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016].

<sup>127</sup> Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, p. 228.

female protagonists to extreme punishments in order to expose society's unfair gender biases. While this makes these male-authored texts somewhat problematic, they do denounce social prejudice and the unfairness of the moral and sexual double standards by making the injustice of the treatment of women self-evident. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise that there is a certain level of objectification that male writers such as Hardy employ when detailing the plight of their female characters.

Although the focus so far has largely been on the sensational aspects of *A Mummer's Wife*, Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* also blurs the boundaries between Sensation and New Woman fiction as it adumbrates New Woman fiction in Isabel's desired relationship with Roland. Devastated by his proposal to elope, Isabel laments that their love cannot stretch beyond physical ties: 'I have read of people, who by some fatality could never marry, loving each other, and being true to others for years and years—till death, sometimes; and I fancied that you loved me like that' (*DW*, 273). Up until this moment, Isabel had believed that Roland's love for her was founded on their being soulmates. Foreshadowing the New Woman-New Man pairings that authors such as Victoria Cross (pseudonym of Annie Sophie Cory) and Grand would later come to promote, Isabel desires her relationship to have the same boundaries. Her ideal of love as having 'no existence out of bright ideal regions wherein shame could never enter' (*DW*, 274) disrupts my earlier definition of Sensation fiction. It implies that *The Doctor's Wife* has a central purpose in presenting a relationship based on spiritual companionship to be desirable and fulfilling for a woman, even if it does eventually fail. Although love in Sensation literature is typically of the bodily variety, Braddon disrupts this to demonstrate her heroine actively rejecting physical desire because she wants, like the New Woman,

the benefits of a connection founded on intellectual and spiritual similarity. However, ultimately, she cannot find a New Man who shares her ideals.

Additionally, *The Doctor's Wife* looks forward to New Woman literature (and Dorothea Brooke's plans in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* [1871]) in its ending. Gifted a fortune in Roland's will, Isabel uses the money to erect 'pretty Elizabethan cottages, with peaked gables and dormer windows' (*DW*, 403) and a schoolhouse for the agricultural workers. Isabel's decision to benefit the wider community anticipates New Woman rhetoric which emphasised the benefits of public engagement. Anticipating Grand's *Ideala* (1888), in which the heroine realises that the 'only way [women can] gain their end is by working for everybody else, with intent to make the whole world better', Isabel is transformed from a woman seeking individual satisfaction to one who finds pleasure working to improve society.<sup>128</sup> The ending of *The Doctor's Wife* challenges my definition of Sensation fiction by having a purposeful final message showing young women the advantages of working to benefit others.

Conversely, the ending of *A Mummer's Wife* is markedly different from the outcome of other New Woman novels. In contrast to *Ideala*, Kate fails to understand that liberation can only occur if women join together to campaign for social freedom. Instead, swept into the narrative margins, Kate suffers the same fate as the majority of troublesome Sensation heroines as she is left to die 'out of sight out of mind' (*MW*, 390). Indeed, Kate's isolated death is more in line with Lucy Audley's banishment to a lunatic asylum in Belgium than the New Woman campaign for women's rights. The ending of *A Mummer's Wife* offers no purposeful message for women's emancipation nor is any narrative understanding regarding Kate's

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<sup>128</sup> Grand, *Ideala*, p. 184.

behaviour provided. Instead she is punished for actions that men have driven her to. By emphasising that the consequences of adultery and divorce rebound only on women, Moore contradicts other New Woman fiction by seemingly warning women not to escape unfulfilling marriages. This message is further emphasised when Kate meets Ralph, her former husband, on a London street just prior to her death and the regrets both of them harbour over their failed relationship are made palpable.

In tracing a direct relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction through *The Doctor's Wife* and *A Mummer's Wife*, a connection between the genres can begin to be formed. Braddon and Moore's novels combine elements of Sensation and New Woman fiction to blur the distinctions between these two literary modes as well as confuse the definitions (novel-revealing-a-secret, novel-with-a-purpose) I established earlier. In *A Mummer's Wife*, Moore is not writing with the intent to change, as my definition of New Woman literature suggests, but to reveal the reality of women's social rebellion by exposing the false sentiment of other novels. Conversely, Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* can be seen to anticipate New Woman literature. Unlike the majority of Sensation fiction, Braddon's novel provides an insight into the heroine's actions and thus early indications of New Woman ideals are visible, if not fully developed, especially in relation to the type of relationship Isabel strives for. This direct connection between Sensation and New Woman fiction emphasises the argument at the centre of my thesis by showing New Woman writers drawing on aspects of Sensation literature and Sensation fiction foreshadowing themes later developed in New Woman fiction.

## Chapter Outlines

To conceptualise and explore the connection between Sensation and New Woman fiction, I will examine five specific topics in the subsequent chapters.

The first chapter, ‘Historical Background: Political and Social Context’, situates the two genres in relation to contemporary discussions surrounding topical issues such as women’s right to higher education and married women’s legal position in order to examine the various socio-political influences on Sensation and New Woman fiction.

Chapter Two, ‘Deceptive Femininities: Manipulating Gender and Genre’, focuses on the female heroines of Sensation and New Woman fiction to argue that both genres challenge prevailing Victorian attitudes to femininity. This chapter begins by blurring the boundaries between Sensation and New Woman literature by investigating Sensation fiction’s tendency to disguise the agents of domestic and marital upheaval as the erstwhile Angel of the House alongside Sarah Grand’s message regarding the power of femininity. The latter half of the chapter then uses Florence Wilford’s *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (1868) and Mona Caird’s *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) to examine the role of the heroine in disrupting literary expectations of Sensation and New Woman fiction.

The third chapter, ‘A Perfect Match? The Emergence of the New Man’, turns its attention to the male protagonists of Sensation and New Woman literature. The figure of the New Man has typically been connected to New Woman fiction, but in this chapter I seek to challenge this assumption by exposing the New Man’s prior emergence in Sensation fiction. To do this, the hyper-masculine heroes of George Alfred Lawrence’s *Guy Livingstone; or, ‘Thorough’* (1857) and Ouida’s *Under Two*

*Flags* (1867) are used to explore Sensation fiction's representation of the homoerotic hero, a figure and 'problem' more typically associated with the *fin de siècle*. This leads to a consideration of a *fin-de-siècle* example: Diavolo Hamilton-Wells from Sarah Grand's New Woman novel, *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), is, I argue, a New Man indicative of Sensation fiction's construction of ideal masculinity.

Chapter Four, 'Spectral Rebellions: Gothic Adaptation in Sensation and New Woman Literature', transfers its focus from the protagonists of Sensation and New Woman fiction to the specifically Gothic literature written by the authors of Sensation and New Woman fiction. While the previous two chapters concentrate on the genres' female and male characters, this chapter picks up on the importance that both Sensation and New Woman literature accord to exposing social injustices to trace shared themes and concerns common in Sensation and New Woman Gothic. After contextualising the sub-genres, 'Sensation Gothic' and 'New Woman Gothic', the chapter explores both genres' use of the Gothic to represent and address contemporary legal debates. I analyse Edith Nesbit's depiction of syphilis and middle-class husband's ownership of their wives bodies in her New Woman Gothic short story, 'The Shadow' (1905), before examining Charlotte Riddell's use of the haunted house in her short story collection *Weird Stories* (1882) to comment on married women's property rights.

Before drawing together the central argument of this thesis, the Conclusion studies the endings of Sensation and New Woman fiction to argue that they are more subversive than has previously been acknowledged. Attention is also paid to several novels from both genres which provide the heroine with a happy ending.

## Chapter One

### Historical Background: Political and Social Context

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The story here offered to the reader differs in one respect from the stories which have preceded it by the same hand. This time the fiction is founded on facts, and aspires to afford what help it may towards hastening the reform of certain abuses which have been too long suffered to exist among us unchecked.

Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (1870)<sup>1</sup>

The Woman Question is the Marriage Question.

Sarah Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'  
(1894)<sup>2</sup>

The nineteenth century was a period of great social and political change, particularly in relation to women. Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), published at the end of the preceding century, had raised the woman question to public consciousness by initiating a discussion of women's fundamental rights. In particular, Wollstonecraft argued that women should receive the same opportunities for education as men:

if marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfil the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men [...]. Nay, marriage will never be held sacred till women, by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions rather than their mistresses; for the mean doublings of cunning will ever render them contemptible, whilst oppression renders them timid.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife*, ed. by Norman Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', *North American Review*, 158.448 (1894), 270-6 (p. 276).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Carol H. Poston (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), p. 165.

Influenced by Wollstonecraft, Victorian feminists including Harriet Martineau, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, John Stuart Mill, Frances Power Cobbe, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner, to name just a few, took up and advanced the woman question.<sup>4</sup> However, the debate surrounding women's nature and societal role diversified in its scope so significantly throughout the Victorian era that Nicola Diane Thompson declares that it would be 'more appropriate to pluralize the term "woman question," changing it to "woman questions"'.<sup>5</sup>

As signified by the second epigraph, the Victorian woman question centred on issues relating to marriage. Mill proclaimed in 1832 that the 'truth is, that this question of marriage cannot properly be considered by itself alone. The question is not what marriage ought to be, but a far wider question, what woman ought to be'.<sup>6</sup> By the 1860s, the decade of Sensation fiction, the women's movement was concerned with (middle-class) women's rights in marriage (as well as related issues including women's right to higher education and their need for economic independence through professional employment and suffrage. Lydia Becker founded the first lasting suffragist organisation in 1866 and, along with Jessie Boucherett, established the *Women's Suffrage Journal* in 1870).<sup>7</sup> Even Eliza Lynn Linton, famously not a supporter of the women's rights movement, stated that the 'revolt of

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<sup>4</sup> Martineau urged the importance of education for upper-class women; Tonna explored the woman question in her novel *The Wrongs of Woman* (1845); Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) put forward the case for social and legal equality between men and women; Cobbe and Garrett Fawcett were involved in various campaigns for women's rights; Caird's essay 'Marriage' (1888) vehemently criticised marriage as a patriarchal institution akin to prostitution and slavery; and Schreiner argued for women's emancipation in *Woman and Labour* (1911). This list is of course not exhaustive and there are many more women and men who were instrumental in advancing the woman question throughout the nineteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> Nicola Diane Thompson, 'Responding to the Woman Questions: Rereading Noncanonical Victorian Women Novelists', in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-23 (p. 3).

<sup>6</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'The Essay', cited in John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *Essays on Sex Equality*, ed. by Alice S. Rossi (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Linda Walker, 'Lydia Ernestine Becker (1827-1890)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1899?rskey=YpdbS8&result=1>> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

women against the undue power of their husbands, against the virtual slavery of marriage, [...is] not [...] without cause. Not that they revolted, but that they have borne so long, is the wonder'.<sup>8</sup> With its focus on unconventional female protagonists who prompt anxieties about shifting gender roles, Sensation fiction reflects these contemporary concerns by examining the relationship between marriage and women's identity.

At the end of the century and with the emergence of the New Woman, the woman question became synonymous with the concern about women's oppression in marriage. This is seen most clearly in the 27,000 responses to Caird's article 'Marriage' (1888) in which she argues that marriage celebrates women's 'subjection to man'.<sup>9</sup> Exemplifying many of the other letters written in answer to the *Daily Telegraph's* question, 'Is Marriage a Failure?', one anonymous respondent appeals for the public to

think of a sensitive, refined, or even a decent woman subjected to the horror of such a matrimonial tie [with a drunkard]; and, if only a hundredth part of her tortures were realised, I think that most sensible people would reluctantly own that divorce would be better for the woman'.<sup>10</sup>

This letter evokes the strategy of New Woman fiction and its representation of marriage as a form of legalised slavery.

Thompson argues that 'given the prominence of discourse and discord on the women question in Victorian England', it is unsurprising that 'Victorian women novelists were centrally concerned with the developing debates over women's proper

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<sup>8</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, "'The Modern Revolt'", *Macmillan's Magazine* (December 1870), pp. 142-9', repr. in *Victorian and Edwardian Anti-Feminism*, ed. by Lucy Delap and Valerie Sanders (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), vol. 2, pp. 130-7 (p. 135).

<sup>9</sup> Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review*, 130.1 (1888), 186-201 (p. 193).

<sup>10</sup> *Is Marriage a Failure?*, ed. by Harry Quilter (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1888), p. 26.

role and status in society'.<sup>11</sup> New Woman literature is intrinsically tied to the woman question not least because of Grand's formative article, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' (1894) and fictional plots which deal frankly with marital abuse, sexual morality and women's desire for fulfilment outside the home. Lyn Pykett states that the New Woman genre is

directly linked to contemporary controversies surrounding the Woman Question, and to the various discourses within which they were produced and mediated. Many of the New Woman novelists were also prominent contributors to the debates on 'woman' in the newspaper and periodical press, and the New Woman fiction was sometimes reviewed alongside sociological and other polemical works, as if it were part of a seamless discourse of the Woman Question.<sup>12</sup>

However, in comparison, Sensation literature and its authors are rarely associated with the woman question and the campaign for women's rights.

While the exposure of gender-based inequalities in New Woman fiction is connected with the genre's socio-political rhetoric, Sensation fiction's engagement with the law has largely been disregarded. For example, Patrick Brantlinger contends that, 'rather than striking forthright blows in favour of divorce law reform [the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857] and greater sexual freedom, sensation novels usually merely exploit public interest in these issues'.<sup>13</sup> However, Pykett contests Brantlinger's claim by arguing that like New Woman fiction, Sensation literature is 'produced by [...] the changing debate on the Woman Question'.<sup>14</sup> The period in which Sensation fiction first emerged to wide-spread public consciousness saw women's rights become a concern at the forefront of public discussion and

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<sup>11</sup> Thompson, 'Responding to the Woman Questions', p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, 'What Is "Sensational" about the "Sensation Novel"?', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37.1 (1982), 1-28 (p. 6).

<sup>14</sup> Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p. 6.

consequently it is justifiable to assume that Sensation novelists were aware of these campaigns and commented on them in their literature.

This is illustrated by canonical Sensation authors such as Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade who are known to have used their fiction to expose the injustices of the law (as demonstrated by the first epigraph). Both were lawyers (although neither ever practised) and their knowledge of the legal world is evident throughout their writing. Declaring that he was ‘inspired by a moral purpose’, Reade used his novels to call for legal reform: the Sensation novel *Hard Cash* (1863) publicises the injustices of the lunacy laws that only required two medical signatures for a person to be incarcerated, while *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856) advocates prison reform.<sup>15</sup> A similar concern with the law and issues relating to the woman question can be found within Collins’ novels where he examines lunacy asylum admittance (*The Woman in White* [1859]), inheritance and bastardy laws (*No Name* [1862]), marital laws (*Man and Wife* [1870]), the ‘not proven’ verdict available in Scotland (*The Law and the Lady* [1875]) and vivisection (*Heart and Science* [1883]). Moreover, the majority of Collins’ novels feature a reputable and reliable lawyer figure. Dougald Maceachen argues that Collins put his ‘attacks on the law in the mouth of a lawyer in order to give them more authority and impressiveness’.<sup>16</sup> This is apparent in *No Name* where Mr Pendril, the family lawyer, verbalises the novel’s central theme by criticising inheritance and bastardy laws: ‘I am far from defending the law of England, as it affects illegitimate offspring. On the contrary, I think it a

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<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Elwin, *Charles Reade: A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931), cited in David Finkelstein, *House of Blackwood: Author-Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> Dougald B. Maceachen, ‘Wilkie Collins and British Law’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 5.2 (1950), 121-39 (p. 122).

disgrace to the nation. It visits the sins of the parents on the children'.<sup>17</sup> Born several years before their parents are married, Norah and Magdalen Vanstone are left penniless by their parents' sudden deaths because the law considers them to be illegitimate.<sup>18</sup>

Reade and Collins may have drawn on extreme cases of legal injustice to engage their readership, but in doing so they were foreshadowing the purpose of New Woman literature by making their readers aware of various legal prejudices that might have escaped attention if not incorporated into popular fiction. As my definition of Sensation fiction emphasises, the revelation of a secret is an essential aspect of the genre and thus this secret could, through an engagement with the home, expose a larger and often legally enshrined inequality in society. In understanding that both Sensation and New Woman fiction are influenced by (and influence) the woman question, discerning the main issues surrounding the women's rights campaign becomes crucial to comprehending the relationship the two genres had to the real world. This chapter will first analyse changing attitudes towards women's education and employment before turning its attention to examine four significant legal changes, the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, the Married Women's Property Acts, the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, that occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These four laws and their surrounding campaigns are especially significant because, as will be shown throughout the course of this chapter, they influenced the themes and subject matter included within Sensation and New Woman fiction.

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<sup>17</sup> Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. by Mark Ford (London: Penguin Group, 1994), p. 110.

<sup>18</sup> It was not until 1926 that Parliament altered the law affecting the legal status and inheritance rights of illegitimate children.

## Education

Victorian gender hierarchy was largely based on the concept of separate spheres which confined women to the domestic world.<sup>19</sup> This ideology was founded on the belief that men and women were fundamentally different. As John Ruskin pronounced in ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ (1864),

the man’s power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy is for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman’s power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision.<sup>20</sup>

A middle-class woman’s traditional outlook was to marry and have children (although the care of these was often left to someone else) and thus, as Thomas Markby writing in the *Contemporary Review* remarked in 1866, the ‘true end of the education of women is making good wives and mothers’.<sup>21</sup> Viewed in terms of their relationship with men (as daughters, wives or mothers), middle-class women, as Deborah Gorham notes, were consequently ‘not educated in a way that would prepare them for the world of gainful employment’.<sup>22</sup> The limited education a middle-class woman did receive equipped her to be little more than a governess, seamstress or lady’s companion. All three positions were subsequently in short supply, as well as poorly paid and unappealing.

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<sup>19</sup> In *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill contests the basis of separate spheres as ‘one of the chief hindrances to human improvement’ because it was enforced simply to permit men ultimate control. He argues that ‘what is now called the nature of woman is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others’. John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, ed. by Susan M. Okin (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1873), p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Markby, ‘The Education of Women’, *Contemporary Review*, 1 (1866), 396-414 (p. 408).

<sup>22</sup> Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 24.

In response to the growing number of women turning to teaching as a profession, Queens College (1848) and Bedford College (1849) were founded to provide training to young girls in order to ‘exclude unqualified teachers from the profession; and gradually to raise the general tone of female education’.<sup>23</sup> However, the colleges soon moved away from an emphasis on teacher training to a broader focus on providing a liberal education to women. Laura Morgan Green argues that in doing so these institutions ‘created a self-perpetuating constituency for the reform of women’s education’ and thus were the first step in the campaign for women’s higher education.<sup>24</sup>

By the middle of the century, the growing visibility of unmarried middle-class women, so-called ‘odd’ or ‘redundant’ women, established the need for an improvement to women’s economic and social condition. In her pamphlet *The Education and Employment of Women* (1868), Josephine Butler uses the 1861 census to demonstrate that the rise in the number of single middle-class women affirms the demand for their higher education.<sup>25</sup> This was an argument Butler returned to a year later when she edited *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (1869) which brought together the essays of prominent men and women such as Reverend George Butler (Josephine Butler’s husband), Frances Power Cobbe and Sophia Jex-Blake on the subject. In the introduction to the book, Butler contends that the ‘demand for industrial freedom and for higher education is based on a necessity. The education which most women need is one which will fit them for business in professions or in

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<sup>23</sup> Governesses’ Benevolent Institution, *Report of the Committee of Management* (London, 1845), cited in Christina de Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Laura Morgan Green, *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Josephine Butler, *The Education and Employment of Women* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1868), pp. 3-4.

industries'.<sup>26</sup> This was an argument echoed throughout the century by supporters of women's access to higher education.

The campaign for women's higher education had its root in Langham Place, a feminist activist network, and the women associated with it, in particular Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Emily Davies. They contested the 'doctrine that "married life is a woman's profession"' and instead positioned education as central to the emancipation of women.<sup>27</sup> Davies, perhaps the most significant figure in the campaign for women's higher education, fought for women to be included in the Schools' Enquiry Commission, the first step in securing women's place at university, and published *The Higher Education of Women* (1866) in which she laid out the argument for women's entry into higher education. She also supported Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in her attempt to gain a medical degree. Another woman central to the campaign was Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. After meeting Davies in 1862, Wolstenholme Elmy founded the Manchester Schoolmistress Association in 1865 and the North of England Council for Promoting the Education of Women in 1867 for which Butler acted as president until 1871.

Run from the offices of Langham Place, women's access to higher education was also promoted by the *English Woman's Journal* which appeared from March 1858 to August 1864 and was published in monthly instalments.<sup>28</sup> Founded by Smith Bodichon and Parkes, the *English Woman's Journal* strove to improve the position and condition of women in society. Contributors included Adelaide Anne Proctor,

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<sup>26</sup> Josephine Butler, 'Introduction', in *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture: A Series of Essays*, ed. by Josephine Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. vii-lxiv (p. xli).

<sup>27</sup> Bessie Rayner Parkes, 'Statistics as to the Employment of the Female Population of Great Britain', repr. in *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, ed. by Candida Ann Lacey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 174-9 (p. 177).

<sup>28</sup> After running into financial difficulties, the *English Woman's Journal* was succeeded by the *Englishwoman's Review* which was published until 1910.

Jessie Boucherett (Proctor and Boucherett were instrumental in establishing the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women), Davies and Emily Faithful (who founded the Victoria Press) and articles often addressed contemporary political or social issues including the Married Women's Property Campaign, female suffrage and women's education. In fact, during its six-year existence, around forty articles relating to women's education were published in the magazine. These included Boucherett's 'On the Education of Girls with Reference to their Future Position' (1860) which argues that 'there is no doubt that a good education is an excellent preparation for the journey of life, and that it enables those who possess it to avoid dangers and to surmount difficulties which are not unlikely to prove fatal to those who start unprovided with this support'.<sup>29</sup> The first major change to women's higher education came in 1863 when, as a result of the campaigning of Smith Bodichon and Davies, women were granted admission to the Cambridge University Local Examination. This subsequently led to the foundation of Girton College (referred to as Hitchin College until 1873 when it was renamed) in 1869 and Newnham College in 1871. However, although women could now sit university examinations, they were not eligible to obtain a degree. This eventually changed in 1878 when the University of London admitted women to two of its colleges with the first women being awarded a BA in 1880.<sup>30</sup> It was not until 1920 that Oxford and 1948 that Cambridge followed suit.

Despite its proximity to these changes in middle-class women's education prospects, Sensation fiction rarely includes heroines who possess higher education (however, it is clear that the female protagonists have natural intelligence to carry

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<sup>29</sup> Jessie Boucherett, 'On the Education of Girls with Reference to their Future Position', repr. in *Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, ed. by Lacey, pp. 241-9 (p. 242).

<sup>30</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, 'Introduction', in *The University of London and the World of Learning, 1836-1986*, ed. by F. M. L. Thompson (London: Hambleton Press, 1990), pp. ix-xxiii (p. xviii).

out their schemes). Instead the focus is on women frustrated by their lack of opportunities other than marriage. An example of this is Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864) in which an insufficient education is blamed for the heroine's behaviour and romantic fantasies. Ann Heilmann states that 'Braddon contributed to the contemporary debate about women's education [by] suggesting that only when adequate attention was paid to their mental and psychological development could women become useful members of society'.<sup>31</sup> However, I contend that by emphasising Isabel Sleaford's limited prospects, Braddon places more significance on the shortage of opportunities available to uneducated women:

if she was not George Gilbert's wife, she would be nothing—a nursery-governess for ever and ever, teaching stupid orphans, and earning five-and-twenty pounds a year. When she thought of her desolate position, [...] she clung to George Gilbert, and was grateful to him, and fancied that she loved him. (*DW*, 103)

Braddon presents Isabel being driven into her unhappy marriage as a direct consequence of the inadequate education and lack of professional opportunities available to middle-class women.

In comparison to Sensation fiction, the majority of female protagonists in New Woman literature are educated and well-read (even if this is achieved through independent study) and those who are not are shown to be easily manipulated and led astray by men. This is evident in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) where Evadne Frayling's self-taught education as conducted by reading widely from her father's library can be seen to provide her with the knowledge and power to understand the risk of contracting venereal disease from her immoral husband. This is in sharp

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<sup>31</sup> Ann Heilmann, 'Emma Bovary's Sisters: Infectious Desire and Female Reading Appetites in Mary Braddon and George Moore', *Victorian Review*, 29.1 (2003), 31-48 (p. 35).

contrast to Edith Beale whose infection with venereal disease by her dissolute husband is suggested to be the result of a conventional education which serves to reinforce middle-class gender ideals and uphold notions of female innocence. New Woman fiction also regularly features heroines who have studied at Girton and Newnham: Eliza Lynn Linton's *One Too Many* (1894), Grant Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897) and H. G. Wells' *Ann Veronica* (1909) (Ann Veronica studied science at the University of London).

Admitting women to university meant changing the social perception of their intended role as wives and mothers and thus, unsurprisingly, opposition continued throughout the century. Arabella Kenealy, despite herself practising medicine for six years, stated that education harmed the basis of what it meant to be 'woman': 'so keenly self-centred the majority of women have become, so bent upon their hobbies and careers, as to have lost nearly all of that sympathetic adaptiveness natural to woman, which enables her to forget—and to forget with pleasure—her own in her personality and interests of others'.<sup>32</sup> Yet earlier in the century, Butler had dismissed this argument and instead claimed that

when a better education is secured to women [...] we may expect to find [...] that they will become the *more* and not the *less* womanly. Every good quality, every virtue which we regard as distinctly feminine, will, under conditions of greater freedom, develop more freely. [...] It will always be in her nature to foster, to cherish, to take the part of the weak, to train, to guide, to have a care for individuals[.]<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to Kenealy, Butler implies that educating women will enable them to better fulfil their maternal role. However, opposition on the basis that middle-class women's access to higher education threatened Victorian concepts of femininity and

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<sup>32</sup> Arabella Kenealy, *Feminism and Sex-Extinction* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920), p. 190.

<sup>33</sup> Butler, *The Education and Employment of Women*, p. 18. Emphasis in the original.

women's intended role intensified as women's presence in universities became increasingly visible.

Several physicians even professed that women were biologically unsuited to education. In 'Sex in Mind and in Education' (1874), Henry Maudsley contends that it is 'quite evident that many of those who are foremost in their zeal for raising the education and social status of women, have not given proper consideration to the nature of her organisation, and to the demands which its social functions make upon its strength'.<sup>34</sup> He further argues that 'women are marked out by nature for very different offices in life from those of men, and that the healthy performance of her special functions renders it improbable she will succeed, and unwise for her to persevere'.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this fear, Linton encouraged 'voluntary celibacy for those who overtax their vital energies by an intellectual strain' in order to prevent injury to their children.<sup>36</sup>

In an attempt to counteract these contemporary arguments, New Woman literature depicts its heroines gaining an education, employment and/or publically engaging with social problems without the consequences Maudsley and others put forward. In fact, Grand attributes Evadne's failure to recover from depression to her lack of engagement in the social reform movement. *The Heavenly Twins* can consequently be viewed as a literary equivalent to the real-life women doctors who countered Maudsley's claims. In her response to his article, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman in Britain to obtain a licence to practise medicine, argues it is a 'great exaggeration to imply that women of average health are periodically

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, 15.88 (1874), 466-83 (p. 466).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 468.

<sup>36</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, "'The Higher Education of Women'", *Fortnightly Review* (October 1886), pp. 498-510', repr. in *Victorian and Edwardian Anti-Feminism*, ed. by Sanders and Delap, vol. 1, pp. 40-52 (p. 52).

incapacitated from serious work by the facts of their organization' and that, as Grand illustrates, 'practically the risk of injury from undue or exceptional physical fatigue at an inopportune moment is much greater'.<sup>37</sup> Although the campaign to secure middle-class women access to higher education institutions had been largely successful, the next step was to win them the right to utilise this education in professional employment. After all, without employment middle-class women without a husband, father or brother in a position to help them out financially, had little ability to support themselves.

## Employment

While working-class women had long been accepted as members of the work force, middle-class women's employment was viewed as more problematic. Concern regarding the impact female employment would have on middle-class society centred on the independence a wage would give women as economic liberation removed their need to marry. Ella Hepworth Dixon in 'Why Women Are Ceasing to

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "'Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply'", *Fortnightly Review*, 15 (1874), repr. in *Gender and Science: Late Nineteenth-Century Debates on the Female Mind and Body*, ed. by Katharina Rowold (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), pp. 54-68 (p. 58); *Ibid.*, p. 59. Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in Britain to have her name entered on the General Medical Council's medical register (1<sup>st</sup> January 1858) when she exploited a clause in the Medical Act of 1858 that allowed doctors with foreign degrees to be recognised. Blackwell gained her degree from Geneva Medical College, New York in January 1849, thus also becoming the first woman to be awarded a medical degree in the United States. It was soon after her recognition by the General Medical Council that Blackwell became a mentor to Garrett Anderson. Also exploiting a loophole, Garrett Anderson obtained a licence from the Society of Apothecaries to practise medicine in 1865. However, due to the stigma attached to female doctors, she was obliged to go to France and the University of Sorbonne in order to gain a medical degree. In 1873 she became a member of the British Medical Association, the only female member for nineteen years. It could be argued James Barry was the first woman to practice medicine as he qualified in 1812—Barry was assigned the female gender at birth but lived as a man and it was not until after his death that his sex was discovered. Edith Shove became the first woman to gain a medical degree from a British university when she graduated with an MB in 1882 from the University of London. Catriona Blake, *The Charge of the Parasols: Women's Entry to the Medical Profession* (London: The Women's Press, 1990). For more information about women's entry into the medical profession and the surrounding public discussion see Katharina Rowold, *Gender and Science: Late Nineteenth-Century Debates on the Female Mind and Body*, ed. by Katharina Rowold (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996).

Marry' (1899) notes that a 'capable woman who has begun a career and feels certain of advancement in it, is often as shy of entangling herself matrimonially as ambitious young men have ever shown themselves under like circumstances'.<sup>38</sup> However, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon argues that women want work, not to avoid marriage, but for the 'health of their minds and their bodies. They want it often because they must eat and because they have children and others dependent on them'.<sup>39</sup> Equating women's desire for employment with men's reasons to work, Smith Bodichon also contests claims that women's entry into the professional sphere would result in unsexing them by reinforcing their maternal role.<sup>40</sup>

The campaign for middle-class women's employment involved many of the same people fighting for women's access to higher education institutions. Inspired by Harriet Martineau's article 'Female Industry' (1859), Boucherett (along with Smith Bodichon and Procter) founded the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW) in 1859. This group sought to encourage women to gain economic independence through employment. However, given the social stigma attached to middle-class female employment, the Society also strove to 'correct this impression, to show that it was a matter of necessity that nearly half of the women in the United Kingdom should maintain themselves, and that women properly trained may become useful members of the body politic'.<sup>41</sup> Faithful, a member of SPEW, went on to establish the Victoria Press in 1860. Exclusively employing women compositors, it

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<sup>38</sup> Ella Hepworth Dixon, 'Why Women Are Ceasing to Marry', *Humanitarian*, 14 (1899), 391-6 (p. 394).

<sup>39</sup> Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, 'Women at Work', repr. in *Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, ed. by Lacey, pp. 36-73 (p. 63).

<sup>40</sup> Emily Davies similarly argues that it is 'certainly not easy to see why it should be unfeminine for a girl to sit in her father's office, under his immediate eye (and protection, if needed) gradually acquiring some experience'. Emily Davies, *Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women, 1860-1908* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1910), cited in Candida Ann Lacey, 'Introduction', in *Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, ed. by Lacey, pp. 1-16 (p. 12).

<sup>41</sup> 'The Twentieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Society for the Employment of Women', *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, 10.75 (1879), pp. 289-97 (p. 291).

printed the *English Woman's Journal* and the *Victoria* magazine, which Faithful herself founded, as well as a range of other titles by prominent feminist campaigners.<sup>42</sup> Another important element in the movement for female employment was the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society. Set up by Maria Rye in 1862, it promoted and assisted in the emigration of educated women to countries such as Canada and New Zealand.<sup>43</sup> As Marion Diamond notes, the 'creation of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society was both a radical and a conservative solution to the perceived problem of redundant women in British society'.<sup>44</sup> While it reinforced class divisions, the Society also emphasised the 'independent aspirations of middle class women' and was 'radical in stressing work rather than marriage as the aim of such emigration'.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the wealth of public debate causes such as these generated, Sensation fiction, paralleling its response to higher education, rarely includes female protagonists who enter the professional sphere. However, as a profession Sensation fiction was itself dominated by female authors who recognised that writing promised employment and financial independence. Indeed, the 1860s was the first time a large proportion of women created a career from writing fiction. In part this was a result of the sheer amount of literature they published: Florence Marryat produced at least one book every year from 1865 until 1899, while Ellen Wood published thirty-eight works during the twenty years from 1860 to 1880. Yet Sensation writers also recognised the opportunity notoriety gave them. As well as exploiting the public's desire for scandalous plots, they became businesswomen who promoted their work

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<sup>42</sup> Lacey, 'Introduction', pp. 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> For more information see Marion Diamond, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

and the genre through different means. For example, Wood (*Argosy*, ed. 1867-1887) and Braddon (*Belgravia*, ed. 1867-1876) edited their own highly successful journals allowing them to construct and influence the dialogue surrounding Sensation fiction by publishing articles responding to negative commentary. Both *Belgravia* and *Argosy* were intended to distil the notion of Sensation fiction as light literature by printing supporting discussions in reputable publications.<sup>46</sup> Although employment, other than as a governess, is rarely represented in Sensation fiction, the authors were pioneers for women in the publishing world.

This is also true for the writers of New Woman fiction who similarly exploited both fiction and non-fiction to campaign for an improvement in women's rights. However, in comparison to Sensation fiction, in New Woman literature female protagonists are frequently portrayed moving outside the home and gaining fulfilling careers. Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl* is one such example, following the heroine, Juliet Appleton, in her employment as a secretary at a publishing firm. Her time there is gratifying and she is presented using her intelligence in ways not previously open to her. Importantly, this marks her out as a New Woman. Professional employment offers Juliet, like many other New Woman heroines, a chance to escape the claustrophobic atmosphere of the middle-class Victorian home and grants her financial independence from men. Interestingly, this is the opportunity writing gave many Sensation authors earlier in the century.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For examples of these discussions see Jennifer Phegley, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), pp. 110-52.

<sup>47</sup> Florence Wilford and Rhoda Broughton defied social convention by not marrying but were able to support themselves by writing, Florence Marryat left her husband and Mary Elizabeth Braddon financially supported her husband, John Maxwell, and their eleven children (five of these children were from Maxwell's first marriage).

In part the difference between Sensation and New Woman fictions' depiction of the heroines' occupation originates from the increasing number of women entering the professional sphere towards the end of the nineteenth century. Compared to the 1851 census which had recorded 56.5 percent of women between fifteen and twenty-four in employment, by 1911, this figure had risen to 65.3 percent.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the fight for middle-class women's right to access higher education and ability to gain professional employment did not occur in isolation. Indeed, as Mary Lyndon Shanley notes, the campaign to improve women's social status was 'part of a multifaceted movement for women's emancipation' that occurred alongside and in conjunction with campaigns to reform women's legal status.<sup>49</sup>

### **Matrimonial Causes Act 1857**

One law to be instrumental in changing the lives of women during the 1860s was the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act.<sup>50</sup> Prior to 1857 divorce could only be granted by a private act of Parliament and thus was an option available exclusively to the very wealthy and used largely by men.<sup>51</sup> In order to obtain a divorce, the husband was required to first sue his wife's alleged lover for 'criminal conversation'. As Elizabeth Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder note, this assumed that the

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<sup>48</sup> Ellen Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1989), p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> Another law to impact upon the lives of women during the mid-nineteenth century was the Custody of Infants Act; however, this law has less relevance to my thesis and so will not be discussed at length. The 1839 Custody of Infants Act reverted the automatic custody of children granted to a father in a separation and allowed a mother to petition the courts for custody of children under the age of seven and for access to children over the age of seven. This law was revised over the remainder of the nineteenth century (The Custody Act of 1873 and The Custody of Infants Act 1886) to extend a woman's right to her children and permit her some control in how they were brought up.

<sup>51</sup> Only four women were granted a parliamentary divorce prior to 1804. Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, p. 36.

wife was a ‘chattel, the value of which had been damaged by the defendant’.<sup>52</sup> If successful, the husband would recover ‘damages’, typically a monetary reward, and then be eligible to apply for a parliamentary divorce.

One of the most public divorce proceedings to occur involved Caroline Norton, whose husband, George Norton, attempted to sue the Whig Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, in 1836. However, the jury quickly dismissed the case and thus the Nortons were unable to divorce. Infuriated by her inability to testify and the damage done to her reputation, Caroline Norton published a series of pamphlets throughout the 1850s exposing the legal injustices facing women separated from their husbands. In *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth’s Marriage and Divorce Bill* (1855), she vehemently condemned the inferior status of women in English law:

if an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce *her* so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband *a vinculo*, however profligate he may be. [...] Her being, on the other hand, of spotless character, and without reproach, gives her no advantage in law. She may have withdrawn from his roof knowing that he lives with ‘his faithful housekeeper’: having suffered personal violence at his hands; having ‘condoned’ much, and being able to prove it by unimpeachable testimony: or he may have shut the doors of her house against her: all this is quite immaterial: the law takes no cognisance of which is to blame. As *her husband*, he has a right to all that is hers: as *his wife*, she has no right to anything that is his. As her husband, he may divorce her (if truth or false swearing can do it): as his wife, the utmost ‘divorce’ she could obtain, is permission to reside alone,—married to his name.<sup>53</sup>

Norton also attacked the sexual double standards of a proposed bill to address the law’s inequality: ‘either let men renounce the privilege of divorce, and the assertion

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<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*, 3 vols (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), vol. 2, p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Caroline Norton, *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth’s Marriage and Divorce Bill*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855), pp. 11-13. Emphasis in the original.

that marriage is a dissoluble contract,—or allow the weaker party that refuge from intolerable wrong, which they claim as a matter of necessity for themselves'.<sup>54</sup> Mary Poovey argues that in publicly revealing the failings of the existing law, Norton, much like Sensation fiction, 'collapses the boundary between the private sphere, where injustice goes unchecked, and the public domain, where laws are made and enforced by men'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Norton's pamphlets were so influential that they were used by members of Parliament as evidence of the need to change the legal status of married women.<sup>56</sup>

After several years of heated parliamentary debate, the Matrimonial Causes Act, often referred to as the Divorce Act, was eventually passed in 1857. It created a new civil court called the Court of Divorce and Matrimonial Causes to regulate divorce and, in theory at least, make divorce accessible for both men and women. However, the bill upheld the sexual double standard of the nineteenth century. While men could divorce on the grounds of their wife's adultery, women had to prove their husband's adultery and an additional offence of incest, unjustified desertion of two years, cruelty (however, if she had returned to her husband this option was considered void), bestiality or bigamy.<sup>57</sup> Although it is indisputable that the law favoured men, it did offer the possibility of divorce to middle-class (and, to a narrow extent, working-class) women. Compared to four successful petitions made by women before 1804, between 1858 and 1868, women brought forty percent of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 65.

<sup>56</sup> Lord Lyndhurst read passages of *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill* during the debates on the Matrimonial Causes Act and proposed amendments to the current bill based on Norton's case. Helsinger, Lauterbach Sheets and Veeder, *The Woman Question*, vol. 2, pp. 16-17.

<sup>57</sup> It was not until the 1923 Matrimonial Causes Act that women were able to obtain a divorce on the grounds of adultery alone. Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 103.

petitions to the Divorce Court and were as successful as men (1279 decrees were granted).<sup>58</sup>

Given the large amount of attention paid to divorce trials in the newspapers during the 1860s—the *London Times*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Evening News* all contained a divorce column—divorce, and indeed adultery, was brought to the forefront of many a Victorian’s consciousness.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Barbara Leckie notes that

what the mid-century shapers of the Matrimonial Causes Act could not have anticipated was that the newspaper coverage of divorce cases would put adultery vividly in the public sphere in a manner that would make the French novels and obscene publications [...] look mild by comparison.<sup>60</sup>

Sensational reporting of divorce cases such as the notorious Smethurst and Yelverton trials unquestionably influenced the fiction of many Sensation writers including Geraldine Jewsbury, Ellen Wood, Charles Reade, Amelia B. Edwards and Mary Elizabeth Braddon.<sup>61</sup> However, as Catherine Pope notes, the fictional response to the Divorce Act was ‘not an outpouring of divorce plots, [but] rather a flurry of bigamy

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<sup>58</sup> Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, p. 36; Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 207.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Leckie, *Culture and Adultery: The Novel, the Newspaper, and the Law, 1857-1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 64.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Smethurst was found guilty and sentenced to death for the murder of Isabella Bankes, his second and thus bigamous wife, in 1859. However, Smethurst was reprieved a few days before he was due to be executed when doubts were raised over the ‘chymical’ analysis (the prosecution had argued that Isabella had been poisoned) and the lack of physical evidence in several newspapers. Although he was granted a full Royal Pardon several months later, Smethurst was indicted for bigamy and sentenced to one year’s hard labour. Details of the Smethurst trial can be found in Peter Maggs, *Henry’s Trials: The Extraordinary History of the Reverend Henry John Hatch* (Chelmsford: Mirli Books, 2009), pp. 195-7. The 1861 Yelverton trial involved William Yelverton and Theresa Longworth who were married in secret in Ireland by a Catholic priest. However, after William grew tired of his first wife he married another woman and exploited Irish marital laws (Irish marriage law stated that a mixed faith marriage or the marriage of two Protestants conducted by a Catholic priest was void) to rid himself of Theresa. Ultimately, the House of Lords ruled in William’s favour and declared the marriage void. Sensation writers would almost certainly have known about the case due to the great attention paid to it in the newspapers of the time and the public outrage the verdict and William’s lack of punishment caused. For more information about the Yelverton trial see Chloë Schama, *Wild Romance: The True Story of a Victorian Scandal* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

novels'.<sup>62</sup> In fact, bigamy was so prominent that the 'bigamy novel' became a recognisable sub-category of Sensation fiction.<sup>63</sup>

Bigamy features in much of the genre's literature including Edwards' *Barbara's History* (1864), Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) and *Verner's Pride* (1863) and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863).<sup>64</sup> However, it is frequently a confusing trope. Actually marrying two people is fairly uncommon outside of Braddon's novels, instead bigamy is repeatedly used to characterise characters who merely leave their partners to begin another relationship. Moreover, the bigamy is often assumed, apparent or accidental. For example, in spite of being classified as a 'bigamy novel', the bigamy in Edwards' *Barbara's History* is assumed and not literal. This strengthens the claim for Sensation fiction's inclusion of bigamy to be a means to comment on the law because its presence emphasises the difficulty of divorce by showing bigamy (or assumed bigamy) to provide women with the only practical solution to escaping unwanted and often abusive marriages.

Despite the confusing application of the term 'bigamy novel', Maia McAleavey maintains that in Sensation fiction the bigamy plot suggests a 'literary-historical asymmetry: just when middle-class Victorians no longer needed to commit bigamy [...] to get rid of an unwanted first spouse, bigamy was transformed from a real crime into a popular narrative device'.<sup>65</sup> McAleavey goes on to question 'why,

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<sup>62</sup> Catherine Pope, 'Marriage of Inconvenience: Bigamy and the Sensation Novel' (unpublished master's thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Henry Mansel, the infamous critic of Sensation fiction, declared that bigamy had become so popular as to 'give rise to an entire sub-class in this branch of literature, which may be distinguished as that of Bigamy Novels'. H. L. Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', *Quarterly Review*, 113.226 (1863), 481-514 (p. 490).

<sup>64</sup> This list mentions just a few of the Sensation novels that contain bigamy in some form. For more examples see Maia McAleavey, *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) which includes a comprehensive list of Victorian bigamy novels.

<sup>65</sup> McAleavey, *The Bigamy Plot*, p. 6.

then, did the rise of divorce in Great Britain seem to correlate with bigamy novels rather than divorce novels?’<sup>66</sup> After all, although the Old Bailey Court proceedings show there was a rise in the number of women using bigamy to apply for divorce in the ten years after 1857, the proportional increase is not as significant as Sensation literature implies.<sup>67</sup> Winifred Hughes contends that bigamy has the ‘advantage of making sexual offense into an actual crime, something for which the offender might theoretically be arrested and sent to jail’.<sup>68</sup> However, I argue that the prevalence of bigamy in fiction during the 1860s represents a reaction against the ineffectiveness of divorce law and, along with Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, that the ‘bigamy novels of the sixties are all divorce novels, which is to say, novels about the failure of divorce to achieve a true separation’.<sup>69</sup> This is apparent in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*.

Like the majority of Sensation fiction, the portrayal of bigamy in *Lady Audley’s Secret* is linked to a woman’s desperate struggle to rid herself of a tyrannical or absent partner. Abandoned by George Talboys, her first husband, when he leaves for Australia to seek his fortune, Helen Talboys, later Lucy Audley, is left penniless with a young baby to support. Lillian Nayder questions why despite recognising George’s ‘desertion’ Lucy does not divorce him: ‘rather than celebrating the newly won right of Englishwomen to sue their husbands for divorce under certain circumstances, or of legally separated wives to possess their own property, Braddon tells a story about a wife’s bigamy and greed, associating such rights with

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> In the ten years prior to the introduction of the Divorce law, 19 women and 132 men were accused of bigamy while from 1858 to 1868, 30 women and 152 men were tried. *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913*, <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016].

<sup>68</sup> Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton and Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 203.

female lawlessness'.<sup>70</sup> However, Nayder fails to consider that women, by law, had to prove adultery alongside an offence such as desertion. Given that there is no suggestion that George has committed the former offence (and also that he disappears without a trace), divorce would not have been an option available to Lucy.

Braddon's novel *Aurora Floyd* provides an additional clue as to why Lucy decides to remarry without first seeking a divorce. Although Aurora Floyd acknowledges that due to the brutality and infidelity of her first husband, the 'law would have set me free from him, if I had been brave enough to appeal to the law', she simultaneously recognises that to 'pursue the legal remedy would have been to realise scandal, to humiliate her father, in short to fall into the realm of *The Times*'.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, like Aurora, Lucy takes matters into her own hands by leaving her past life and announcing her own death in the newspaper. Significantly, Pope observes that the date given for Helen's death, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1857, is 'just one week before the Matrimonial Causes Bill became law'.<sup>72</sup> In demonstrating the impossibility of divorce for Lucy, Braddon exhibits the inequality of the Matrimonial Causes Act by depicting bigamy, illegal at the time (although not treated as unlawful in the novel), to be the only option available to her heroine.<sup>73</sup>

Although Lucy succeeds in achieving financial security in her marriage to Sir Michael Audley, when George returns from Australia she realises that the 'energy of

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<sup>70</sup> Lillian Nayder, 'Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives: The Indian Mutiny and Marriage Law Reform in *Lady Audley's Secret*', in *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*, ed. by Marlene Tromp, Pamela K. Gilbert and Aeron Haynie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, ed. by P. D. Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 418; Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, p. 202.

<sup>72</sup> Pope, *A Marriage of Inconvenience*, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Bigamy was made a criminal offence in 1861 in section 57 of the Offences Against the Person Act and thus the inclusion of bigamy also allowed Sensation authors, in typical Sensation style, to punish their heroines.

his character' (*LAS*, 301) will lead him to reclaim her as his legal property. Although Lucy is punished at the end of the novel, the narrative suggests that her actions are a result of her desperation and lack of other options:

have I ever been really *wicked*, I wonder? [...] My worst wickednesses have been the result of wild impulses, and not of deeply-laid plots. I am not like the women I have read of, who have lain night after night in the horrible dark and stillness, planning out treacherous deeds, and arranging every circumstance of an appointed crime. (*LAS*, 253, emphasis in the original)

Pope argues that 'Braddon uses this self-reflexion to demonstrate that Lady Audley's actions are motivated by real injustices and she is not simply a stereotypical sensation novel villain'.<sup>74</sup> The Matrimonial Causes Act offers Lucy no hope of legally ending her marriage nor grants her any protection from the claims of her first husband. Thus, *Lady Audley's Secret* foreshadows polemical writing of this period such as Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (written in 1861 but not published until 1869) by suggesting that the ineffectiveness and inequality of the law results in the failure of marriage.

Interestingly, the bigamy plot is largely absent from New Woman fiction.<sup>75</sup> In part the absence of bigamy reflects New Woman writers' disinclination to criminalise their heroines. New Woman literature needed to generate positive change and associating the heroines with illegal acts undermined this strategy. Moreover, in comparison to Sensation fiction, some New Woman novels began to advocate free love and relationships ungoverned by the law. In Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Lyndall tells the father of her child: 'I cannot marry you [...]

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<sup>74</sup> Pope, *A Marriage of Inconvenience*, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> Yet, as exemplified by McAleavey, bigamy novels continued to be produced throughout the 1880s and 1890s. McAleavey, *The Bigamy Plot*, pp. 172-82.

because I cannot be tied; but if you wish, you may take me away with you, and take care of me; and then when we do not love any more we can say good-bye' (*SAF*, 206). Similar sentiments are also present in Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895) and Victoria Cross' *Anna Lombard* (1905). However, this is not to say that New Woman writers were unconcerned with women's inability to escape violent marriages nor that divorce had become easier to obtain. For instance, Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) and Ouida's *Moths* (1880), both depict women trapped in violent marriages (Caird's novel and its portrayal of domestic violence will be explored in depth in Chapter Two). Although the Matrimonial Causes Act was amended in 1878 to permit battered wives to obtain legal redress, the law continued to offer little protection to abused women. Thus, compared to Sensation fiction which exposed the failings of the Divorce Act, New Woman literature shifted its focus to explore a further legal impediment faced by married women: married women's property rights.

### **Married Women's Property Acts**

Like the Matrimonial Causes Act, public attention was first focused on married women's property rights during the 1850s when Caroline Norton publicised the legal inequality faced by married women after she left her abusive husband and found herself a victim of the law that regarded a wife as her husband's 'property'. In *A Letter to the Queen of Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill*, sections of which were read in Parliament in support of a married women's property bill, Norton laments that a

married woman in England has *no legal existence*: her being is absorbed in that of her husband. [...] She has no possessions, unless by special

settlement; her property is *his* property [...]; her husband may take them and sell them if he pleases, even though they be the gifts of relatives or friends, or bought before marriage. An English wife cannot make a will [...];—*she may be separated from her husband, who may be living with a mistress*; no matter: the law gives what she has to him [...]. An English wife cannot legally claim her own earnings. [...] An English wife may not leave her husband's house. Not only can he sue her for 'restitution of conjugal rights,' but he has a right to enter the house of any friend or relation with whom she may take refuge, [...] and carry her away by force.<sup>76</sup>

Upon marriage the husband gained complete control of his wife's current and future property and was entitled to use and dispose of it as he pleased regardless of whether he and his wife continued to live together or if that fortune was originally hers: 'the wife has no separate existence from that of her husband. [...] She and her husband are considered as one person, but that person is not a combination of the two, but is represented by the husband alone'.<sup>77</sup> Margaret Oliphant even went as far as to claim that 'marriage is like dying—as distinct, as irrevocable, as complete'.<sup>78</sup> Unable to initiate a lawsuit, write a will, sign a lease, sue or be sued, a married woman, even if deserted by her husband, had no individual rights.<sup>79</sup>

Although Norton sought legal equality between men and women, she simultaneously rejected the 'wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality' stating that the 'natural position of woman is inferiority to man'.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, Smith Bodichon, who published her own treatise against the inequality of the law during the 1850s, argued that the 'abolition of the laws which give husbands this unjust power is most

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<sup>76</sup> Norton, *A Letter to the Queen*, pp. 8-10. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>77</sup> George Shaw-Lefevre, *Speech of Mr G. Shaw Lefevre, M.P., on Bringing in 'the Bill to Amend the Law with Respect to the Property of Married Women'* (Manchester: A. Ireland and Co., 1868), p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Margaret Oliphant, 'The Laws Concerning Women', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 79 (1856), 379-87 (p. 380).

<sup>79</sup> The wealthy escaped the injustices of the Common law by exploiting Equity law and settling separate property on their daughters.

<sup>80</sup> Norton, *A Letter to the Queen*, p. 98.

urgently needed'.<sup>81</sup> In *A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854), Smith Bodichon protests against the current legal situation which left married women with

no legal right to any property; not even her clothes, books, and household goods are her own, and any money which she earns can be robbed from her legally by her husband, nay, even after the commencement of a treaty of marriage she cannot dispose of her own property without the knowledge of her betrothed. If she should do so, it is deemed a fraud in law, and can be set aside after marriage as an injury to her husband.<sup>82</sup>

Smith Bodichon's pamphlet, which ran to three editions, was instrumental in widening the scope and awareness of married women's property rights not least in promoting a discussion by, and subsequently the support of, the Law Amendment Society.

Smith Bodichon also established the Langham Place Circle, the first organised women's group, to debate and promote women's rights including those relating to married women's ownership of property.<sup>83</sup> The Langham Place Circle 'insisted that the state recognize the fundamental and equal rights of men and women to possess property, regardless of marital status' and pointed to the double standards of the upper classes who escaped the injustices of the law by ensuring that their daughters' property rights were secured in separate settlements.<sup>84</sup> Shanley notes that 'such trusts and bequests, explicitly secured to a married woman alone and known as her "separate estate," were the means of avoiding the common law rule that a

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<sup>81</sup> Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, *A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women; together with a Few Observations Thereon* (London: Holyoake and Co., 1856), p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, p. 32.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

married woman's property belonged to her husband'.<sup>85</sup> As public feeling grew, a petition circulated by Smith Bodichon was presented to Parliament in 1856 arguing that

since modern civilisation, in indefinitely extending the sphere of occupation for women, has in some measure broken down their pecuniary dependence upon men, it is time that legal protection be thrown over the produce of their labour, and that in entering the state of marriage, they no longer pass from freedom into the condition of a slave, all whose earnings belong to his master and not to himself.<sup>86</sup>

Signed by more than 26,000 women, the petition included the signatures of various high-profile women, many of whom came from the literary world. These included Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Geraldine Jewsbury and less prominently, Mary Anne Evans (soon to become George Eliot).<sup>87</sup> Significantly, it was also signed by the Sensation author Amelia B. Edwards, reinforcing the argument for Sensation writers' engagement with the law.

As a result of this petition, Sir Thomas Perry introduced a bill to Parliament in 1857 calling for a change in the law relating to married women's ownership of personal property. After several months of heated parliamentary debates that centred on the issue that women's increased financial independence would, as Sir Richard Bethell claimed, 'involve a material change in the social and political institutions of a nation', the married women's property reform bill was eventually defeated.<sup>88</sup> Instead the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed later that year. Although it addressed some of the issues relating to married women's property rights by safeguarding

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>86</sup> 'To the Honourable the House of Peers [and Commons] in Parliament assembled. The Petition of the undersigned Women of Great Britain, Married and Single', repr. in 'Art. III.—The Property of Married Women', *Westminster Review*, 66.130 (1856), 331-60 (p. 338).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (London: Cornelius Buck, 1857), vol. 145, p. 275.

vulnerable women's financial security—namely it gave courts the power to 'order payment of separate maintenance to a wife' and enabled a 'separated or divorced wife [to] recover her rights to inherit or bequeath her own property, to enter into contracts, and to sue or be sued as if she were single'—the Matrimonial Causes Act did nothing to help ordinary married women nor did it grant legal equality to husbands and wives.<sup>89</sup>

Following disappointment with the legal amendments made to married women's property rights, the Married Women's Property Committee was formed in Manchester in the 1860s with the purpose of pressuring Parliament to pass a specific married women's property bill (other committees were later formed in Birmingham, Belfast and Dublin).<sup>90</sup> Drawn together from various women's rights organisations including the Manchester Women's Suffrage Society, the Married Women's Property Committee sought to transform marriage from a 'relationship of hierarchy and domination to one of reciprocity and friendship'.<sup>91</sup> Central to this group were Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, Josephine Butler, Ursula Mellor Bright, Jessie Boucherett and Elizabeth Gloyne who, together with their various male supporters including Richard Pankhurst, Jacob Bright, George Shaw Lefevre and John Stuart Mill, called on Parliament to introduce greater legislative measures regarding married women's property rights.

After years of hard fought campaigning and intense Parliamentary debates, the law was eventually altered in 1870; however, as in 1857, the first Married Women's Property Act was full of compromise and contradiction. Whilst it enabled

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<sup>89</sup> Helsinger, Lauterbach Sheets and Veeder, *The Woman Question*, vol. 2, p. 17. Moreover, it granted wives deserted by their husbands the power to protect their earnings against his claim.

<sup>90</sup> Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, pp. 50-2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

married women to retain possession of their earnings and granted them the right to inherit small sums of money, everything else, whether acquired before or after marriage, still belonged to her husband.<sup>92</sup> It was not until 1882 that the law finally recognised husbands and wives as two separate legal entities. A married woman was now able to ‘acquir[e], hol[d], and dispos[e] by will or otherwise, of any real or personal property as her separate property, in the same manner as if she were a feme sole’ regardless of whether it was hers at the time of marriage or acquired later.<sup>93</sup> She could also write a will, dispose of her separate estate as she saw fit and was treated as a separate legal entity to her husband. However, despite the legal improvement to married women’s property rights, in New Woman literature, these legal changes are shown to have little bearing on the lives of ordinary women. In her well-known essay ‘Marriage’ (1888), published six years after significant changes had been made to married women’s property rights, Caird argues that marriage should be founded on the ‘economical independence of wom[e]n’.<sup>94</sup> This implies that, despite the Married Women’s Property Acts, the issue of a woman’s financial independence from her husband remained unresolved.

Grand addresses a similar sentiment in *The Beth Book* (1897). Manipulation and ownership intermingle in this novel as Dan Maclure, the husband of Elizabeth Caldwell, known as Beth, seeks to gain total control of her body and possessions. He confines her to their home, reads her letters, examines her personal belongings without her consent and most importantly, controls her inheritance. In having Dan take possession of Beth’s finances, Grand demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the law in changing the lives of married women within the middle-class home. Dan

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<sup>92</sup> Helsing, Lauterbach Sheets and Veeder, *The Woman Question*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> *Married Women’s Property Act 1882*, <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/45-46/75/contents/enacted>> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

<sup>94</sup> Caird, ‘Marriage’, p. 198.

argues that Beth is ‘too young to have the care of managing money’ and because ‘she had too much self-respect to ask for money’, Beth never questions his right to her finances and so ‘she found that she was not to have any housekeeping money at all’ (*BB*, 359). In emphasising the law’s inability to prevent injustices against women and the ease with which men could gain control of their wife’s finances, New Woman writers expose the limitations of these legal changes.

*The Beth Book* also reveals another problem unresolved by the Married Women’s Property Act. In an attempt to escape her domineering and possessive husband, Beth locks herself in their bedroom. However, when Dan discovers what she has done he declares that he ‘cannot understand a wife locking her husband out of her room, and what’s more, you’ve no business to do it. I’ve a legal right to come here whenever I choose’ (*BB*, 363). It is at this moment that Beth comes to the realisation of ‘what the law of man was with regard to her person’ (*BB*, 363). As well as ownership of a woman’s physical property, a man also gained control of his wife’s body upon marriage: ‘a woman’s body belongs to her husband; she is in his custody, and he can enforce his right by a writ of *habeas corpus*’.<sup>95</sup> As Shanley notes, during the debates on married women’s property rights ‘sexual violence within marriage was not even considered by the Lords. A husband had the right of access to his wife’s body, and by definition could not be charged with marital rape’.<sup>96</sup> Although the law was changed in 1891 to deny men ‘conjugal rights’ to their wife’s body, marital rape was not made a criminal offence until 1992 and thus a

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<sup>95</sup> Smith Bodichon, *A Brief Summary [...] of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women*, p. 4. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>96</sup> Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, p. 42.

husband's presumed ownership and right to his wife's body remained a topical issue in New Woman literature.<sup>97</sup>

In comparison to New Woman literature, Sensation fiction rarely features a discussion of married women's bodily ownership (although the conversation around women's reading of Sensation fiction draws on such concepts of female bodily autonomy). However, one exception is Collins' *Man and Wife* (1870). Imprisoned by her reluctant husband, Geoffrey Delamayn, Anne Silvester is forced to realise that there were 'outrages which her husband was privileged to commit, under the sanction of marriage, at the bare thought of which her blood ran cold. [...] Law and Society armed her husband with his conjugal rights'.<sup>98</sup> Like Beth, Anne is painfully aware that because the law considers her to be the property of her husband, it provides her with no protection from his sexual advances.

While the topic of women's bodily autonomy is largely absent, the issue of married women's property rights repeatedly figures throughout the Sensation genre.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Collins specifically mentions the Married Women's Property Act in the preface to *Man and Wife*: 'I have only to add that, while I write these lines, Parliament is bestirring itself to remedy the cruel abuses which are here exposed in the story of "Hester Dethridge"'.<sup>100</sup> Lisa Surridge contends that the character of Hester is based on Susannah Palmer who in 1869 attempted to kill her husband after

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<sup>97</sup> The initial alteration in the law was influenced by the 1891 decision in *Regina v. Jackson*. For more information about this case and the legal admission of a woman's right to her own body see Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, pp. 177-83.

<sup>98</sup> Collins, *Man and Wife*, p. 550.

<sup>99</sup> It will be argued in Chapter Four that Sensation authors turned to the Gothic mode in order to represent the problems of female property ownership.

<sup>100</sup> Collins, *Man and Wife*, p. 5. Collins also names 'The Report of the Royal Commissioners on the Laws of Marriage' (1868) as an inspiration for this novel illustrating his desire to expose the realities and inadequacy of British law relating to the injustices surrounding married women's property.

suffering twelve years of physical abuse.<sup>101</sup> Although Palmer had been deserted by her husband, ‘he would not allow her to earn her own living, and whenever she managed to get into lodgings with the children he came and broke up the home and sold the little articles of furniture she had gathered together’.<sup>102</sup> Also married to a drunk and violent husband, Hester, a lowly cook, suffers a similar fate to Palmer when she returns home to find that the furniture, despite being bought by her, has been sold by her husband to fund his drinking habit. In a significant exchange Hester is told by the magistrate:

you are a married woman. The law doesn’t allow a married woman to call anything her own—unless she has previously (with a lawyer’s help) made a bargain to that effect with her husband, before marrying him. [...] Your husband has a right to sell your furniture if he likes.<sup>103</sup>

Foreshadowing Frances Power Cobbe’s famous attack on Victorian marital laws that questioned if it was ‘indeed expedient that the whole and sole power should be lodged in the husband’s hands; the power not only over all they already have in common, but the power over all she can ever earn in the future’, Collins illustrates the hopelessness of Hester’s situation.<sup>104</sup>

Collins also points to the injustice of the law regarding class. While the upper classes had the means to ensure their daughters were not left penniless in marriage, Hester is a servant and therefore does not have the money or knowledge of the law to realise that she could have protected her property or earnings with a lawyer’s help before marriage. Hester eventually suffocates her husband in a fit of rage at the

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<sup>101</sup> Lisa Surridge, ‘Unspeakable Histories: Hester Dethridge and the Narration of Domestic Violence in *Man and Wife*’, *Victorian Review*, 22.2 (1996), 102-26.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Central Criminal Court’, 9a, *The Times* (1869), cited in Surridge, ‘Unspeakable Histories’, p. 104.

<sup>103</sup> Collins, *Man and Wife*, p. 586.

<sup>104</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, ‘Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 8 (1868), 777-94 (p. 785).

hopelessness of her situation. Maceachen argues that in having Hester murder her husband, Collins suggests that ‘murder is able to do for her what the law cannot do. Murder [...] was the consequence of the law’s failure to protect the wife’.<sup>105</sup> I would add that Collins’ criminalisation of his heroine’s actions emphasises the desperation caused by the limited legal opportunities for women to redress brutal and exploitative marriages.

While the passing of the 1882 Married Women’s Property Act marked a moment of success in the campaign to win married women the right to control their property, as stated previously, it did nothing to address a husband’s uncontested right to his wife’s body. Positioning marriage as a form of sexual slavery, Caird argued that marriage and prostitution are ‘two sides of the same shield’.<sup>106</sup> Yet, earlier in the century, a woman’s right to her own body and the problem of unrestrained male sexuality had been the subject of much legal debate. Given that the Contagious Diseases Acts and their impact on nineteenth-century society will be discussed at length in Chapter Four, only summary details regarding this law will be provided in the next section.

### **Contagious Diseases Acts**

First introduced in 1864, the Contagious Diseases Acts were a reaction to the growing problem of venereal diseases within the armed forces. Responding to recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army in 1857 and a parliamentary Select Committee, the first Contagious Diseases Act permitted the forced examination of any woman thought to be a prostitute in select army and navy

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<sup>105</sup> Maceachen, ‘Wilkie Collins and British Law’, p. 133.

<sup>106</sup> Mona Caird, ‘Ideal Marriage’, *Westminster Review*, 130.1 (1888), 617-36 (p. 635).

towns and her confinement in what became known as a Lock hospital for up to three months if suspected of being contaminated with venereal disease.<sup>107</sup> If a woman refused to be examined she could be imprisoned for up to two months.<sup>108</sup> The law was subsequently extended in 1866 and 1869. As Mary Spongberg notes, the ‘language and ideology underpinning’ the Contagious Diseases Acts ‘treated prostitutes and disease synonymously’.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, given that the Acts gave no consideration to men as the carriers and transmitters of the disease, the body of the prostitute came to be viewed as inherently diseased.

In a reaction to the Contagious Diseases Acts, Butler and Wolstenholme Elmy founded the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1869. As laid out in their manifesto, ‘The Ladies’ Appeal and Protest’ (1869), they contested the Acts on the basis that they violated the ‘legal safeguards hitherto enjoyed by women in common with men’ and ‘punish the sex who are the victims of a vice, and leave unpunished the sex who are the main cause, both of the vice and its dreaded consequences’.<sup>110</sup> The manifesto also included the signatures of 124 prominent women including Martineau, Florence Nightingale and Mellor Bright. It was subsequently reprinted in the first edition of *Shields*, the journal of the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts,

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<sup>107</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 76-8. The Royal Commission on the Health of the Army reported that ‘there is doubtless a greater amount of [sexual] dissipation [...] among young men [in the army] of the same class than in civilian life’. ‘Reports of the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army’, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857, XVIII, cited in Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 74.

<sup>108</sup> Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 63.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>110</sup> “‘The Ladies’ Appeal and Protest”, *Shield* (14 March 1870), pp. 9-11; 13’, repr. in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, ed. by Jane Jordan and Ingrid Sharp, 5 vols (London: Routledge, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 45-58 (p. 46).

before becoming a national petition that was eventually delivered to Parliament with the signatures of 2000 women.<sup>111</sup>

Despite fierce public debates regarding the Contagious Diseases Acts occurring throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Sensation fiction rarely includes women affected by the law. Sex seldom features in Sensation literature, nor do children from married relationships, and therefore the opportunity to include commentary on the issue is limited. Moreover, although prostitutes are sometimes present, they are typically at the margins of the texts as recipients of the heroine's charity. However, Felicia Skene's *Hidden Depths* (1866) challenges this assumption. In her attempt to save the sister of a woman her brother seduced and then abandoned, Ernestine Courtenay exposes the hidden world of prostitution and its middle-class clientele in Greyburgh (a fictional Oxford). Published the same year the powers of the Contagious Diseases Act were first extended, *Hidden Depths* anticipates the rhetoric of 'The Ladies' Appeal and Protest' by repeatedly attacking the duplicity of those who 'tramp[e] under foot the fallen woman, [...whilst] holding out the right hand of fellowship to the man who dragged her into sin, and shared it with her'.<sup>112</sup> Although discussing Braddon's *Aurora Floyd*, Marlene Tromp's comments regarding the relationship between Sensation fiction and the repeal of the Acts are also appropriate to Skene's novel. Tromp argues that the

debates surrounding the Contagious Diseases Acts, which appeared only after *Aurora Floyd* had been widely circulated and digested, suggest that Braddon's contentious, exploratory fiction engaged in the revisioning of

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<sup>111</sup> Jane Jordan, 'Introduction', in *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns*, ed. by Jordan and Sharp, vol. 2, pp. 1-10 (p. 1).

<sup>112</sup> Felicia Skene, *Hidden Depths*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1866), vol. 1, p. 106. Like Collins' epigraph to *Man and Wife*, Skene's novel begins with a preface that lays out her intention to expose social injustices: 'this book is not a work of fiction, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. [...] [T]ruth must always have a certain power, in whatever shape it may appear; and though all did not occur precisely as here narrated, it is nevertheless actual truth which speaks in these records'. Ibid, vol. 1, no page no.

the language that created law, playing out and exposing the complex network of cultural tensions that generated the construction of the dangerous woman.

In drawing attention to the gendered injustices of the law, Skene's novel functions in much the same way. She exposes the sexual double standard by creating empathy for the prostitutes and showing that they are driven to this way of life by men who face no legal or societal retribution for their actions.

Although the Acts were eventually repealed in 1886 after a long public campaign, issues of male wanton sexuality continued to concern the New Woman as she came to sympathise and identify with the figure of the prostitute. Earlier in the century, Butler had used a prostitute's account of her life to aid the repeal campaign: 'it is men, only men, from the first to the last, that we have to do with! To please a man I did wrong at first, then I was flung about from man to man [...] we never get out of the hands of men'.<sup>113</sup> It is this sentiment, against the backdrop of predatory male sexuality, that many New Woman writers emphasise and utilise in their fiction. Like Skene's *Hidden Depths*, Annie Holdsworth's New Woman novel *Joanna Traill, Spinster* (1894) contains a similarly sympathetic portrayal of the prostitute. After saving Christine Dow from a life of prostitution, Joanna Traill flouts social convention by instilling Christine as her female companion. The novel, somewhat shockingly, concludes with Christine's marriage into the middle class. By emphasising that it is the 'attitude of men and women towards the fallen that prevents their redemption', Holdsworth, echoing the rhetoric of the social purity campaign, illustrates the need for public opinion to change.<sup>114</sup> Yet in contrast to

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<sup>113</sup> *Shield*, 9 May 1870, cited in Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 128.

<sup>114</sup> Annie E. Holdsworth, *Joanna Traill, Spinster* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1894), p. 97.

Sensation fiction, New Woman literature was also preoccupied with the plight of women as a result of their sexually infectious husbands. In creating sympathetic portrayals of prostitutes and innocent wives infected with venereal disease, New Woman authors castigate men's inability to control their sexual desire as the source of the problem. As will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four, New Woman fiction identifies men, not women, as the carriers and transmitters of the disease, thus rejecting the view of women's bodies as the harbourers of contagion.

While the focus in this chapter has so far been on social and legal advances relating to women, this thesis also considers Sensation and New Woman fiction's representation of men and masculinity and thus an additional law which affected the lives of some men must be considered.

### **Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885**

Upon the passage of the 1882 Married Woman Property Act, Wolstenholme Elmy wrote a letter to the members of the Married Women's Property Committee detailing 'other wrongs [...] which I am sure you will forgive me for briefly suggesting to you'.<sup>115</sup> She declared that 'Parliament has busied itself much [...] in interfering with the freedom of women to work and earn their living, but it has deliberately refused to punish the mature seducer of the little girl one day above thirteen years of age'.<sup>116</sup> At the time Wolstenholme Elmy was writing the legal age of consent for girls, but not boys, was thirteen (it was raised from twelve in 1875).

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<sup>115</sup> Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy to anon. (1883), 'Speeches, Pamphlets and Leaflets concerning the Married Women's Property Bill (1868-83)', British Library, 8416.k.6.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

However, in 1885, when journalist W. T. Stead exposed the world of child prostitution in a series of articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by purchasing a thirteen-year-old girl from her mother for five pounds, the government was forced to act. The



WHAT IT WILL SOON COME TO.  
Miss Sampson. "PRAY LET ME CARRY YOUR BAG, MR. SMITHEREEN!"

Figure 1.1 Illustration by unknown artist, 'What It Will Soon Come To', *Punch, or the London Charivari* (24<sup>th</sup> February 1894), p. 90.

girls, an additional clause included in the Criminal Law Amendment Act negatively impacted the lives of some men.

Criminal Law Amendment Act raised the age of consent for girls to that of boys, sixteen, made it a criminal offence to procure girls for prostitution with the use of drugs or intimidation and gave courts the power to remove a girl from her legal guardians if they were suspected of condoning her 'seduction'.<sup>117</sup> While this change in the law

undoubtedly improved the lives of many young

<sup>117</sup> Frederick Mead and A. H. Bodkin, *The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, with Introduction, Notes, and Index* (London: Shaw and Sons, 1885), pp. 21-67.

Proposed at the last minute with no notice by Henry Labouchere, Section 11, known as the Labouchere Amendment, of the Criminal Amendment Act effectively made it easier to prosecute homosexual acts because intercourse did not have to be proven. It made ‘any act of gross indecency’ whether committed in ‘public or private’ between men a criminal offence for which the punishment was up to two years’ hard labour.<sup>118</sup> Given the contemporary belief that ‘masculinity was [...] bound up with desiring women and femininity with desiring men’, Alan Sinfield notes that effeminacy became the ‘defining characteristic of same-sex passion’.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, Matt Cook states that the ‘shaping of the invert or homosexual as a type owed much to popular stereotype [...] and effeminacy was a frequently noted



**THE NEW WOMAN.**

“YOU’RE NOT LEAVING US, JACK! TEA WILL BE HERE DIRECTLY!”

“OH, I’M GOING FOR A CUP OF TEA IN THE SERVANTS’ HALL. I CAN’T GET ON WITHOUT FEMALE SOCIETY, YOU KNOW!”

Figure 1.2 Illustration by George Du Maurier, ‘The New Woman’, *Punch, or the London Charivari* (15<sup>th</sup> June 1895), p. 282.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 68. For more information about the Labouchere Amendment and its impact see Chapter Three. It is important to note that active male homosexuality does not explicitly appear in either *Sensation* or *New Woman* fiction (although the argument will be made in Chapter Three for its metaphorical inclusion).

<sup>119</sup> Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 7; Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Continuum, 1994), p. 43.

characteristic' that came to be associated with unsuitable or inadequate masculinity.<sup>120</sup>

Yet as well as representing the figure of the homosexual, the effeminate man also came to exemplify the detrimental effect of increasing women's rights. Tara MacDonald claims that the New Woman and the effeminate man were 'often linked in the periodical presses of the *fin de siècle* as figures that provoked fears over the malleability of gender distinctions'.<sup>121</sup> This is evident in the *Punch* cartoons 'What It Will Soon Come To' and 'The New Woman' (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) where women are presented adopting typically masculine roles while their male companions appear weak and effeminate in comparison. The fear surrounding the loss of men's dominant social position can be tied to the need for Victorian men to establish their masculinity through conventional heterosexual behaviour. Yet, as will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Three, New Woman fiction (and to some extent Sensation fiction) challenged this by using accepted notions of masculinity for undesirable male characters, while those shown to offer the best relationship or friendship to the heroine question what it means to be a 'man'.

## Conclusion

The alterations to women's social, political and economic rights serve to illustrate the private/public split that is one of the largest defining features of the two eras and as such the distinction between Sensation and New Woman fiction. Whereas feminist campaigns of the 1880s and 1890s focused on freeing a woman from the domestic sphere and improving her life outside the home, attention during the mid-

<sup>120</sup> Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality*, p. 83.

<sup>121</sup> Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 15.

Victorian period was centred on improving a (married) woman's life within the home. Nevertheless, although public discussion and focus shifted, bringing new topics to New Woman literature, it is also evident that the ground had already been prepared for many of these discussions by Sensation fiction. Additionally, Sensation writers' exposure of social and legal inequalities in their fiction reveals a previously unconsidered connection that, I speculate, was included not for entertainment as critics typically contend, but to promote the need for change.

The social and political advances of the mid- to late nineteenth century dramatically changed the lives of many middle-class women (and men). However, they simultaneously promoted anxiety that women would reject marriage in favour of unmarried independence. Consequently, as has been shown throughout this chapter, in reacting to the woman question, Sensation and New Woman fiction interrogate what it means to be a 'woman' and probe her intended role whilst simultaneously undermining expectations regarding her 'nature'. Given these shifting definitions of womanhood, the next chapter focuses more specifically on the heroines of Sensation and New Woman fiction to explore their challenge to the socio-political construct of femininity and the effect this has on genre stability.

## Chapter Two

### Deceptive Femininities: Manipulating Gender and Genre

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Come, the curtain is down, so I may be myself for a few hours, if actresses ever are themselves.

Louisa May Alcott, 'Behind a Mask' (1866)<sup>1</sup>

The woman who spends hours in considering the points of a costume in which she shall be coquettishly alluring to men in a ball-room is an animal lowering herself by the endeavour; but a woman, actuated by noble purpose, who selects a costume which shall help her to please by her appearance those whom she hopes to convince by her arguments, and so, to begin with, inclines them to listen favourably to what she has to say, is worthy of admiration.

Sarah Grand, 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance' (1893)<sup>2</sup>

Femininity is presented as a masquerade by sensationalist Louisa May Alcott in 'Behind a Mask' (1866) and New Woman campaigner Sarah Grand in her essay 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance' (1893). Grand argues that a feminine appearance constitutes an unexploited strategy of political conversion to the womanly cause and thus, that gender performance serves to advance feminist sexual politics. While the sexual politics of Alcott's heroine are more self-serving, her performance explodes the concepts of gender and authentic identity altogether.

Introduced as a 'pale-faced girl' with 'delicate' features whose femininity, to the outside world at least, echoes her idealistic physical appearance, Jean Muir, the anti-heroine of Louisa May Alcott's sensational novella, 'Behind a Mask', seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> Louisa May Alcott, 'Behind a Mask, or A Woman's Power', in *Behind a Mask: The Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott*, ed. by Madeleine Stern (London: Perennial, 2004), pp. 1-104 (p. 11).

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Grand, "'The Morals of Manner and Appearance'", *Humanitarian*, 1893, vol. 3, pp. 87-93', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 21-8 (p. 25).

embodies Victorian ideals of femininity.<sup>3</sup> Reinforced by Sarah Ellis' conduct books, Felicia Hemans' poetry and later John Ruskin, Victorian models of femininity, as represented by the Angel in the House, prescribed that a woman should be self-sacrificing, submissive and content to be restricted to the confines of the domestic sphere:

Man must be pleased; but him to please  
Is woman's pleasure: down the gulf  
Of his condoled necessities  
She casts her best, she flings herself [...]  
And if he at last, by shame oppress'd,  
A comfortable word confers,  
She leans and weeps against his breast,  
And seems to think the sin was hers:  
And while his love has any life,  
Or any eye to see her charms,  
At any time, she's still his wife,  
Dearly devoted to his arms.<sup>4</sup>

However, Sensation heroines such as Jean challenge this assumption. As soon as she is on her own, moments after implying that the word 'actress' is interchangeable with 'woman' (quoted in the first epigraph) to emphasise the ease with which femininity can be engineered, Jean disrupts expectations by removing the disguise that reveals her to be a 'haggard, worn, and moody woman of thirty at least'.<sup>5</sup> Jean's power of bodily transformation demonstrates the instability of femininity as she manipulates gender expectations to her own advantage.

By repeatedly depicting her heroine's transformation, Alcott exposes the fakery of her beauty and shows it to be the result of a clever use of stage props:

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<sup>3</sup> Alcott, 'Behind a Mask', p. 6; Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore, *The Angel in the House: The Betrothal* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1858), pp. 125-6.

<sup>5</sup> Alcott, 'Behind a Mask', p. 12.

sitting on the floor she unbound and removed the long abundant braids from her head, wiped the pink from her face, took out several pearly teeth [...]. The metamorphosis was wonderful, but the disguise was more in the expression she assumed than in any art of costume or false adornment. Now she was alone, [...] her mobile features settled into their natural expression, weary, hard, [and] bitter.<sup>6</sup>

The implication here is that there is a ‘natural’ or original self; however, Alcott later complicates this inference by suggesting that there is no essential self just masquerade:

Miss Muir’s eyes brightened as she looked, her step grew firmer, her carriage prouder, and a smile broke over her face; the smile of one well pleased at the prospect of the success of some cherished hope. Suddenly her whole air changed, she pushed back her hat, clasped her hands loosely before her, and seemed absorbed in girlish admiration of the fair scene that could not fail to charm any beauty-loving eye.<sup>7</sup>

Jean’s ability to transgress the physicality of her body, as demonstrated by the instrumental role her ‘expression’ plays in the masquerade, implies that femininity is not fixed. Even Jean’s moment of ‘unveiling’ can be seen to perform a role. Rather than reveal Jean’s ‘true’ self, it shows that nothing about her appearance, and hence femininity, is inherent. Jean’s narrative control means she can manipulate her femininity to trick those around her into believing that she possesses a stable identity when in reality no such certainty is provided.<sup>8</sup> The danger in believing that a person’s exterior reflects their interior, as was the Victorian expectation supported by the pseudo-science of physiognomy, is further enhanced as Jean’s feminine looks

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Unlike Sensation novels such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* where the heroine’s secret is revealed only at the end of the novel, in ‘Behind a Mask’ the readers are quickly taken into Jean’s confidence meaning that they are sympathetic to her and her actions and thereby complicit.

and strategies of dissimulation subsequently enable her to make a successful upper-class marriage.

Although the sexual politics of Alcott's heroine are self-serving, 'Behind a Mask' functions as an example of how the popular mid-century genre of Sensation fiction constructs and subverts patriarchal definitions of femininity. Tara MacDonald argues that the Sensation genre's 'playful engagement with human complications and misconceptions' in novels such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859), where Marian Halcombe is depicted as a 'masculine' (*WIW*, 35) woman, or *The Law and the Lady* (1875), where Miserrimus Dexter's androgyny questions his assumed gender role, demonstrates that Sensation fiction is a genre preoccupied with 'disrupt[ing] gender conventions and challenge[ing] stable notions of identity'.<sup>9</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor similarly claims that Sensation novels 'hinge on probing the boundaries of the social self, and explore how a "legitimate" identity is in many ways a trick of the light created by the manipulation of self-possession and propriety, underpinned by economic interests'.<sup>10</sup> Thus the genre reveals the 'impossibility of representing a coherent female subjectivity, a "true nature"'.<sup>11</sup> In part Sensation literature's inclusion of heroines whose physical appearance questions the conflation of femininity and assumptions of morality reflects the contemporary uncertainty regarding femininity that was captured by Eliza Lynn Linton in her infamous article, 'The Girl of the Period' (1868). Although Linton's article has typically been linked with the New Woman, given its timing, 'The Girl of the Period' can be viewed as a

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<sup>9</sup> Tara MacDonald, 'Sensation Fiction, Gender and Identity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 127-40 (p. 139).

<sup>10</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

reaction to the Sensation heroine. After all, Victorian concern regarding the instability of femininity is central to Linton's critique of the modern woman.

Linton contends that 'of late years we have changed the pattern, and have given to the world a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether'.<sup>12</sup> A 'poor copy' of the Victorian ideal, the Girl of the Period disrupts what it means to be a 'fair young English girl' because she 'cannot be made to see that modesty of appearance and virtue ought to be inseparable'.<sup>13</sup> However, while Linton's feminine impersonators are noticeable by



Figure 2.1 Illustration by Matt Moran, 'The Authoress of "The Girl of the Period"', George Somes Layard, *Mrs Lynn Linton, Her Life, Letters, and Opinions* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), p. 143.

their obsession with cultural trends, the muse in Matt Moran's cartoon, 'The Authoress of "The Girl of the Period"' (Figure 2.1), echoes Sensation heroines like Jean by not giving any physical indication of her problematic identity. It is only the painter, representing Linton, who sees through the disguise.

To the viewer's eye, the model encapsulates the

<sup>12</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, "'The Girl of the Period'", *Saturday Review* (14<sup>th</sup> March 1868), repr. in *'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. by Susan Hamilton (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1995), pp. 147-50 (p. 147).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149; *Ibid.*, p. 147; *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Victorian woman: she is beautiful, possesses no personal vanity (as signalled by her modestly folded arms), and emanates humility. However, on the canvas the woman is given a devilish appearance with horns and disfigured features. Victorians expected a woman's appearance to represent her virtuous nature but Linton and Moran's decision to play with preconceived notions of gender emphasise the increasing volatility of femininity.

On the other hand, Moran's cartoon can be seen to satirise Linton and her interpretation of the Girl of the Period's appearance. Painting a face more closely resembling her own than that of the woman who sits for the painting, Linton is critiqued for her presumed envy of this young woman's beauty. In this sense, her singular ability to construct a particular stereotype as the 'true' character behind the surface is not shown to provide an insight into the dangers of deceptive appearances, but is demonstrated to be for selfish purposes. This is emphasised by the tins of paint which are labelled 'gall' and 'venom', suggesting the painting to be a personal attack. Thus, Moran could be insinuating that Linton aims to enhance her own desirability by showing that, compared to the beautiful

young woman who could be masking a dangerous femininity beneath, her

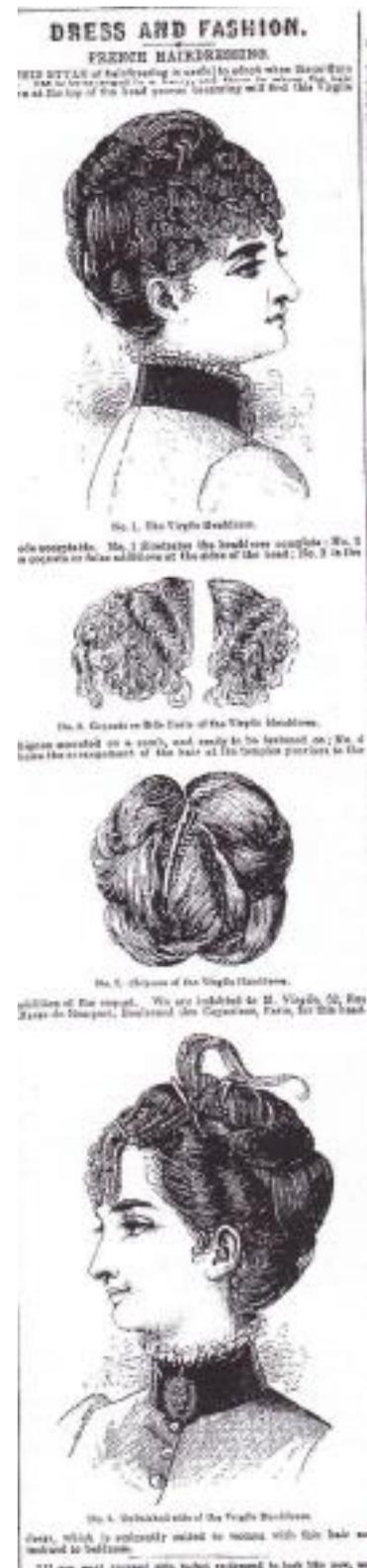


Figure 2.2 'Dress and Fashion: French Hairdressing', *Queen*, 77 (28<sup>th</sup> March 1885), p. 331.

appearance is at least reliable. It is implied that Linton's own jealousy is the reason behind the anxiety she sought to induce by representing the threat to society of misaligned appearance and morals.

Femininity was further destabilised by Victorian women's magazines of the mid- to late-Victorian period in which, as Margaret Beetham observes, 'femininity is always represented [...] as fractured, not least because it is simultaneously assumed as given and as still to be achieved'.<sup>14</sup> She argues that by providing 'patterns, narratives and models of the self', women are taught that femininity is fluid and that its very instability could be beneficial as it offered the prospect of improvement.<sup>15</sup> This is demonstrated most clearly by advertising which promoted products to 'restore' and embellish defective femininity (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). Endorsing the use of products to alter the hair's colour, volume and to disguise baldness, these advertisements, and the magazines themselves, offer women the prospect of achieving socially recognisable femininity by employing physical embellishment.



### Grey Hair Restored to its Natural Colour.—

Neuralgia, Nervous Headache, Rheumatism, and Stiff Joints cured by F. M. HERRING'S PATENT MAGNETIC BRUSHES, 10s. and 15s.; Combs, 2s. 6d. to 20s.

Dr. HASSALL reports, "I have carefully examined, and also tested, the magnetical properties of the 'Patent Magnetic Hair and Flesh Brushes' of Mr. F. M. Herring, and I have to state, as the result of this examination, that I regard them as the most perfect Brushes hitherto constructed, both as respects their mechanical construction and their magnetical action.

"The Flesh Brush I consider to be most effective, for it removes the outer and older portions of the epidermis, and then frees the pores of the skin much more completely than any of the Brushes or Gloves now in use."

*The Public are cautioned against counterfeits.*

Grey Hair and Baldness prevented by F. M. H.'s Patent Preventive Brush, price 4s. and 5s. F. M. H.'s Teazle Brushes (purely mechanical) for Cloth, Velvet, Merino, &c., not only perfectly cleanse, but *preserve* the Fabric in a remarkable manner. Offices, 32, BASING-HALL STREET, London.

Figure 2.3 'Grey Hair Restored to its Natural Colour', *Alexandra Magazine*, 1 (September 1865), p. 257.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

In the advertisement ‘Grey Hair Restored to its Natural Colour’, the elimination of grey hair is proclaimed to offer a treatment for, among other bodily ailments, neuralgia and nervous headaches.<sup>16</sup> By aligning greyness, an inherent and biological process, with illness, the natural body becomes a site of un-femininity. Thus, as the advertiser seeks to profit from the conflation of gender and sex, they simultaneously deconstruct gender by proclaiming that it is only by artifice, in this case hair dye, that a ‘naturally’ feminine appearance and bodily and mental health can be achieved. This further establishes the fractured femininity presented and encouraged in women’s magazines as well as implying that femininity is always and forever defective.

Echoing this contemporary rhetoric regarding the instability of femininity, Sensation heroines create power by assuming the appearance of feminine women. Seemingly conforming (at least initially) to social expectations of femininity, the heroines use their deceptive appearance to gain power (again initially) by exploiting the notion of femininity as biological. This is evident in Collins’ *The Law and the Lady* when Valeria Brinton accentuates her femininity in order to manipulate information from the womaniser, Major Fitz-David, to prove her husband innocent of the murder he stands accused of having committed. Knowing a more feminine appearance will benefit her task, Valeria allows her chambermaid to use a ‘box of paints and powders’ to improve her appearance.<sup>17</sup> She watches her ‘skin take a false fairness, my cheeks a false colour, my eyes a false brightness—and I never shrank from it. No! I let the odious deceit go on; I even admired the extraordinary delicacy

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<sup>16</sup> This advertisement appeared opposite the article ‘The Use of a Special Periodical’ in which the *Alexandra Magazine* lays out its feminist manifesto and positions the magazine as central to the campaign for women’s rights. ‘The Use of a Special Periodical’, *Alexandra Magazine*, 1 (September 1865), 257-63.

<sup>17</sup> Wilkie Collins, *The Law and the Lady*, ed. by David Skilton (London: Penguin Group, 2004), p. 55.

and dexterity with which it was all done'.<sup>18</sup> Afterwards she declares that it 'seemed in some strange way [...that I had] lost my ordinary identity—[...and] stepped out of my own character'.<sup>19</sup> Despite Valeria's initial reservations, it is her hyperbolic feminine appearance that enables her to gain crucial information from Major Fitz-David that eventually leads to proving her husband's innocence. As illustrated by the second epigraph, it is this ability to recognise the malleability of femininity that Grand would, nearly two decades later, come to promote as a strategy by which the New Woman could empower herself.

In her 1893 article, 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance', Grand twists the concept of what modern-day feminist critics term essentialism to situate femininity as a neglected source of power for the women's movement. She argues that it would be 'disastrously foolish' for women, at this 'critical period of their progress, to endanger their chances of success by being careless of the effect of their personal appearance' on their ability to gain a receptive audience for their opinions.<sup>20</sup> In making this politicised argument, Grand can be seen looking back to Sensation fiction and its exploration of the power that originates from a deceptive feminine appearance. Grand asserts that by 'neglecting to cultivate such attractions as we may have', women are failing to recognise the power of traditional femininity.<sup>21</sup> Like Valeria, who 'cultivates' her naturally feminine appearance with the help of 'paints and powders', Grand implies that women can enhance their influence by refining their womanly attributes: 'women are richly endowed by nature with this force, but it is a thing that can be increased by cultivation'.<sup>22</sup> By refining their personal

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Grand, 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance', p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

appearance and ‘charms of manner’, she claims that women could reassure society that they were not the monstrous ‘masculine women’ presented in the popular press but trustworthy and, most importantly, feminine women whose rational arguments deserve to be respected: ‘if we cultivate charms of manner upon principle, and make the most of our personal appearances, we shall very soon be known as “attractive” in spite of our opinions [...silencing] one of our most inveterate opponents’.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, Grand is more essentialist than the sensationalists. She positions the New Woman, rather than the Old, as the ‘true’ and ‘naturally’ feminine woman, while she ascribes to the Old Woman the markers of artificiality, shallowness and moral corruption that Linton identifies in the *Girl of the Period*.<sup>24</sup> However, Grand simultaneously presents femininity as a construct based on performance and thus it cannot be inherent.

This tension and disjuncture between the representation of femininity as performance and masquerade on the one hand and on the other an endeavour to authenticate ‘true’ femininity persists in both *Sensation* (as evidenced by Alcott’s conflicting representation of her protagonist’s ‘natural’ self verses her masquerade) and *New Woman* literature and serves to further complicate both genres’ portrayal of femininity. In part this conflict and variation in the depiction of femininity arises as a result of historical patriarchal assumptions. While some viewed femininity as a means by which women could be controlled and therefore saw the need to refute stereotypical traits of innocence and self-sacrifice with unfeminine and authoritative heroines, others recognised that because femininity was valued by patriarchal society

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 24; Ibid, p. 26; Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> For Grand, the Old Woman, in complete opposition to the New Woman, has ‘no notion of progress’ but rather she is a ‘creature of custom, who has come to a standstill’ content with her ‘settled prejudices, settled virtues, [and] settled vices’. Sarah Grand, “‘The New Woman and the Old’”, *Lady’s Realm*, 1898, vol. 4, pp. 466-70’, repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 69-76 (p. 71); Ibid, p. 73.

it could be strategically employed to gain authority. As will be shown through this chapter, this tension in the construction of femininity is frequently unresolved. In ‘The Morals of Manner and Appearance’, Grand points to the importance of a woman’s ‘motive’ in exploiting her femininity stating that it must only be used to ‘satisfy the palates of those who test the quality of your opinions’, and not for personal vanity.<sup>25</sup> It is the use of femininity as a strategy for the readers or interlocutor’s seduction into feminism that marks the major difference between Grand and Sensation fiction. In part this variance in intention is determined by Sensation fiction’s concern with the individual, not, as in New Woman literature, the collective rebellion. However, although Sensation fiction demonstrates the ease with which appearances could be manipulated for personal gain, not the feminist aims that Grand would put forward, the approach is remarkably similar.

While Valeria actively increases her femininity in a deliberately performative strategy, other Sensation heroines are less conscious of their physical deceit. Lydia Gwilt, the anti-heroine of Collins’ *Armadale* (1866), is depicted as a woman whose appearance is ‘so often presented to our admiration in pictures and books, [yet] so rarely met with in the living face’.<sup>26</sup> Completely ‘pure of the slightest blemish’, Lydia’s appearance gives no indication of her ‘true’ nature.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Lydia’s rejection of ‘odious powders and paints’ emphasises her naturally feminine appearance that, unlike Valeria, does not need to be enhanced to complete her aims.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence of her beauty, Lydia would have been expected to possess certain moral standards. However, a seductress, bigamist and murderer whose desire for money eventually ends in her suicide, Lydia shocked reviewers who were

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<sup>25</sup> Grand, ‘The Morals of Manner and Appearance’, p. 24; *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Armadale*, ed. by John Sutherland (London: Penguin Group, 2004), p. 277.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

horrified that Collins had created a heroine who ‘through the horrors of forgery, murder, theft, bigamy, gaol, and attempted suicide’ is left ‘without any trace [...on] her beauty’.<sup>29</sup> The reviewer’s critique is not based on Lydia’s actions, but is rather directed at Collins for revealing the opportunities that are granted to women possessing a feminine appearance. Recognising the power of her looks, Lydia, in a tactic that anticipates Grand’s, ‘endeavour[s] to influence the feeling of the community without outraging it’, leaving the reader wondering ‘who would ever have believed that the mischief that woman’s beauty has done [...] could have reached as far’.<sup>30</sup> Although Lydia’s objectives are inverse to those put forward by Grand, Collins’ presentation of his heroine’s ability to use her femininity to create influence over her peers is analogous to the strategy Grand came to advocate in the 1890s.

Interestingly, in comparison to the positive view of femininity presented in Sensation fiction and Grand’s article, in New Woman literature more generally femininity is shown to be dangerous for women, not for men, as a feminine appearance comes to imply ‘weakness, inefficacy, and silly romanticism’.<sup>31</sup> Instead of granting power, conventional looks are presented as the catalyst to a woman’s downfall. Compared to Rhoda Nunn, the heroine of George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* (1893), whose capability and social desirability is indicated by her unconventional looks that ‘might or might not develop a certain beauty’, Monica Madden, Rhoda’s marginalised counterpart, is, like Lydia, of a ‘recognized type of prettiness [...]; from the smooth forehead to the dimpled little chin all its lines were

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Armadale’, *The Spectator*, (9<sup>th</sup> June 1866), 638-40 (pp. 638-9).

<sup>30</sup> Grand, ‘The Morals of Manner and Appearance’, p. 26; Collins, *Armadale*, p. 675.

<sup>31</sup> Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction: Literacy, Textiles and Activism* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 173.

soft and graceful'.<sup>32</sup> However, Monica's lack of 'aptitude for anything but being a pretty cheerful, engaging girl, much dependent on the love and gentleness of those about her' signals failure.<sup>33</sup> Her old-fashioned belief in men's superiority, which Gissing associates with her conventional beauty, results in her marriage to an abusive husband and an unsuccessful affair which ends with her death during childbirth. Monica's orthodox ideas correspond to her feminine appearance, thus emphasising the social undesirability of conventional femininity to the New Woman campaign.

Similarly, in Linton's *The One Too Many* (1894), Moira Brabazon's 'graceful [and], timid' appearance along with her 'silence and unquestioning acquiescence' enables her mother to bully her into marrying the tyrannical Mr Brabazon.<sup>34</sup> However, unlike Monica, Moira comes to realise that by playing the 'rôle of the victim' she has become her 'husband's slave'.<sup>35</sup> In New Woman fiction even those heroines with feminist ideologies but a feminine appearance ultimately fail. In *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Olive Schreiner's heroine, Lyndall, is described as possessing 'elfin-like beauty' (*SAF*, 2); however, with her desire for education and vision of a world in which to be 'born a woman will not be to be born branded' (*SAF*, 154), Lyndall is not the submissive woman Monica and Moira are. Yet, ultimately, Lyndall dies in solitude with only Gregory Rose, disguised as a woman, to nurse her after the death of her illegitimate child.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7; *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, *The One Too Many*, 3 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1894), vol 1, p. 206; *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 197. Moira is contrasted to the 'mannish' New Woman, Effie Chegwin, whose 'bloom' is 'all gone both physically and morally, and in its place that unmistakable hardness with which experience touches the face and eyes, after it has moulded the heart and mind'. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 206.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 319. Emphasis in the original; *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 322.

<sup>36</sup> The ending of Schreiner's novel will be discussed in the Conclusion.

Aligned as it is with the Old Woman and the traditional belief that a woman's 'intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision', in New Woman fiction a feminine appearance is portrayed as a hindrance to the campaign for gender equality.<sup>37</sup> Yet this assumes there is an inherent femininity negating the argument that it is socially induced and can be used to generate change. Rather than focusing on physical attractiveness, New Woman literature draws on the premise that 'there is another kind of beauty, that which is rooted in the mind': a concept by which Grand intended to show that enlightened ideas were indicative of feminine women, not, as in much New Woman fiction, that beauty and social progress were separate.<sup>38</sup> It is the 'habitual self-possession' of female protagonists such as Margaret Ellwood, the heroine of Mona Caird's now unknown novella, *A Romance of the Moors* (1891), that represents New Woman fiction's feminine ideal.<sup>39</sup> The majority of New Woman writers, in contrast to Grand, use their heroines' unconventional and often unfeminine appearance to demonstrate their ability to do battle with the outside forces that attempted to repress them.<sup>40</sup>

To further explore the impact of Sensation and New Woman's fiction's deceptive female protagonists, this chapter will first compare the two genres' portrayal of cross-dressing heroines. The largest distinction between Sensation and New Woman fiction is usually considered to be the introduction of feminist politics in the later decade. However, as has been shown, parallels can be drawn between the two genres in terms of their examination of socio-political definitions of 'woman'

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<sup>37</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1873), p. 90.

<sup>38</sup> Grand, 'Morals of Manner and Appearance', p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> Mona Caird, *A Romance of the Moors* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1891), p. 53.

<sup>40</sup> As well as the examples mentioned previously (Monica Madden, Effie Chegwin and Margaret Ellwood), others include Hester Gresley in Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899) who despite living a 'sheltered life' has a 'white, exhausted face' which 'bore its mark upon her pure forehead and youthful face'. Mary Cholmondeley, *Red Pottage* (London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899), p. 86. Moreover, Cosima Chudleigh in George Paston's (pseudonym of Emily Morse Symonds) *A Writer of Books* (1898) is described as 'pretty [but] in rather an odd, old-fashioned style' (*WB*, 10-11).

and subsequent exposure of anxieties relating to the century's shifting gender boundaries. By focusing on the figure of the cross-dresser in Florence Marryat's *Her Father's Name* (1876) and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), I will argue that twentieth-century misreadings of nineteenth-century gender theory, specifically the two-sex model Thomas Laqueur in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990) identifies as holding precedence in the Victorian period, disregard the forward-thinking narratives of Sensation and New Woman fiction in which ideas about women and gender are radically challenged.

Finally, two separate sections on Florence Wilford's *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868) and Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) will transfer the focus from gender to genre deception as the heroine of each novel disturbs literary expectations of Sensation and New Woman fiction. Beth Palmer argues that 'both gender and genre can be revealed as performative' because the challenge to genre stability is associated with the challenge to gender.<sup>41</sup> I contend that Sensation and New Woman literature's challenge to 'authentic' femininity simultaneously undermines the stability of genre boundaries and categories. Wilford and Caird's novels have been chosen because they serve as examples in which the genre overlap of Sensation and New Woman fiction can be traced through the heroine's conflicting construction.

### **The 'Ambiguous Sex': Cross-dressing Heroines in Sensation and New Woman Fiction**

While Sensation heroines like Jean and Valeria typically only have the power to use their feminine identity to suit their own intentions, other Sensation novels contest

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<sup>41</sup> Beth Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 14.

contemporary assumptions regarding the difference between masculinity and femininity by using cross-dressing narratives to show that their protagonists have the ability to ‘alter’ their gender. One such example is the little-known Sensation novel, *Revealed at Last* (1873) by Albert Eubule Evans. Raised as a boy in order that his/her father may inherit his/her mother’s fortune, Evelyn Montmorency’s ‘true’ gender is eventually revealed by his/her tutor, Mr Hamilton, after he escapes the asylum he has been admitted to in an attempt to prevent him from revealing the secret to Evelyn. Evelyn’s gender-neutral name serves to conflate masculinity and femininity, enabling Evelyn to occupy both binary categories simultaneously. Indeed, I would argue that the reader is ultimately left unsure of Evelyn’s biological sex, which is why I have chosen not to use a gender-specific pronoun in reference to Evelyn.

Although Evelyn is presented as an involuntary cross-dresser by Hamilton, there are hints throughout the narrative that he only determines that Evelyn is female because of his/her ‘unmanly’ appearance.<sup>42</sup> Confused by his ‘strange inexplicable interest’ in Evelyn, Hamilton, it could be argued, rationalises and normalises his love for Evelyn by making him/her female.<sup>43</sup> After it is jokingly suggested to him by a friend ‘what a pity it is that it [Evelyn] is not a girl that you might elope with her’, Hamilton conveniently declares that ‘I almost think it is a girl’.<sup>44</sup> It is from this moment onwards that Evelyn is viewed as female: ‘that was not a boy that sate [sic] before him. What boy ever had such a small, delicate, fleshy hand—still more such a microscopic foot?’<sup>45</sup> This emphasises the vital role sensational crossing narratives

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<sup>42</sup> Albert Eubule Evans, *Revealed at Last*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1873), vol. 1, p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 120. It is also noteworthy that Hamilton refers to Evelyn at ‘it’ here.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 127-8.

place on a person's exterior to construct their gender, whilst simultaneously demonstrating the potential for appearances to be manipulated. The novel ends without revealing Evelyn's 'true' gender (significantly, 'Evelyn' must die in order to allow him/her to become Hamilton's wife) meaning that the title itself is in some sense also a performance.

By using his protagonist to oppose Victorian assumptions regarding the inherent binary of gender, Evans anticipates a key intention of New Woman fiction. Cross-dressing narratives are more typically associated with the end of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the New Woman. A controversial figure constructed largely by the periodical press, the New Woman was, as Marie Mulvey-Roberts states, 'denigrated in some quarters as a "masculine woman"', thus implying that her gender is not stable.<sup>46</sup> The large majority of Victorians believed that gender was inseparable from anatomical sex, and that masculinity and femininity were, and should be, two distinct categories. However, the emergence of an 'ambiguous sex' which is 'neither the one nor the other, possessing the coarser passions and instincts of men without their strength or better judgement' and the 'position and privileges of women without their tenderness, their sense of duty, or their modesty', challenged this perception.<sup>47</sup> A middle-class woman's traditional outlook in life was to marry and have children but the New Woman's entry into, and active participation in, the public sphere (via higher education institutions and professional employment) as well as her rejection of marriage, threatened ideologies of femininity. It was feared that if the New Woman and the Victorian women's movement succeeded in

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<sup>46</sup> Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 'Dracula and the Doctors: Bad Blood, Menstrual Taboo and the New Woman', in *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic*, ed. by William Hughes and Andrew Smith (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 78-95 (p. 79).

<sup>47</sup> 'The Epicene Sex', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, (24<sup>th</sup> August 1872), 242-3 (p. 243).

remodelling gender roles, men and women would become virtually indistinguishable and the foundations of patriarchal society would be undermined.

The cross-dressing heroine is a literal figment of this anxiety as both genders are expressed by her body at once, thus preventing her from being contained within one part of the binary. Ann Heilmann claims that New Woman writers used cross-dressing female protagonists to ‘destabilize the Victorian body politic’ by ‘turn[ing] the body into a site of feminist resistance’.<sup>48</sup> This enabled them to use their fiction to contradict gender essentialism by showing that ‘women *could*, in fact, become men’.<sup>49</sup>

A figurative example of women becoming men occurs in Lady Florence Dixie’s utopian New Woman cross-dressing novel, *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900* (1890). The novel sees Gloria de Lara disguise herself as Hector D’Estrange in order to be elected as Prime Minister and enjoy a successful political career fighting for women’s rights. Dixie emphasises her female protagonist’s inability to conform to either gender by referring to her heroine as both Gloria and Hector in one sentence: ‘Gloria, in other words Hector D’Estrange; for the reader must have no difficulty in recognising in this latter, the beautiful girl’.<sup>50</sup> Gloria/Hector cannot be defined by Victorian codes of gender and so becomes a hybrid of both, implying that a person has the ability both to move between genders and to represent both at any given moment. Furthermore, Gloria/Hector’s dualistic gender identity emphasises that femininity and masculinity are not distinct categories but naturally combined. This is further reiterated as Dixie employs the male pronoun to refer to Gloria/Hector

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<sup>48</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 118.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>50</sup> Lady Florence Dixie, *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900* (London: Henry and Company, 1890), p. 49.

for the majority of the novel. There is one moment, however, when both male and female pronouns are employed. Coming just before Gloria/Hector's parliamentary speech on women's rights, fixed gender identity is deconstructed by the depiction of two genders in one body: 'now *he* has taken his seat. But *she* has risen now'.<sup>51</sup> The dual pronouns serve to destabilise gender binaries and emphasise the volatility of gender as a category. It is also interesting to note that Gloria/Hector's gender is changed at the moment she gives the speech to parliament, implying that women can fulfil this role better than men.

In contrast to Gloria/Hector who is empowered by her ability to disguise herself as a man, Albert Nobbs in George Moore's 1927 novella of the same name is left isolated as a result of her unconventional gender identity. Feeling like 'neither man nor woman, just a perhapser', Albert is depicted as an 'outcast from both sexes'.<sup>52</sup> Instead of creating a gendered identity based on a combination of femininity and masculinity, Albert loses connection to her true gender and 'only remembered occasionally that she was a woman'.<sup>53</sup> Heilmann argues that this difference is based on the author's own gender. She states that, in comparison to female writers who created heroines who were 'energised, not traumatised, by their breeches', Victorian male writers 'presented the cross-dresser, not as a phallic (empowered) woman or female man, but as a castrated, sexless and sad neuter'.<sup>54</sup> This is evidenced by Albert's inability to gain power from her gender manipulation. Instead, as represented by the absence of her female name, she loses her feminine identity and consequently her sense of self. In fact, Albert's inability to 'no longer

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 126. My emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> George Moore, "'Albert Nobbs", *Celibate Lives* (1927)', repr. in *The Collected Short Stories of George Moore: Gender and Genre*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, 5 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), vol. 5, pp. 189-220 (p. 198).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, vol. 5, p. 193.

<sup>54</sup> Ann Heilmann, '(Un)Masking Desire: Cross-Dressing and the Crisis of Gender in New Woman Fiction', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 5.2 (2000), 83-111 (p. 90).

[think] and [feel] as she used to when she wore petticoats [...or] feel like a man though she wore trousers' emphasises that she does not possess any kind of gendered identity.<sup>55</sup>

*Gloriana*, and to a certain extent 'Albert Nobbs', serve to demonstrate, especially with Gloria/Hector's hybrid gender, that New Woman fiction utilises cross-dressing female protagonists to imply that gender is a spectrum. In comparison, although Evans fails to separate masculinity and femininity in his main protagonist, ultimately, given that Evelyn is forced to '[act] the part of boy', this novel illustrates that in Sensation fiction, the ability to alter one's gender is based on a performance of masculinity.<sup>56</sup> Thus, while in sensational cross-dressing narratives the focus is on a person's exterior and that person's ability to stage gender, in New Woman fiction, masculinity and femininity are shown to be naturally combined (although performance is sometimes employed, it is presented as an outward extension of the protagonist's ambiguous gender). However, ultimately, a tension lies in these crossing narratives, specifically in that they construct femininity as both performative (*Gloriana*) and as bodily/mentally fluid (*Revealed at Last*).

To further explore the representation of cross-dressing heroines in Sensation and New Woman fiction, the focus in the remainder of this section will be on Florence Marryat's *Her Father's Name* (1876) and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893). These two novels serve as examples of Sensation and New Woman literature's differing portrayals of the cross-dresser. However, in comparison to the examples mentioned previously, they also challenge these perceptions by contesting the inherent binary of gender as well as the social impact of strict definitions of

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<sup>55</sup> Moore, "'Albert Nobbs'", vol. 5, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> Evans, *Revealed at Last*, vol. 2, p. 202.

gender on women. While the fear of unsexed women and gender slippage is typically associated with the *fin de siècle* and the later women's movement, I argue that Sensation literature adumbrates a central aim of New Woman fiction in its inclusion and portrayal of cross-dressing heroines.

Although Grand maintained throughout her life that she 'greatly deprecate[d] any change that would tend to make women less womanly', her fiction does not present femininity as a fixed entity.<sup>57</sup> Instead, foreshadowing the method of future feminist activists, Grand manipulates socio-political constructions of gender in order to question whether 'femininity is an innate, anatomical essence, or a socio-political construct'.<sup>58</sup> This is particularly evident in her seminal New Woman novel, *The Heavenly Twins*. Containing one of the best-known Victorian fictional depictions of a cross-dressing heroine, the novel sees Angelica Hamilton-Wells disguise herself as a boy in order to rebel against the limitations of her gender. Known only as 'boy' during her period of disguise, Angelica pretends to be her twin brother, Theodore, otherwise known as Diavolo, as she strikes up a friendship with the village Tenor. Published seventeen years prior to *The Heavenly Twins*, Marryat's lesser-known Sensation novel, *Her Father's Name*, similarly employs a cross-dressing heroine to probe Victorian notions of gender construction and question whether seemingly inherent codes of gender are imposed by society. On a quest to solve the mystery surrounding her late father's murder charge, Leona Lacoste repeatedly disguises

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<sup>57</sup> Jane T. Stoddart, "'Illustrated Interview: Sarah Grand'", *Woman at Home*, 1895, vol. 3, pp. 247-52', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 211-19 (p. 214).

<sup>58</sup> Galia Ofek, *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 181. The suffrage campaign used feminine dress to combat the stigma of women being labelled masculine by anti-suffragists. As Kortsch notes, this method served to draw the 'public's attention to the suffragists' beauty and respectability, and perhaps public censure' and so, the 'more radical their message, the more feminine their clothing'. Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction*, p. 91. For more information regarding the use of feminine performance in the suffrage movement see Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

herself as a man. While Greta Depledge claims that by dressing as a man Leona is ‘granted a freedom without any cultural anxieties about the propriety of a woman travelling alone and sleuthing’, I maintain instead that Marryat uses Leona’s cross-dressing not to enable her to cross geographical and societal boundaries, but to show that gender is malleable.<sup>59</sup> Thus, as I will contend, Marryat anticipates a key intention of New Woman fiction by using her cross-dressing heroine to question the inherent binary of gender.

As previously addressed, nineteenth-century theories of gender were founded on the belief that men and women were fundamentally different. Charles Darwin maintained that gender difference was rooted in biology and a result of ‘sexual selection’. He argued that ‘man has ultimately become superior to woman’ because men ‘generally undergo a severe struggle in order to maintain themselves and their families; and this will tend to keep up or even increase their mental powers, and, as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes’.<sup>60</sup> Middle-class Victorian gender hierarchy was largely based on the concept of separate spheres which viewed women as oppositional beings to men and confined them to the domestic world.

Replicating these mid-Victorian ideals, Thomas Laqueur argues that during the latter half of the eighteenth century there was a transition in the social perception from a one-sex model where the female sexual organs were seen as ‘interior versions of what the male had outside—the vagina as penis, the uterus as scrotum’, to a two-sex model where female and male genitalia were ‘constructed as of an entirely

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<sup>59</sup> Greta Depledge, ‘Sensation Fiction and the New Woman’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 196-209 (p. 199).

<sup>60</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: John Murray, 1874), pp. 565-6.

different nature'.<sup>61</sup> Laqueur claims that this noted biological distinction enabled difference to be identified in 'every conceivable aspect of the body and soul, in every physical and moral aspect', thus separating men and women on both biological and psychological grounds.<sup>62</sup> However, Laqueur's two-sex model disregards the forward-thinking narratives of Sensation and New Woman fiction in which ideas about women and gender are radically challenged. By focusing on the figure of the cross-dresser in Marryat's *Her Father's Name* and Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, I will challenge Laqueur's twentieth-century misreading of nineteenth-century gender theory and show that in late-Victorian fiction both masculinity and femininity co-exist in the female body. Consequently, I argue that by using their cross-dressing heroines to deconstruct the conflation of sex and gender, Grand and Marryat foreshadow Simone de Beauvoir's later recognition that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.<sup>63</sup>

In Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, the Tenor, along with the readers who are also first duped by Angelica's disguise, observes Victorian ideals of gender by separating masculinity and femininity into two distinct Jekyll and Hyde categories: 'there was never any devilment in the girl's face; it was always pale and tranquil, almost to sadness. In the boy, on the contrary, there was no trace of that graceful attribute' (*HT*, 374). Gendered assumptions regarding a person's manner and morality are demonstrated to be so ingrained that the Tenor is unable to see Angelica's transgressive nature reflected in her feminine appearance or identify the boy and Angelica as one person. Grand contests the contemporary perception of

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. viii.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 295.

gender that separated masculinity and femininity by showing that it is not Angelica's morals that differ, but the Tenor's perception of gender-inherent characteristics. Like the Tenor, Grand's readers are also forced to unlearn stereotypes as she fails to disclose Angelica's identity until the moment the disguise is discovered by the Tenor.<sup>64</sup>

Strict categories of gender are further destabilised in *The Heavenly Twins* as Grand uses fluctuating pronouns. Employing the male pronoun during the period in which Angelica is disguised as a boy, Grand reverts back to the female pronoun when the Tenor discovers the boy's 'true' gender and identity: "how dare he"—he stopped there, realising the absurdity of it, realising that there was no boy' (*HT*, 435). This linguistic deception encourages readers to reflect on how they identify gender and whether masculinity and femininity are entirely distinct. Victoria Flanagan contends that the extent to which gender is elevated to a 'level where the fact of biology becomes less significant, or temporarily irrelevant' is accomplished by the 'choice of pronoun which is used to identify the cross-dressing character'.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the use of dual and shifting pronouns in Grand's novel serves to illustrate that both men and women have 'feminine' and 'masculine' attributes.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This is a strategy reminiscent of Sensation novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret* where readers are not privy to the 'secret' until the climatic revelation scene.

<sup>65</sup> Victoria Flanagan, *Into the Closet: Cross-Dressing and the Gendered Body in Children's Literature and Film* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> This is further emphasised by the Tenor and his distinctive femininity. Heilmann argues that the Tenor 'performs the feminine male to [...Angelica's] masculine female'. Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 132. However, it is also important to note that the novel draws attention to the Tenor's masculinity when describing his home: 'it was a luxurious apartment, but not effeminate. The luxury was masculine luxury, refined and significant; there was no meaningless feminine fripperies about, nor was there any evidence of sensuous self-indulgence. It was the abode of a cultivated man, but of one who was essentially manly withal' (*HT*, 352).

Like Grand, Marryat also employs dual pronouns to deconstruct binary gender in her cross-dressing Sensation novel, *Her Father's Name*. During a period in which she is disguised as her friend Christobal Don Valera, Leona

locked the door behind *him*, threw off *his* fashionable new habiliments with a sigh of relief, and felt that for a few hours at least *he* might cast aside the restraint that galled *him*, and be what *he* was—Leona Lacoste. ‘So far, so good’, *she* thought, as *she* stretched *herself* upon *her* couch. (*HFN*, 147, my emphasis)<sup>67</sup>

Marryat's change of pronouns here suggests that clothes have the power to alter Leona's gender. After all, as G. Bolich states, ‘without dressing there is no crossdressing’.<sup>68</sup> Whilst wearing male clothes Leona is ‘turned into a man’ (*HFN*, 50), but once these garments are removed, the female pronoun is reinstated to establish the complex role costume and body play in determining a person's gender. Given that Leona must first remove the props of her disguise to expose a different gender, *Her Father's Name* initially appears to conform to the characteristics of other sensational cross-dressing narratives by depicting masculinity as a performance. However, the ease with which Leona crosses genders illustrates that, like Angelica, her gender is not singularly masculine or feminine. As Catherine Pope argues ‘through Leona, Marryat is keen to show a character who embodies the best of both masculine and feminine characteristics, rather than simply a woman who

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<sup>67</sup> The names of the characters in *Her Father's Name* also appear to be part of the novel's cross-dressing plot. ‘Christobal’ is reminiscent of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, ‘Christabel’ (1816) about women who cross gender boundaries. Moreover, Christabel's father's name, Leoline, has interesting resonances with Leona's name which is in itself a pun on lion.

<sup>68</sup> G. G. Bolich, *Crossdressing in Context: Dress, Gender, Transgender, and Crossdressing*, 5 vols (Raleigh: Psyche's Press, 2006), vol. 1, p. 172.

seeks to behave like a man'.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it is only when Leona embraces her dualistic identity that she can truly realise herself.

Despite the significance of Leona's dress in constructing her gender, in contrast to New Woman fiction, it does not have the power to override her 'feminine' instincts. In the light of her inability to control her emotions after she has shot a man during a duel, Christobal warns Leona that 'if you do not show a little more reason in the matter, your sex will become apparent to the whole company' (*HFN*, 61). As the narrative acknowledges that the 'effeminacy of many men in the southern climates much assisted' (*HFN*, 47) Leona in her disguise, Greta Depledge argues that Marryat's novel questions whether 'clothes alone can make a man to fool other men'.<sup>70</sup> Even Leona's masculine clothes are shown to have limitations as Dr Hastings retorts that the disguised Leona 'looks more like a woman stuck into boy's clothes to me' (*HFN*, 145). In undermining the power of physical performance to produce gender, Marryat implies that some elements of femininity are biological and thus inherent in women. Ultimately, Leona is only able to 'mimic' (*HFN*, 51) masculinity, not feel like a 'genuine boy' (*HT*, 443) as Angelica does.

Like Marryat, Grand recognises the role clothes play in the performance of her heroine's masculinity, or more specifically boyhood, by emphasising 'just how important dress is' (*HT*, 439) in the social production of gender. However, in comparison to *Her Father's Name* where gender is at times shown to be a physical masquerade that can be taken on and off, Angelica's boyhood is presented as more than a performance. It is significant that Angelica is performing boyhood as opposed

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<sup>69</sup> Catherine Pope, 'The Regulation of Female Identity in the Novels of Florence Marryat' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2014), p. 118.

<sup>70</sup> Greta Depledge, 'Introduction', in Florence Marryat, *Her Father's Name*, ed. by Greta Depledge (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. i-xxxii (p. xv).

to manhood because as Tina O'Toole argues the boy occupies an intermediate position between femininity and masculinity:

for New Woman writers, the Boy was one avenue through which they could access male privilege, at least temporarily. Much New Woman fiction concentrated on the equality pre-adolescent girls enjoyed alongside their brothers; for instance, Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* depicts the New Girl as a tomboyish character exploring the wilderness alongside the boys. New Woman writers deploy this prelapsarian experience to demonstrate the ways in which such girls are then contained within the private sphere as they grow older.<sup>71</sup>

As Angelica 'moved like a *boy*; [...and] felt like a *boy*' until she was her 'own brother in very truth', she becomes 'mentally and morally [...] exactly what you thought me' (*HT*, 443, my emphasis). Angelica notes that 'having once assumed the character, I began to love it; it came naturally; and the freedom from restraint, I mean the restraint of our tight uncomfortable clothing, was delicious' (*HT*, 442-3). As Heilmann argues, this suggests that 'dressing as a man, and enjoying a man's freedom of movement, had a profoundly masculinising effect on her psyche'.<sup>72</sup> Yet Grand does not portray Angelica as unsexed. Instead, Angelica retains her femininity whilst cross-dressing, thus making her a hybrid of both genders. In using her cross-dressing heroine to undermine the stability of gender categories, Grand, like other New Woman writers, can be seen to look back to Sensation fiction by creating heroines whose physical appearance challenges stereotypes of femininity.

In addition to revealing the freedom of mind that Angelica simultaneously gains when she puts on male clothes, Grand, through the Tenor, shows that gender is constructed in the eye of the beholder. Angelica relishes her ability 'to *convert* a

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<sup>71</sup> Tina O'Toole, *The Irish New Woman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 110.

<sup>72</sup> Heilmann, '(Un)Masking Desire', p. 90.

substantial young woman into such a slender, delicate-looking boy as I make' (*HT*, 439, my emphasis). The word 'convert' illustrates that although Angelica's physical body does not change, apart from the artifice she employs to appear more slender than she really is, she mentally becomes a boy emphasising that individuals are psychological compounds of both genders. This is reiterated in her confession to the Tenor:

I assumed his [Diavolo's] manner and habit when I put these things on, imitated him in everything, tried to think his thoughts, and looked at myself from his point of view; in fact my difficulty was to remember that I was not him. I used to forget sometimes—and think I was. (*HT*, 440)

Flanagan contends that the 'cross-dressing heroine's role is one which explicitly involves the successful assumption of a masculine subjectivity to the extent that the biologically female subject is considered to be a male by secondary characters'.<sup>73</sup> Angelica's disguise is shown to be so convincing that even she begins to forget her biological sex. Illustrating that being human means to combine traits of both genders, Angelica, like the Tenor, fails to separate masculinity and femininity into two distinct categories. Angelica's hybrid gender contradicts the pre-conceived inherent relationship between sex and gender to reveal the 'political possibilities' by which the women's movement could counteract gender stereotypes and illustrate that, as Michelle Mouton states, 'gendered attributes can be attached to any bod[y]'.<sup>74</sup> Thus, as well as destabilising gender boundaries, Grand demonstrates that anatomical sex does not equal gender.

As in *The Heavenly Twins*, Leona's admission that 'she had acted a boy's part so long that she sometimes almost came to think she was one' (*HFN*, 172)

<sup>73</sup> Flanagan, *Into the Closet*, p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> Michelle J. Mouton, 'Taking on Tennyson: Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* and the Ethics of Androgynous Reading', *Victorian Review*, 23.2 (1997), 184-221 (p. 204); *Ibid*, p. 203.

challenges nineteenth-century theories of gender by demonstrating that gender is not fixed. Leona's confession evokes the argument Judith Butler put forward two centuries later to show that femininity is not based on biology, but culturally determined and sustained by iterative performative acts. Butler argues that 'gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self'.<sup>75</sup> Like Angelica, Leona comes to forget her biological sex as other characters fall for her charade. Finding herself alone with Lizzie Vereker, one of the many young women who declare themselves to be in love with the disguised Leona, Leona momentarily fails to remember that she is a woman:

[Lizzie] lifted up a very bright face so close to Leona's that it only seemed natural to my heroine to kiss it. The minute she had done it though, she saw by the blush that dyed her companion's cheek, how imprudent she had been, but it was impossible to explain the action away again. She must let Miss Vereker think what she chose. (*HFN*, 172)

While critics such as Catherine Pope have argued that this episode signals emerging homoerotic tensions within the novel, Leona's decision to kiss Lizzie without considering the consequences suggests that as a woman it comes 'natural' to her to kiss her best friend.<sup>76</sup> Despite acting in a way usually associated with heterosexual masculinity, Leona's actions reflect middle-class women's friendship patterns in the nineteenth century. Sharon Marcus argues that these relationships between women frequently 'worked in tandem with heterosexual exchange and patriarchal gender

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<sup>75</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 191.

<sup>76</sup> Pope, 'The Regulation of Female Identity in the Novels of Florence Marryat', pp. 119-20.

norms'.<sup>77</sup> However, she also notes in relation to Sophia Jex-Blake's account of a kiss with her friend Octavia Hill that these friendships opened up space for the development of lesbian relations.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, it is only after Lizzie's flushed response that Leona realises the sexual connotations of what she has just done.

In *The Heavenly Twins*, after the revelation of her cross-dressing antics, Angelica contends that because men are 'educated deliberately to think of women chiefly as the opposite sex', she was forced to cross-dress in order to enjoy the 'benefit of free intercourse with [the] masculine mind undiluted by [the] masculine prejudices and proclivities with regard my sex' (*HT*, 444). Angelica achieves her desire as, while disguised as the boy, her friendship with the Tenor flourishes as he treats her as his equal. However, upon the revelation of her 'true' gender after a boating accident, their friendship comes to a sudden end as gender stereotypes disrupt their relationship. The Tenor acknowledges that it was 'curious how the new knowledge already affected his attitude towards her' even though 'it was only a change of idea really, the boy was a girl, that was all; but what a difference it made' (*HT*, 435). Unable to combine into one person the boy and Angelica, the Tenor cannot 'drop either of the two individualities which had hitherto been so distinct' (*HT*, 436). His response emphasises the difficulty in realising that gender identities cannot be differentiated into binary categories but rather that gender represents a scale which individuals can negotiate. It is also worth noting that it is the Tenor's 'idea' which changes, not Angelica's sex, reinforcing Grand's message that to be human is to have attributes of both femininity and masculinity.

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<sup>77</sup> Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Although the endings of both *The Heavenly Twins* and *Her Father's Name* see Angelica and Leona give up the freedom that cross-dressing affords them by marrying, their submission to patriarchal bounds is not so straightforward. Firstly, it is Leona and Angelica who, in a role-reversal, propose to their respective husbands. Moreover, Angelica's marriage is founded on the 'bargain' that her husband 'should let me do as I liked' (*HT*, 445). Leona and Angelica enter into marriage only once their autonomy has first been established, both to their own satisfaction and in the eyes of the man they are marrying.<sup>79</sup> Thus, this enables them to retain the independence cross-dressing offered them.

By portraying the artificiality of gender categories, Grand and Marryat, along with the majority of the other authors discussed within the course of this section, demonstrate that a person's gender is not based on their anatomy but is instead culturally determined. Angelica and Leona construct their own hybrid identity that, reinforced by their outward expression of masculinity, has attributes of both genders. However, neither resembles the masculine women portrayed in the popular press. Rather, in combining masculine and feminine characteristics, Leona and Angelica serve, as Mouton argues, to 'challenge readers to interpret [...people], not as men or women, but as androgynes'.<sup>80</sup> Yet, Leona and Angelica are not genderless. Instead they occupy both binary categories simultaneously to illustrate that gender is a construct.

To further oppose the contemporary rhetoric that associated femininity with domesticity and passivity, Grand and Marryat expose the potential artificiality of

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<sup>79</sup> However, given that Angelica's husband, Mr Kilroy, prohibits her going public as a musician (an act that leads Angelica to cross-dress), she must reinstate her desire for marital independence once her masquerade is revealed.

<sup>80</sup> Mouton, 'Taking on Tennyson', p. 185.

appearance by presenting gender as a spectrum that, at times with the ease of a costume change, can be engineered and used by women to generate power. Leona's and Angelica's masculine disguises are accepted because they successfully subvert socio-political expectations of gender. By having their heroines disrupt stereotypes of gender, Marryat and Grand demonstrate the artificiality of socio-political constructions of gender and illustrate the ease with which they can be inverted and exploited. This enables both Grand and Marryat to use their cross-dressing female protagonists to make a broader statement regarding the inherent malleability of gender and its ability to be manipulated, as well as, in the wider political sense, the untenability of withholding rights from woman on the grounds of their essential difference from men.

As addressed in relation to Evans', Dixie's and Moore's cross-dressing narratives, in Sensation fiction gender is typically shown to be achieved through iterative performative acts, whereas in New Woman literature femininity and masculinity are shown to be part of the human spectrum. However, *Her Father's Name* contests this by depicting Leona to have inherent traits of both masculinity and femininity. Consequently, given the similarities between Grand's and Marryat's portrayal of a cross-dressing female protagonist, Heilmann's statement that New Woman writers used their cross-dressing narratives to imply that 'women *could*, in fact, become men' can also be applied to Sensation fiction. However, while both novels expose the social construction of femininity, neither Grand nor Marryat offer the same direct challenge to the concept of masculinity. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both Angelica and Leona are aided in their cross-dressing by the limitations of masculinity in the men who surround them: Leona in the natural femininity of Brazil's native men and Angelica by Diavolo's sensitivity and

feminine appearance and the Tenor's femininity. This suggests that like femininity, masculinity is a patriarchal construct designed to enable men to maintain their dominance.

As Leona and Angelica expose the instability of femininity, *Her Father's Name* and *The Heavenly Twins* emphasise the role of Sensation and New Woman fiction in the formation of modern ideas of gender, in particular that gender is a social construct. These two novels also serve to challenge Laqueur's twentieth-century misreading of nineteenth-century theories of gender and demonstrate that in the forward-thinking cross-dressing narratives of Sensation and New Woman literature, ideas about women and gender are radically contested. By illustrating that a person is concurrently masculine and feminine, Marryat and Grand simultaneously refute the nineteenth-century notion that women were biologically inferior to men and demonstrate that masculinity and femininity are not distinctive categories, but co-exist in the female (and also male) body.

While the discussion in this chapter has so far focused on Sensation and New Woman fiction's heroines' ability to manipulate gender expectations, attention will now pass to genre deception. As demonstrated by *Her Father's Name* and *The Heavenly Twins*, gender subversion operates in tandem with genre subversion as the authors challenge normative thinking in several ways at once. By depicting gender as a socio-political construct, this renders the heroines untrustworthy and in turn their instability, even when their physiognomy is not purposefully manipulated, deconstructs the genre itself. While cross-dressing narratives are about protagonists seizing control of their representation in a society that denies them control over their own bodies, the protagonists of Florence Wilford's *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868) and Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) regain control of their bodies, not via

performance/masquerade, but by writing (Wilford) and self-defence (Caird). It is the former of these novels to which attention will first be turned.

### **The Female Writer: Art and Autonomy in Florence Wilford's *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868)**

Anticipating Olive Schreiner who in a letter in 1889 stated that 'it is not against men we have to fight but against ourselves within ourselves', *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868) by Florence Wilford is a little-known sensational Künstlerroman that explores a woman's struggle to align her literary ambitions with social expectations of femininity.<sup>81</sup> The heroine of the novel, Marion Hilliard (later Bartram), successfully publishes the Sensation novel, 'Mark's Dream', but is forced to keep her authorship a secret as she endeavours to be her husband Nigel Bartram's 'ideal' woman. In exploring the internal identity crisis women experienced who disrupted social and gender hierarchies and in delineating the power of writing to overcome this conflict, I argue that Wilford creates a heroine more typically associated with New Woman fiction of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>82</sup>

An important figure of New Woman literature, the fictional female author gives voice to women's experience as she enables the writers to 're-enact autobiographical dilemmas' they themselves faced and that Heilmann identifies as a

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<sup>81</sup> Olive Schreiner to Mary King Roberts (1889), *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online*, <<https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=137&letterid=331>> [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016].

<sup>82</sup> This autobiographical commentary is largely absent from Sensation fiction. One of the few novels to include a fictional writer is Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864). However, despite articulating some of Braddon's own opinions regarding the merits of Sensation fiction, the writer, Sigismund Smith, is male and therefore does not offer an insight into the complex symbolism of the female writer.

defining feature of the later genre.<sup>83</sup> Yet, Wilford's novel serves to confuse Heilmann's definition of New Woman fiction by providing an exploration of the internal struggle to marry intellectual and socially acceptable womanly values alongside sensationally-standard plot devices. I argue that Marion blurs the boundaries between Sensation and New Woman fiction as, like the fictional female writers in New Woman novels such as George Egerton's *The Wheel of God* (1898) and Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899), she serves as a 'compound figure' for the intellectual woman and the obstacles she will face in subverting social definitions of femininity.<sup>84</sup> Further, I contend that the novel's metafictional strategy doubles the process of the female Bildungsroman's journey towards writerly independence—it is by investigating the problems her heroine has to overcome that Wilford achieves her own literary autonomy—and that this also points to the internal struggle Wilford herself faced throughout her life.

Little has been written, or was previously known, about Wilford and her literary career and consequently she has slipped from literary consciousness. However, by tracking her through census records and other public documents, I have discovered formerly unknown details about Wilford's life which help to shed more light on her fiction. Before undertaking an analysis of Wilford's representation of the fictional female artist in *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, it is important to explore this context regarding her life and literary inspiration.

Born on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 1836 in Woolwich, Kent, Wilford was the youngest of four children to parents Edmund Neal and Jane (née Drew) Wilford.

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<sup>83</sup> Ann Heilmann, "'New Woman' Fiction and Fin de Siècle Feminism', *Women's Writing*, 3 (1996), 197-216 (p. 205).

<sup>84</sup> Lyn Pykett, 'Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of the Female Artist in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s', in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 135-50 (p. 136).

Jane died just days after Wilford's birth and Edmund, who was born in Dublin and a Captain in the Royal Artillery stationed at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, went on to marry for a second time in 1841 and had another two children. Census records reveal that for the majority of her life Wilford lived apart from her father and rest of her family as a lodger of independent means in various houses.<sup>85</sup> I have been unable to locate Wilford in the 1861 census records, the decade in which she wrote *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, and so the circumstances surrounding her inspiration remain somewhat of a mystery. However, in a letter from Wilford's friend Charlotte Mary Yonge to Christabel Rose Coleridge on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1865, Yonge details that Wilford has been 'so ill used' that she had not contributed anything to the *Barnacle* suggesting that Wilford may have faced some kind of personal upset.<sup>86</sup> The *Barnacle* was a manuscript magazine which circulated among members of the Gosling Society containing hand-written and hand-illustrated stories (some of which stretched across several volumes), poems and the occasional musical score.

Established by Yonge at the suggestion of her cousin Alice Mary Coleridge, the Gosling Society, which ran from 1859 to 1877, was an essay society for 'young girls who were in need of more mental stimulation than the life of a Victorian daughter at home afforded them'.<sup>87</sup> Listed as being a 'scholar at home' in the 1851 census, Wilford was clearly well educated and well read. This is further exemplified

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<sup>85</sup> In 1841 Wilford is living with her father, siblings (apart from her older sister Emma Angela) and other relatives in Woolwich. Emma is recorded as being a visitor in the home of Ruth Wilford and her three unmarried daughters in Pilton, Devon. Given that Ruth was also born in Ireland, and has the same surname, it seems likely that Ruth was related to Edmund. Wilford is listed as living with her aunt, Maria Christall, and maternal grandmother, Mary A. Drew, in 1851. In 1881 Wilford is shown for the first time living together with her father and Emma.

<sup>86</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge to Christabel Rose Coleridge (30<sup>th</sup> October 1865), *The Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Charlotte Mitchell, Ellen Jordan and Helen Schinske, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/2078>> [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

<sup>87</sup> Ellen Jordan, Charlotte Mitchell and Helen Schinske, "'A Handmaid to the Church': How John Keble Shaped the Career of Charlotte Yonge, the 'Novelist of the Oxford Movement'", in *John Keble in Context*, ed. by Kirstie Blair (London: Anthem Press, 2004), pp. 175-91 (p. 184).

by the chapter epigraphs in *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* which contain quotations from authors such as William Wordsworth, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti. Ellen Jordan, Charlotte Mitchell and Helen Schinske contend that the foundation of the Gosling Society, which coincided with the campaign for women's entry to higher education institutions, 'reflects the anxiety felt by many Victorians about the restricted educational opportunities for women'.<sup>88</sup> While, as Jordan, Mitchell and Schinske note, the Goslings seemingly did not benefit personally from admission of women to universities, Julia Courtney affirms that the Gosling Society members were of the 'generation that in turn provided the women teachers, college principals, and high school founders of the 1880s'.<sup>89</sup> Each member of the Gosling Society adopted a pen-name (Wilford's was 'Turkschap') and was required to produce articles for the *Barnacle*. Other members included Frances Mary Peard ('Fernseed'), Mildred Mary Coleridge ('Ladybird') and Mary Augusta Arnold ('Windermere'), the future Mrs Humphry Ward.

Wilford produced several articles for the *Barnacle* which prior to my research were undiscovered; these include the poem, 'Albert Durer's Little Daughters' (1865), a lengthier story titled 'A Vantage Ground for Doing Good' (1866-7) and the essay 'The Men and Women of Books' (1867). The poem, included in its entirety in the Appendix to this thesis, revolves around a little girl watching the birds at her window while her father paints. The girl, so 'pure, and sweet and gentle', acts as a 'silent messenger' who reminds her father of 'hearts above'.<sup>90</sup> The religious allegory of Wilford's poem resonates in many of her novels thus cementing it as an

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Julia Courtney, 'The *Barnacle*: A Manuscript Magazine of the 1860s', in *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, ed. by Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone (London: University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 71-97 (p. 72).

<sup>90</sup> Florence Wilford, 'Albert Durer's Little Daughters', *The Barnacle: Gosling Magazine*, 10 (1865), no page no., Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 823.99 318.

important aspect of her writing. Yet, as will be emphasised when some of her other novels are examined later in this section, it also serves to make evident that *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* stands outside of Wilford's canon. 'The Men and Women of Books', published a year before *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, discusses the construction of the Victorian heroine. Unfortunately, due to the articles in the *Barnacle* being handwritten in a frequently indecipherable hand, I have only been able to partly transcribe this essay (it is also included in the Appendix). Nevertheless, it gives an interesting insight into Wilford's thoughts regarding the Victorian heroine and Sensation fiction around the time she was writing *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, as well as demonstrating that she was familiar with the writings of Ellen Wood and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. This article and Wilford's construction of her heroine will be explored in more depth later in this section.

Returning to the circumstances surrounding Wilford's life at the time she wrote *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, the suggestion that Wilford suffered personal hardship during the 1860s is substantiated up by another letter from Yonge several years later in which she expresses her happiness that Wilford has 'brought back [her] invalid safe and better' but wishes that Wilford 'could speak better of [her] eldest sister'.<sup>91</sup> It is most likely that the invalid Yonge is referring to here is Wilford's aunt, Maria Cristall, with whom she stayed frequently throughout the 1860s.<sup>92</sup> Wilford never married but remained close to her older sister, Emma Angela, throughout her life.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge to Florence Wilford (6<sup>th</sup> May 1868), *Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Mitchell, Jordan and Schinske, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/2244>> [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

<sup>92</sup> Letters from 26<sup>th</sup> June 1861 (Charlotte Mary Yonge to Ann Maria Carter Smith) and 11<sup>th</sup> June 1863 (Yonge to Carter Smith) reveal that Wilford was residing with her aunt. Volume 14 (date unknown but presumably around 1867) of the *Barnacle* also lists Wilford as living with 'Miss Crystal'.

<sup>93</sup> It appears that Emma wrote poetry as in a letter from 18<sup>th</sup> October 1890 to Wilford, Yonge states her hope that she might be able to shortly publish Emma's work. *Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Mitchell, Jordan and Schinske, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/3165>> [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018].

In fact, it was Emma who applied to the Royal Literary Fund on her sister's behalf in July 1889. The basis of the application is given as Wilford's poor health which Emma states 'has always been considerably delicate'.<sup>94</sup> In her supporting letter to the Royal Literary Fund Committee, Emma details that Wilford has been unable to write since a 'bad attack of congestion of the lungs was followed by a severe mental-attack which involved her being placed under medical-law for several months'.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, as exemplified by her bibliography, Wilford published little from 1883 until her death in 1897. Admissions registers for Brislington House, Bristol and North Grove House, Cheshire reveal that Wilford spent the period between 1883 and 1896 in and out of psychiatric institutions typically staying for only a couple of months at a time before being discharged.<sup>96</sup>

Wilford's Royal Literary Fund application was supported by three letters from Isabella Bayne, John R. Scott, chaplain to the Royal Artillery Regiment, and Yonge. Yonge, the better-known Victorian novelist, and Wilford sustained a long personal and professional relationship which stretched across thirty years. Indeed, it appears that Yonge acted as a kind of literary mentor to Wilford throughout her life. This is exemplified by a letter from the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1861 in which Yonge advises Wilford that Miss Mozley's *Magazine for the Young* would be the best place to publish the 'Seven Campbells'.<sup>97</sup> Yonge also edited two of Wilford's novels

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2018]. Emma's poem titled 'The Treasures of the Snow: Feast of the Purification' and signed 'W' was printed in the *Monthly Packet* in February 1891.

<sup>94</sup> Emma Angela Wilford to Arthur Llewelyn Roberts (24<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, mental ill health is also a feature of New Woman biographic. For instance, both Grand and Charlotte Perkins Gilman suffered with mental health issues, specifically nervous breakdowns, throughout their lives.

<sup>97</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge to Florence Wilford (22<sup>nd</sup> April 1861), *Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Mitchell, Jordan and Schinske, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/1827>> [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018]. In a letter from 20<sup>th</sup> February 1871, Yonge appears to be discussing the plot of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* with Anne Sturges Bourne. She writes, 'I always imagined Marks Dream to be a kind of imitation of the French novels learnt with a clever woman's intellect but not her heart and without

(*Beneath the Cross, Readings for Children on our Lord's Seven Sayings* [1881] and *A Mother and her Boys* [1895?]) and published several of her novels including *A Vantage Ground, and Other Tales* (1879) in her magazine, the *Monthly Packet*. Describing Wilford as a 'person of great merit personally, and considerable talent and industry as a writer of works of excellent tone', Yonge discloses that in part as a result of 'more than ordinary troubles in her family [...which] have tried her health and spirits most severely', 'attacks of insanity have, during the last few years, rendered mental exertion more difficult or rather impossible'.<sup>98</sup> Despite these supporting statements, the application was ultimately rejected for reasons of 'authorship insufficient' and Wilford died on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1897 from bronchitis and pneumonia in Brislington House.<sup>99</sup> On her death certificate Wilford is listed as 'formerly an authoress' under occupation. Surprisingly, given the reason for her Royal Literary Fund application, she left effects valued at over £4000 to her sister.

Wilford produced around twenty novels and two short story collections during her lifetime, the majority of which were published by Joseph Masters.<sup>100</sup>

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knowing how bad it was, so that it was quite possible to outgrow it. You see Ada says Marion was much what she was made by those with her. I thought she was entirely without love for Fabian except sisterly'. Charlotte Mary Yonge to Anne Sturges Bourne (20<sup>th</sup> February 1871), *Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Mitchell, Jordan and Schinske, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/2399>> [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018].

<sup>98</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge to Arthur Llewelyn Roberts (19<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/4.

<sup>99</sup> Royal Literary Fund Application Form, Florence Wilford—signed Emma Angela Wilford on behalf of her sister, who was an inmate of an asylum (24<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/1.

<sup>100</sup> With no biography or conclusive list of Wilford's texts I have constructed this list from the British Library catalogue, COPAC and Wilford's Royal Literary Fund application form: *Master of Churrchill Abbots and his Little Friends* (1858); *Joy in Duty* (1859); *Play and Earnest* (1860); *A Maiden of our own Day* (1862—ran to three editions); *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868); *The King of a Day; or, Glimpses of French Life in the Fifteenth Century* (1868); *Vivia, a Modern Story* (1870); *Golden Gorse; and Uncle Mark's Snow-Balls* (1872); *What Friends Are Meant for* (1872); *Holiday Tales* (1873); *Little Lives and a Great Love* (1874); *No Man's Land, or How the Church Came to It* (1874); *Dominie Freylinghausen* (1875); *Harry Deane's Life-Boat* (1876); *In the Backwoods* (1877); *A Vantage Ground, and Other Tales* (1879); *Self-Conquest: The Story of Dulcie Ward* (1881); *Beneath the Cross, Readings for Children on our Lord's Seven Sayings* (1881—ran to two editions); *Tender and True* ([also referred to as *Tried and True*] 1882); *Short Stories of Mothers Meetings* (1883); *A Mother and her Boys* (1895?). Wilford also contributed to *The Miz Maze; or, The Winkworth Puzzle: A Story in Letters, by Nine Authors* (1883).

Masters established his publishing business in 1838 and was known primarily for his prosperous series of Sermons by High Churchmen and for being the publisher to the Ecclesiological Society.<sup>101</sup> One novel of Wilford's to be published by Masters was *A Maiden of our own Day* (1862)—this novel is listed on the title page of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*. The plot revolves around Gyneth Deshon and the events in her life leading up to her engagement to Lewis Grantham. Like Wilford, Gyneth has lived away from her family for the majority of her life and so when she returns to live with them they appear 'almost strangers' to her.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, although it does not serve as a major plot point, Gyneth is a writer. At the beginning of the novel she is writing a story about Japan and has a letter defending William Gladstone's 'Homeric' published in the newspaper.<sup>103</sup> However, upon her marriage, Gyneth gives up on her previous literary ambitions dismissing them because they 'belonged to my maiden days, and I buried [them] decently on the eve of my wedding'.<sup>104</sup> Unlike Marion in *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, Gyneth does not suffer a similar authorial crisis in making this decision but rather views it to be a necessary step in ensuring a happy marriage. A large proportion of Wilford's other novels including *What Friends Are Meant for* (1872) and *Tender and True* (1882) were published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

However, Wilford turned to a different publisher, Frederick Warne, for her more sensational novel. Primarily a children's book publisher, Warne is today best known for publishing Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) and thus there

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<sup>101</sup> George Cameron, 'Joseph Masters, Esq', *Bookseller: A Handbook of British and Foreign Literature*, 68 (1863), 495 (p. 495).

<sup>102</sup> Florence Wilford, *A Maiden of our own Day* (London: Joseph Masters, 1862), p. 51.

<sup>103</sup> Before becoming Prime Minister of Great Britain, William Gladstone wrote the book *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* (1858) in which he discussed a range of issues within Homer's work.

<sup>104</sup> Wilford, *A Maiden of our own Day*, p. 534.

appears to be little rationale for Wilford choosing him as her publisher.<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, Wilford's novel *Vivia* (1870) was also first published by Warne. However, unlike *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, it is not in the least sensational but rather concerns itself with the slowly blossoming romance between Gervase More and the heroine, Vivia Carmichael, who despite her claim that 'she had a strong mind; she knew her own mind clearly' comes to wish her future husband will 'feel how much you are above me'.<sup>106</sup> As will be explored in detail later in this section, self-deprecation also afflicts the heroine of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*. This novel was published as part of Warne's Companion Library series and sold for one shilling. It ran to 'two or three' editions but was out of print by 1889.<sup>107</sup>

Emma's supporting letter to the Royal Literary Fund details that three chapters—it was in fact only two—and illustrations were added to the second edition of the novel.<sup>108</sup> These were chapters VI ('Silent Growth') and XI ('Hugh Manners'). In the preface to the 1869 edition of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, Wilford states that these 'few very slight additions' serve to 'give distinctness to two of the characters' (*NBI*, no page no.). Chapter XI adds relatively little to the overall novel, introducing the character of Hugh Manners who seemingly desires to marry Nigel's sister, Ada, and has Nigel briefly question whether he can trust Marion before quickly dismissing this anxiety. Chapter VI contributes much more in terms of developing the characterisation of the heroine.

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<sup>105</sup> 'Frederick Warne', *Penguin*, <<http://www.penguin.com/publishers/frederickwarne/>> [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018]. Warne later rejected *Dominie Freylinghausen* (1875) which had been serialised in the *Monthly Packet* from January to June 1872. Charlotte Mary Yonge to Christabel Coleridge (6<sup>th</sup> June 1872?), *Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge*, ed. by Mitchell, Jordan and Helen, <<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/yonge/2449>> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018].

<sup>106</sup> Florence Wilford, *Vivia* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1870), p. 24; *Ibid*, p. 409.

<sup>107</sup> Royal Literary Fund Application Form, Florence Wilford—signed Emma Angela Wilford on behalf of her sister, who was an inmate of an asylum (24<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/1.

<sup>108</sup> Emma Angela Wilford to Arthur Llewelyn Roberts (24<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/2.

This chapter revolves around a trip to a lending library in order to search out a book for Blanche, Marion's older sister who treats Marion as if she were a 'machine' (*NBI*, 69). At the start of the novel, Marion is living with Blanche and serving as governess to her children. It is whilst at the lending library that one of Blanche's sons who accompanies them on the trip discovers 'Mark's Dream'. The reader learns that Marion has written the Sensation novel 'Mark's Dream' during her earlier interactions with Nigel who is reviewing the novel. Initially presuming that 'Mark's Dream' has been written by a man, Nigel finds the author to be a 'man of most decided genius, but perhaps not of very high principle' (*NBI*, 17). However, when Marion questions his assumption of the author's gender, Nigel's opinion changes and his review, echoing contemporary critical denunciations of female Sensation authors, becomes 'ten times more cruel' (*NBI*, 49) as his criticism reverts from assessing the literary acclaim of 'Mark's Dream' to a judgement based only on its author's gender. In Chapter VI, Marion, embarrassed by the attention being paid to her novel, determines to take out a '*lady's book*' (*NBI*, 65, emphasis in the original) after reading Nigel's review of it. Nigel's review emphasises the book's 'gentle and feminine tone, the elevation and purity of its sentiments' (*NBI*, 66) and consequently Marion comes to learn that 'this was how he liked a woman to write! Ah, the book had fresh interest for her now! [...] It would help to show her what women ought to be' (*NBI*, 66-7). Thus this chapter becomes the first in which Marion begins to mould herself to Nigel's ideals and reject her previous ambitions:

all that she had valued in the past seemed blotted out from her life [...]. What had her mind fed upon, what had her soul aspired to, through the past years, before that influence had come into her life which had given such a strange new bent to her thoughts and wishes? (*NBI*, 67-8)

The narrative emphasises that Marion's reading of the 'lady's book' signals the beginning of a change in her: 'she did not feel any change passing over her, and yet she was changing' (*NBI*, 73). In adding this chapter, Wilford enhances Marion's characterisation and adds some rationale as to why she later determines to reject her literary past.

In comparison to the majority of Wilford's other novels and the poem 'Albert Durer's Little Daughters' which are marked by their religious overtones, *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* adapts itself to contemporary literary trends. Pandering to the public's desire for scandalous tales, Sensation fiction typically centres on the crimes committed and/or the secrets concealed within apparently proper, bourgeois middle-class homes. In *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* it is the secret of Marion's literary authorship and intellectual ability which is at the heart of the novel's events. Wilford's novel also obeys genre conventions by having Nigel serve as the gullible, unknowing husband who represents an outdated mode of masculinity. Yet whilst *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* observes certain principles of the Sensation genre, it simultaneously subverts others. This is done most notably through the figure of Marion. As discussed previously, Wilford's article 'The Men and Women of Books' expresses her frustration regarding the 'totally false impression' provided in 'cheap romances' and Sensation literature 'that all notable people are either strikingly beautiful or pathetically ugly' and that to be 'decently goodlooking [sic] stamps a person at once as an inferior being'.<sup>109</sup> Given that Marion is described as 'pale, with dark brown hair, very dark eyes, regular but rather insignificant features, and a grave quiet expression' (*NBI*, 3), Wilford can be seen using her heroine to consciously resist certain conventions of the Sensation genre. Moreover, in comparison to Sensation

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<sup>109</sup> Florence Wilford, 'The Men and Women of Books', *The Barnacle: Gosling Magazine*, 17 (1867), no page no., Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 823.99 322.

novels such as Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) where the (anti) heroine is positioned as a villainess because she defies assumptions of femininity, Marion's determination to escape the limited prospects of a middle-class woman's life through creative industry aligns her more closely with the New Woman heroine. Marion also challenges the critical devaluation of Victorian women authors and contemporary stereotypes of the female Sensation author as one who must have had a 'strange and sad acquaintance with the darker side of life, who understood all but too well the black secrets of the human heart; who had herself sinned and suffered, and had written out of the depths of her own miserable experience' (*NBI*, 49). Instead, foreshadowing New Woman protagonists such as Hester Gresley in Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* who writes to create individual and decidedly female agency, Marion uses fiction to give purpose to her life.

In part due to her differing model of a Sensation heroine, Wilford received a vastly different critical response compared to other female novelists of the 1860s and 1870s. *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* was celebrated by reviewers as a 'clever and original tale' whose strong female protagonist they considered 'too rare in our present literature'.<sup>110</sup> In its evaluation of the novel, the *Saturday Review* praised Wilford for creating a heroine who 'so evidently comes from inward experience that we regard it as a real and valuable contribution to the existing evidence on the much-vexed question as to the capacity and sphere of "clever women"'.<sup>111</sup> Thus, like the novels by Wilford's New Woman counterparts that are defined by their authors' 'autobiographical dilemmas', *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* is similarly assumed to be influenced by a personal understanding of the self-sacrifice of producing novels.

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<sup>110</sup> 'Nigel Bartram's Ideal', *The Spectator* (23<sup>rd</sup> January 1869), 109-10 (p. 109); 'Nigel Bartram's Ideal', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, (9<sup>th</sup> January 1869), 59-60 (p. 59).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

This determination becomes more significant given what we now know of Wilford's later life and her own struggle to write. However, it is important to note that whereas Marion's self-sacrifice is based on her desire to represent Nigel's ideal, Wilford's literary problems were caused by her ill-health, thus aligning her with New Woman writers and their protagonists whose health fades as their texts grow. After the publication of *Red Pottage*, Cholmondeley feared that her literary talents were failing her: 'I am so strong. I have never been so well as I am now. And I have never had so little mental grasp. Will my powers really return. I doubt it'.<sup>112</sup> The plot of *Red Pottage* centres on two women, Rachel West and Hester Gresley. Living with her brother, the vicar of Warpington, whilst she completes her second novel, Hester, a novelist, suffers a prolonged nervous illness after her brother's disapproval of her writing leads him to destroy her manuscript. Taking *Red Pottage* as representative of the portrayal of the woman writer in New Woman fiction demonstrates how New Woman authors drew on their own personal experience to capture the struggle they faced as artists and as women. Whilst writing enables the New Woman, and her writer-protagonist, to pursue a fulfilling purpose in life and achieve self-discovery, it simultaneously threatens their bodies to the point of destruction. In its (perhaps unconscious) doubling of the writerly experience and commentary on the difficulties of female authorship, I argue that *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* adumbrates these concerns.

The statement made by the *Saturday Review* also suggests a wider intention of Wilford's novel. Regarding it as a narrative which involves itself in the contemporary discussion surrounding middle-class women's intellectual opportunities, the anonymous reviewer positions *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* as a novel-with-a-purpose by arguing that Marion exposes the contemporary uncertainty

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<sup>112</sup> Mary Cholmondeley (Diary, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1908), cited in Carolyn de la L. Oulton, *Let the Flowers Go: A Life of Mary Cholmondeley* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), p. 148.

regarding the impact of women's domestic liberty on marriage and the marital home. Social anxiety regarding female employment was focused on the impact middle-class women's economic liberation would have on gender hierarchy and the institution of marriage. Indicative of similar attacks made in response to the growing demand for female professional employment during the nineteenth century, Dr W. Withers Moore declared that

women are made and meant to be not men, but mothers of men. A noble mother, a noble wife—are not these the designations in which we find the highest ideal of noble womanhood? Woman was formed to be man's helpmeet, not his rival; heart, not head; sustainer, not leader.<sup>113</sup>

Linton likewise (and ironically given her own professional role) claimed that 'wife labour is the cancer which destroys the poor man's peace'.<sup>114</sup> I contend that Wilford's novel, reflecting the aims of the Gosling Society, serves to counteract these contemporary anxieties by illustrating that women who desire more intellectually fulfilling lives are not a threat to society.

Prior to her marriage, Marion expresses her dissatisfaction and frustration with the limited prospects of her life as she starts to question the 'numerous contradictory dogmas' about women that two decades later Caird would argue were all 'more or less falsified by this universal though sublimely unconscious ignorance' regarding "'woman's nature'".<sup>115</sup> Registering a 'spark of ambition, a noble discontent—not with her surroundings, but with herself—a longing after something like intellectual life, a feeling that at six and twenty she was still too young to give

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<sup>113</sup> W. Withers Moore, 'President's Address, Delivered at the Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association: The Higher Education of Women', *British Medical Journal*, (14<sup>th</sup> August 1886), 295-9 (p. 298).

<sup>114</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, "'Man's Might and Woman's Right'", *Saturday Review* (3<sup>rd</sup> May 1856), pp. 5-6', repr. in *Victorian and Edwardian Anti-Feminism*, ed. by Valerie Sanders and Lucy Delap, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 187-90 (p. 190).

<sup>115</sup> Caird, 'Marriage', p. 186.

up all personal hopes and aims, to let her mind lie fallow', Marion begins to 'feel impatient of all her past, to despise all that she had done, or had dreamed of doing: she began to wish to *be* rather than to *do*—to be something that noble and gentle minds could take pleasure in, could recognize as not altogether alien' (*NBI*, 55, emphasis in the original). Desiring to be valued purely for her intellectual abilities, Marion strives to step outside the traditional boundaries of a middle-class woman's life. She becomes increasingly conscious of a 'strange new sensation' in her heart, and a mind 'almost painfully alive, full of eager thoughts and fancies and longings' (*NBI*, 56). The focus on Marion's body implies that it is only through a disassociation from external social prejudices and attention paid to her authentic desires that she will be able to recognise the possibility of individual agency.

Nevertheless, Marion's wish to '*be* rather than to do' is somewhat contradictory. These opposing impulses are also referenced in Grand's New Woman novel *Ideala* (1888) as the heroine claims 'my function is not to do, but to be'.<sup>116</sup> Teresa Mangum notes that as a 'representation of ideal womanhood, the idealized heroine's function can only be decorative' and so *Ideala*, and I would argue Marion, 'voices her dissatisfaction with the passive, dutiful female role by objectifying herself'.<sup>117</sup> This becomes further evident as Ada, Nigel's sister, positions Marion's compliance with Nigel's feminine ideal as a 'kind of acting' (*NBI*, 88) to demonstrate the self-consciousness of Marion's compliance with her husband's ideals. Thus, this implies that Marion, recognising the need to outwardly obey conventions of femininity in order to achieve her ambition to write, is utilising

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<sup>116</sup> Sarah Grand, *Ideala*, ed. by Molly Youngkin (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008), p. 14.

<sup>117</sup> Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 72.

performative strategies akin to those Grand would argue for two decades later in ‘The Morals of Manner and Appearance’.

Nigel, at first in ignorance of his wife’s literary success and later in repudiation of it, represses Marion’s creativity by forcing his own ideologies of femininity onto her. It is Nigel’s Ruskinian ‘preconceived ideal’ (*NBI*, 87) of his wife as a ‘quiet gentle little soul who should be entirely womanly, and yet intelligent enough to sympathize with his intellectual tastes’ (*NBI*, 27) that ultimately suffocates Marion’s creative talent and distorts her self-identification. Nigel’s vision of his wife’s intellectual capabilities is almost verbatim taken from John Ruskin who in ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ (1864) advocated that a

woman, in any rank of life, ought to know whatever her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. [She...] ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as many enable her to sympathise in her husband’s pleasures, and in those of his best friends.<sup>118</sup>

As Nigel’s ‘horror of strong-minded women’ (*NBI*, 30) begins to penetrate her consciousness, Marion succumbs to the pressures of traditional femininity and denounces her previous visions of creative fulfilment as ‘terribly silly and impossible’ (*NBI*, 111). Thus, in a reversal of her yearning for an active independent life, Marion determines that her ‘old self shall be crushed and trodden out for ever’ (*NBI*, 99) until the ‘one heart and will’ (*NBI*, 187) between her and Nigel is his own.

Although Marion’s willingness to suppress her literary talent initially appears to jar with her earlier desire for autonomy, it is given some rationale as she questions ‘how could I live if he ceased to love me?’ (*NBI*, 99). This statement, other than being a sentimental declaration of love, illuminates the difficult position Victorian

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<sup>118</sup> Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, pp. 98-9.

women were placed in. A middle-class woman was expected to marry and have children and so consequently she was not educated to enter the professional workplace. As explored in detail in Chapter One, middle-class women's education was viewed by some to pose a threat to Victorian gender hierarchy as it challenged ideologies of femininity. This sentiment is echoed by Nigel who declares that

I am not sure that we men ever *quite* like to feel ourselves inferior to our wives in anything but goodness. We believe, and we like to believe, that they are purer and better than we are, but I don't think we altogether wish them to be cleverer—more capable. (*NBI*, 330-1, emphasis in the original)

Despite the rise of an organised feminist movement in the 1860s, social opportunities for women were still scarce and those who pursued public roles, including female Sensation novelists, faced disapprobation. By providing a justification for Marion's readiness to repress her literary desires, Wilford suggests that it is only through a change in the social perceptions of femininity that Marion will be able to be both writer and wife.

As Marion is forced to reevaluate her ambitions and recognise their incompatibility with social expectations of middle-class women, she experiences what Heilmann considers the 'precarious balancing act women artists have to perform between conforming to traditional notions of feminine morality and securing their individual professional survival'.<sup>119</sup> Like her New Woman counterpart Hester whose literary identity Cholmondeley depicts as weakening whilst in the domesticity of her brother's home, Marion realises that in her choice of marriage and a recognisable femininity she will have to sacrifice her independent self. Struggling to

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<sup>119</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 159.

align her two identities of writer and wife, Marion foreshadows a central concern in New Woman's fiction's exploration of the female artist-heroine.

Lyn Pykett contends that the female author in New Woman fiction is both an 'invader of a masculine (or, at least, male-controlled) domain' and a 'feminist or proto-feminist, since artistic expression and the life of the artist are seen as in themselves both liberated and liberatory activities'.<sup>120</sup> Yet, while Wilford provides the compound figure that Pykett identifies to explore the complexities surrounding female authorship, she instead presents masculine and feminine forces as conflicted. Nigel, representing patriarchal society, attempts to repress Marion's intellect by forcing her to become his ideal woman rather than acknowledging her individual self. In contrast, Marion's internal, and arguably proto-feminist, consciousness strives to create individual agency through writing. Thus, like New Woman fiction and its exploration of the female artist, *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* is the narrative of a woman and her struggle to write, or rather her struggle to harmonise her intellectual ambitions with societal expectations of femininity.

The climax of the novel, and Marion's own crisis of identity, comes when, discovering that Nigel's brother is in financial difficulties that Nigel will struggle to address, Marion determines to write a second novel. In comparison to Hester (and indeed Wilford herself) for whom the process of writing was 'sapping her strength like a vampire', Marion's 'beautiful, joyous, exultant light' (*NBI*, 204) returns as she rediscovers her literary ability and subsequently her independent identity.<sup>121</sup> Heilmann claims that in New Woman fiction 'it seems that once her creativity has materialized into a visible product, the woman artist fades into nothingness; and

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<sup>120</sup> Pykett, 'Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman', p. 138.

<sup>121</sup> Cholmondeley, *Red Pottage*, p. 79.

conversely, that her continued presence results in the loss of her work. Since “woman” and “art” cannot coexist, either she herself or her work must disappear’.<sup>122</sup> However, compared to Hester who exemplifies Heilmann’s argument, Marion reclaims her sense of self *during* the production of her second novel as the return of her intellectual ambitions enables her to regain the independent agency she had enjoyed prior to marriage. On the other hand, when Nigel later forces Marion to give up her dreams of publishing by leading her to believe he has burnt the manuscript of her second novel, Marion must suffer *both* the loss of her book and her independent self. It is this that appears to be the largest distinction between the genres’ representation of the female writer: in Sensation fiction, ‘woman’ and ‘art’ must either coexist or disappear.

Marion’s mental anguish at the conflict between her personal ambitions and social restraints is shown only to fade when she recognises that her literary talent can be employed to enable her to become Nigel’s ideal woman. It is in this moment of clarity that Marion aligns what no female artist in New Woman literature is able to combine: her desire for agency and external pressure. In contrast to New Woman fiction, where protagonists such as Hester write to create autonomy, Marion’s intention to publish her second novel and gain ‘fifties’ where Nigel could only make ‘pounds’ (*NBI*, 212) is a more realistic reflection of many Sensation authors’ purpose of writing. Linton, Marryat and Braddon were among the many female writers of the mid- to late-Victorian period to use their income to financially support themselves, their families and, in Braddon’s case, her husband. Indeed, given that Wilford remained unmarried throughout her life, writing would have provided her with the means to support herself. This is evidenced by her sister’s letter which accompanies

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<sup>122</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction*, p. 157.

the application to the Royal Literary Fund. In it Emma details that Wilford, despite ‘not mak[ing] much by her works’, had been previously able to support herself by writing.<sup>123</sup>

As Marion discovers, this new practical objective to write aligns her two identities of writer and wife: she becomes the masculine invader and liberated proto-feminist that Pykett locates in depictions of the female artist in New Woman fiction. Wilford demonstrates the importance of writing in allowing women to shape their own identity by showing that it is as a direct result of her literary production that Marion recovers her independent self. This further associates Marion with the New Woman and her quest for creative production.

Now neither an author nor Nigel’s ideal woman, Marion loses the basis of her two identities and is reduced to a shadow of her former self:

a shadow fell upon the pale brow, and the quivering lips were closed with a sort of despairing resolution; those were the only signs that she understood that all dreams of fame—and, far dearer, of helping him and his—were over for her for ever, that the genius which he himself had once allowed to be ‘wonderful’ was henceforth to be crushed out as a useless, unworthy gift. (*NBI*, 209)

Compared to Hester who likens her brother’s destruction of her second novel to a murdered child by exclaiming ‘I did not let your child die. Why have you killed mine?’, Marion’s internal suffering is depicted to be based not on the demise of her creative industry but for the lost opportunity to help her husband.<sup>124</sup> However, even in this moment of self-effacement Marion exposes the bias at the heart of Nigel’s decision. Drawing attention to the material objects Nigel prides himself in being able

<sup>123</sup> Emma Angela Wilford to Arthur Llewelyn Roberts (24<sup>th</sup> June 1889), British Library, 96 RLF 1/2311/2. Emma adds that her ‘own income is only about the same [...] and that my Brother’s (who are both abroad) are quite unable to help us in a pecuniary way’. *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Cholmondeley, *Red Pottage*, p. 277.

to provide her with, Marion internally questions whether ‘they [can] be compared to the artist’s pleasure in her work, to the happiness of being allowed to serve him and his brother?’ (*NBI*, 213). This statement reiterates the expediency of women earning a wage by illustrating that Marion does not write for individual reasons, but to benefit her husband.

Although the ending of *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* appears to restore traditional Victorian values and the gender balance as Marion seemingly forgets her dreams of being a novelist, Wilford disrupts this by having Nigel break down under the strain of work while Marion strives to keep the household together. It is during this illness that Nigel rejects his previous ‘horrid starched old-world ideas’ (*NBI*, 333) of passive femininity and recognises that Marion does not fall short of, but exceeds his ideal. Wilford uses Nigel’s dismissal of his former ideal to illustrate that it is his change in attitude, not Marion’s rejection of her literary ambitions, that enables their married life to continue in harmony. Wilford further undercuts conventionality by having Marion, in a role-reversal, usurp the masculine position of breadwinner and Nigel resolve to ‘learn to be dependent’ (*NBI*, 347) on her in an acknowledgement of her superior intellect. Consequently, much like Angelica in Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins* who writes her husband’s speeches, Marion and Nigel become literary partners with Nigel providing the inspiration for articles and Marion writing them.

Despite being the family’s financial provider, Marion appears to reject the masculine role by stating that ‘there must always be a certain superiority in a man’s mind to a woman’s, let the “woman’s right” people say what they will’ (*NBI*, 264). However, when she is questioned by Nigel’s sister, Ada, how she can allow Nigel to remain ‘so shamefully conceited’ (*NBI*, 361), her response contradicts this previous statement. As Marion ‘smiled a pretty smile of amusement, that seemed to say she

understood all about it, and was perfectly content' (*NBI*, 361), this recalls an earlier moment in the novel when Marion's apparent willingness to eradicate her independence is destabilised as the narrative acknowledges that 'people who can efface themselves, and live in the life of others, must either be almost characterless or have very unusual depth of character' (*NBI*, 118). Marion recognises, much like Valeria from Collins' *The Law and the Lady* and Grand in 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance', that in appearing to obey social conventions and performing a feminine role, she will be able to achieve her literary ambitions without facing ostracism.

Marion's ability to realise her intellectual dreams within the boundaries of patriarchal society enables her to escape the fate of New Woman literature's fictional authors whose literary ambitions fail to survive in the face of exterior pressures. Moreover, whereas in Sensation and New Woman fiction the female protagonist is usually shown to fail in her literary aspirations, Wilford's novel breaches the conventions of both genres in that both Wilford and Marion are rewarded with success in their literary project of self-liberation. The ending of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* reinforces the fact that Marion creates an identity not by becoming Nigel's ideal woman but by writing, illustrating, as in New Woman literature's explorations of the female artist, that creative liberation is tied to the independent self.

Although *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* was written prior to Wilford's stay in various psychiatric institutions during the 1880s and 1890s, the novel's depiction of Marion's artistic experience anticipates Wilford's own struggle to write as well as the New Woman's portrayal of creative industry. Wilford's life and later health issues which prevented her from writing foreshadow those of New Woman writers such as Cholmondeley whose inability to fuse her profession with nineteenth-century

expectations of femininity was reflected by her ailing health. Yet, while New Woman authors reconstruct their own artistic struggles in their representation of fictional writers, Wilford has her heroine ostensibly adapt herself by mimicking patriarchal demands of femininity and in doing so achieves and maintains an artistic identity. By positioning Marion as a formative New Woman writer, Wilford's novel acts as an examination of the internal and external pressures nineteenth-century female writers encountered. However, unlike her New Woman counterparts (and Wilford herself), Marion succeeds in harmonising her two identities. A simultaneously threatening and enlightening figure, she serves to undercut social assumptions of gender and in turn destabilises expectations of the Sensation genre by demonstrating the extent to which women's intellectual talent is needlessly suffocated by patriarchal anxiety. In bringing attention to Wilford and *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* I hope to return Wilford to literary consciousness by situating her as an important pre-cursor to the New Woman and her representation of the fictional female artist.

While Wilford anticipates an important discussion in New Woman fiction, Mona Caird's New Woman novel *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) draws on strategies of the earlier genre in its sensational depiction of domestic violence to further demonstrates the fluidity of genre boundaries.

### **Sensationalising Marital Violence in Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889)**

Frances Power Cobbe in her infamous article 'Wife-Torture in England' (1878) notes that the 'notion that a man's wife is his PROPERTY, in the sense in which a

horse is his property [...], is the fatal root of incalculable evil and misery'.<sup>125</sup> Thus, she argues for the implementation of a bill which would allow an abused wife to be granted a separation order and that would force the husband to pay her an independent maintenance.<sup>126</sup> However, despite Cobbe's suggestion of a maintenance order being incorporated into the 1878 Matrimonial Causes Act, Charles Macfarlane during a speech to Parliament in 1884 made the shocking suggestion that women should be included in the Cruelty to Animals Act as then the law would provide them with some protection and the men convicted of marital cruelty would be subject to harsher punishments.<sup>127</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, despite other legal reforms to marriage, the problem of marital abuse remained unresolved.<sup>128</sup>

In her article 'Are Women Protected?' (1892), Matilda Blake declares that out of the 8075 assaults on women that occurred in 1889, the same year that *The Wing of Azrael* was published, 'only in forty-three cases were the offenders punished with more than two years' imprisonment'.<sup>129</sup> The *Women's Suffrage Journal* was

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<sup>125</sup> France Power Cobbe, "'Wife-Torture in England'", *Contemporary Review* (April 1878), repr. in *'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. by Susan Hamilton (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 111-44 (p. 117). Capitalisation in the original. Significantly, Cobbe makes allusions to vivisection in her argument when she states that 'I have called this paper English *Wife-torture* because I wish to impress my readers with the fact that the familiar term "wife-beating" conveys about as remote a notion of the extremity of the cruelty indicated as when candid and ingenuous vivisectioners talk of "scratching a newt's tail" when they refer to burning alive, or dissecting out the nerves of living dogs, or torturing ninety cats in the series of experiments'. *Ibid.*, p. 125. Emphasis in the original. Cobbe founded the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection in 1875. This organisation was instrumental in the passing of the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876 which went some way to regulate animal experimentation.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>127</sup> *The Law Times; Journal and Record of the Law and the Lawyers*, 76 (1884), p. 426. The 1876 Cruelty to Animals bill stated that 'any person performing or taking part in performing any experiment calculated to give pain, in contravention of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act, and shall, if it be the first offence, be liable to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds, and if it be the second or any subsequent offence, be liable, at the discretion of the court by which he is tried, to a penalty not exceeding one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months'. *Cruelty to Animals 1876*, <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/39-40/77/enacted>> [accessed 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018].

<sup>128</sup> For a discussion of the legal attempts to address the problem of marital abuse see Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1989), pp. 156-88.

<sup>129</sup> Matilda Blake, 'Are Women Protected?', *Westminster Review*, 137.1 (1892), 43-8 (p. 47).

among several feminist publications during the latter half of the century to draw attention to the light sentences given in cases of domestic violence against women. For example, in 1880 it emphasised the disparity between the punishment for a man convicted of rabbit poaching and a wife-beater: a rabbit poacher was subject to a penalty of five pounds plus costs or a month in jail while a wife-beater faced a fee of ten shillings plus costs or fourteen days in prison.<sup>130</sup> Legally a wife's body belonged to her husband and therefore, as Annie Besant noted in 1879, 'force or constraint [was] recognised by the law as rape, in all cases save that of marriage [...because] the consent given in marriage is held to cover the life'.<sup>131</sup> A wife had no right to prevent or turn down her husband's sexual advances and so, as the heroine in George Egerton's 'Virgin Soil' (1894) illustrates, 'as long as man demands from a wife as a right, what he must sue from a mistress as a favour [...] marriage becomes for many women a legal prostitution, a nightly degradation'.<sup>132</sup> Consequently, the New Woman campaign became increasingly concerned with contesting the right of a husband to his wife's body.

While writers such as Grand in *The Beth Book* (1897) explore brutality to women through the horrors of vivisection and Ouida in *Moths* (1880) represent married women as sexual slaves whom men exploit in a way the 'world does not care even to name', Mona Caird in *The Wing of Azrael* acts out the violence directly onto her heroine's body.<sup>133</sup> Published a year after her essay 'Marriage' made her a household name, Caird's novel similarly appeals for a 'full understanding and acknowledgement of the obvious right of the woman to *possess herself* body and

<sup>130</sup> 'Poaching and Wife Beating', *Women's Suffrage Journal*, 11.120 (1880), 27, Manchester Central Library, M50/1/7(6-13). The case is also referred to on p. 21 of the same issue.

<sup>131</sup> Annie Besant, *Marriage, as It Was, as It Is, and as It Should Be: A Plea for Reform* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1882), p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> George Egerton, 'Virgin Soil', in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women, 1890-1914*, ed. by Angelique Richardson (London: Penguin Group, 2002), pp. 103-14 (p. 109).

<sup>133</sup> Ouida, *Moths*, ed. by Natalie Schroeder (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 167.

soul, to give or withhold herself body and soul exactly as she will'.<sup>134</sup> In love with Harry Lancaster, a New Man figure, Viola Sedley, the heroine of *The Wing of Azrael*, is forced by her family to marry the arrogant and sadistic Sir Philip Dendraith in order to prevent their financial ruin. Viola is repeatedly subjected to both physical and psychological abuse at the hands of her husband, culminating in Philip's horrific attack and attempted rape of her moments before she fatally stabs him.<sup>135</sup> It is in the many moments prior to and including this one where violence is implied or literalised that I argue Caird destabilises the borders of genre by using the language of Sensation to verbalise a woman's experience of marital abuse and demonstrate the urgent need for a wife's right to her own body.<sup>136</sup>

Lisa Hager argues that the 'key crises of New Woman texts [...] are marked by sensational language that strives to communicate the intensity of the heroine's inner struggles' by combining the 'affective power' of Sensation fiction with a 'psychological exploration of women's specific social position in Victorian society that would later characterize New Woman discourse'.<sup>137</sup> By adapting and drawing on Sensation fiction's depiction of domestic violence which, as Marlene Tromp claims, actively dismantles and reassembles social discourse to 'produce an engaging and entertaining textual experience', Caird exposes the injustice surrounding a wife's

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<sup>134</sup> Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review*, 130.1 (1888), 186-201 (p. 198). Emphasis in the original.

<sup>135</sup> The plot of Caird's novel somewhat foreshadows the circumstances surrounding the case of *Regina v. Jackson*. After refusing to live with her husband, Emily Jackson was forced into a waiting carriage by her husband, Edmund Jackson, one morning in 1891. She was taken to Edmund's home, placed in his sister's charge and denied any opportunity to leave.

<sup>136</sup> It is interesting to note that Andrew Maunder categorises *The Wing of Azrael* as a Sensation novel in the bibliography he provides to the series *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction*. Andrew Maunder, 'Bibliography of Sensation Fiction', in *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890*, ed. by Andrew Maunder, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 279-392 (p. 297).

<sup>137</sup> Lisa Hager, 'Embodying Agency: Ouida's Sensational Shaping of the British New Woman', *Women's Writing*, 20.2 (2013), 235-46 (p. 236); *Ibid*, p. 238.

legally enforced sexual submission.<sup>138</sup> I argue that the repeated focus on the female body during the moments when Philip exerts his authority establishes Caird's use of sensational vocabulary as a method to give voice to female suffering whilst simultaneously creating a form of agency that moves beyond the body and is located in Viola's mental resistance.

Philip's desire to control Viola's body is apparent from their very first meeting as children when he kisses her 'in spite of her violent resistance' (WA, 29). Literally imprisoning her body within his own, Philip's actions demonstrate his use of physical contact as a method to establish and maintain his dominance. This is reiterated in another later episode as Philip 'leant back luxuriously, moving first a little closer to Viola, so that he could lay his hand on the arm of her chair, or touch hers now and again when it so pleased him' (WA, 140). Caird foregrounds bodily sensations and physical reactions to heighten the tension in these scenes and place the reader in the feminine position so that they, along with Viola, are forced to experience Philip's repulsive physical invasion. As Judith Walkowitz has identified, the female viewpoint was absent from other Victorian rape narratives. She illustrates that W. T. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute' (1885) series, in which the business of child prostitution was exposed, 'recorded no towering voices of female indignation' and therefore an understanding of direct suffering was lost.<sup>139</sup> However, by deploying what Hager refers to as the 'sensational vocabulary of overpowering, fated forces brought to bear upon the individual', I contend that Caird is able to negotiate a

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<sup>138</sup> Marlene Tromp, *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation, and the Law in Victorian Britain* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 118.

distinctly New Woman topic whilst re-establishing a perspective that would otherwise have been lost.<sup>140</sup>

President of the Independent Anti-Vivisection League whose members included Annie Besant and George Bernard Shaw, Caird, like many other Victorian feminists including Power Cobbe and Anna Kingsford, connected domestic abuse with vivisection and the maltreatment of animals:

we chain up a dog to keep watch over our home; we deny him freedom, and in some cases, alas! even sufficient exercise to keep his limbs supple and his body in health. [...] In the same way we have subjected women for centuries to a restricted life, which called forth one or two forms of domestic activity; [...] we have then insisted that the consequent adaptations of structure, and the violent instincts created by this distorting process, are, by a sort of compound interest, to go on adding to the distortions themselves [...]. We chain, because we *have chained*. The dog must not be released, because his nature has adapted itself to the misfortune of captivity.<sup>141</sup>

For Caird the parallels between women's oppression and violence towards animals were palpable. This analogy soon becomes apparent in *The Wing of Azrael* when, escaping the claustrophobic atmosphere of her childhood home, Viola is ominously pulled towards the sea and Upton Castle, Philip's ancestral home, where she discovers her beloved dog, with its legs tied, being pelted with stones by Philip. After 'look[ing] on and laugh[ing] at the creature's struggles' (WA, 47), Philip likens Viola to a 'high-spirited young animal who would be worth breaking' (WA, 48). In

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<sup>140</sup> Hager, 'Embodying Agency', p. 245.

<sup>141</sup> Caird, 'Marriage', p. 188. Emphasis in the original. Vivisection and its analogies to domestic violence was a subject Caird returned to frequently throughout her writing: in *Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Professor Fortescue's rejection of vivisection endangers his reputation; in *The Sanctuary of Mercy* (1895), Caird graphically describes experiments which 'go on often for hours, and often require the victim to be kept alive in its agony for days and even months'; in the pamphlet, *Beyond the Pale* (1897) she challenges the views of celebrated vivisectionist Claude Bernard by arguing that vivisection will impede human welfare; and in *The Stones of Sacrifice* (1915), Caird critiques vivisection through multiple narrative perspectives. Mona Caird, 'The Sanctuary of Mercy', *Victorian Women Writers Project*, <<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp/view?docId=VAB7149>> [accessed 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018].

drawing a connection between Viola and the dog, Philip implies that he does not distinguish women from animals in his treatment.

This is reinforced later in the novel when, on the first day of their engagement, Viola witnesses Philip severely punish his horse by whipping it until the ‘creature was flinching, and tried to escape from the heavy blows; his glossy sides were bleeding and foam-flecked, and with every savage stroke of the whip he gave a desperate plunge’ (WA, 122). As she watches on in helpless horror, Viola is forced to realise that Philip is ‘capable of physical violence towards her’ (WA, 123).<sup>142</sup> Indeed, as a ‘pale, dark-haired little creature, with large grey eyes and delicately cut features’ (WA, 8), Viola resembles the horse. Caird suggests that it is therefore inevitable that Viola will become the animal that Philip uses to exert his frustrations on. Unsurprisingly given these earlier indications of Philip’s brutal nature, Viola is repeatedly subjected to sexual assaults that she can neither prevent nor escape from once she and Philip are married. While Viola only associates these horrors with the night—‘the night was a living hell!’ (WA, 192)—in Upton Castle the atmosphere is consistently nocturnal as the ‘shadows lingered in the corners, and hung, like a canopy, about the ceilings of the vast old rooms’ (WA, 156). Unable to evade this pervasive darkness, Viola can never truly escape the abuses of the night because as a married woman she is legally obliged to endure all its torments.

Until 1884 when the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed, a spouse (typically the husband) could appeal to the courts for a writ for restitution of conjugal rights. If the defendant (typically the wife) did not subsequently return home they were imprisoned until they agreed to obey the court order, thus effectively meaning that a

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<sup>142</sup> However, it is also in this moment that that Viola ‘longed to do battle with him [Philip] herself’ (WA, 123). Caird thus demonstrates that even though men have the power to govern women’s bodies, they do not, and cannot, control their minds.

wife could be incarcerated for denying her husband his matrimonial right to her body. Despite the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1884 allowing a spouse to apply to the courts for a separation order if the other spouse did not return home, the courts continued to reject the notion that a husband could be guilty of marital rape because by their ‘mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract’.<sup>143</sup> However, uncertainty regarding the doctrine of a wife’s consent did emerge in one court case during the 1880s. The year before *The Wing of Azrael* was published, Charles James Clarence was charged with assault and inflicting grievous bodily harm on his wife, Selina Clarence, for having sex with her whilst being aware that he had venereal disease.<sup>144</sup> Selina argued that had she known her husband was infected with gonorrhoea she would not have consented to intercourse with him. A jury found Charles guilty of the charges but on the judge’s recommendation it was sent up to the Court of Crown Cases Reserved to be examined. They ultimately overturned the decision by holding that marital rape was not a crime. However, several of the judges suggested some doubt regarding the possibility of marital rape. Mr Justice Field, for example, contended that ‘there may, I think, be many cases in which a wife may lawfully refuse intercourse, and in which, if the husband imposed it by violence, he might be held guilty of a crime’.<sup>145</sup> *The Wing of Azrael* uses the language of Sensation to accentuate this emerging doubt and irrefutably demonstrate the existence of marital rape and the need to legislate against it.

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<sup>143</sup> Matthew Hale, *The History of the Pleas of the Crown*, 2 vols (London: T. Payne, 1800), vol. 1, p. 629. The proposed Criminal Code amendment of 1880 caused further outrage by defining rape as the ‘act of a man, not under the age of 14 years, having carnal knowledge of a woman, who is not his wife, without her consent’. Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law*, p. 184. Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy argued that this effectively placed wives in a position of ‘bodily slavery’. *The Criminal Law in Relation to Women* (Manchester: A. Ireland, 1880), p. 10.

<sup>144</sup> Lois S. Bibbings, *Binding Men: Stories about Violence and Law in Late Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 112-48.

<sup>145</sup> *Reports of All the Cases Decided by All the Superior Courts relating to Magistrates, Municipal, and Parochial Law* (London: Horace Cox, 1889), vol. 14, pp. 647-62 (p. 660).

In a clear example of Caird employing the ‘overpowering, fated forces’ of sensational language, Viola laments that

there was no respite. The day was dull and weary, and filled with a thousand trials and annoyances, great and small; but the night—the time for solitude, stillness and repose, the time to build up strength and draw in new hope and peace—the night was a living hell! She might never be alone, never feel that she possessed herself. Her very thoughts were scarcely free. Freedom was an unknown word; the only words that ruled in that red-hot Purgatory were right, duty, submission. What inmate of the harem, she used to wonder, endured slavery more absolute than this? (WA, 192)

Viola’s narrative control and psychonarration ensures that the reader is placed in the feminine position, forced, as she is, to experience these night-time horrors. Despite Lisa Surridge claiming that ‘until the final rape scene[,] the text does not suggest that Philip uses violence to enforce his sexual rights’, I contend that in moments such as this the overwhelming sense of claustrophobia is indicative of the personal experience of rape.<sup>146</sup> This suffocating atmosphere is created not just by the language which conveys Viola’s inability to escape Philip’s touch but also by the short sentences that are repeatedly broken by punctuation to enhance the impression of entrapment. Additionally, the rhythm created by the sentence structure which is fragmented by punctuation and words that due to their emphasis symbolise the motion of thrusting—‘right, duty, submission’—reinforces Philip’s attempt to instil obedience by violating Viola’s body.

Although Viola feels herself to be ‘branded’ (WA, 194) with Philip’s name, underpinning the connection between marriage and slavery that John Stuart Mill had evoked two decades earlier in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), by recognising and

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<sup>146</sup> Lisa Surridge, *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), p. 204.

giving voice to the injustices of women's status in marriage, she simultaneously demonstrates an understanding of what should be women's natural right and therefore, mentally at least, gains agency.<sup>147</sup> This further enables her to regain a sense of individuality as the claustrophobic narrative becomes one in which she actively invites the reader to question society's current hierarchy, thus removing the focus and control Philip's actions are meant to instil. As Surridge identifies, selfhood is an important aspect of Caird's novel. She claims that *The Wing of Azrael* questions 'what happens to selfhood when the body is no longer under the woman's control and volition, but subject to the will and control of her husband?'<sup>148</sup> In response to this question, I contend that while on the surface Philip's bodily control seems to remove Viola's claims to selfhood, her ability to divorce her body and mind means that although she does not have control over one, she is able to control the other and so maintain a sense of agency. Indeed, while Philip's ability to dominate Viola's body is repeatedly reinforced throughout the novel, Caird juxtaposes this with his failure to diminish Viola's mental strength. Viola's mental resistance is made clear from their wedding day when, significantly, her body will legally become Philip's: 'please do not forget that I come here against my own wish, and can have no response in my heart for such speeches. And one thing more: please do not forget what I say to-day is said with my lips only' (WA, 153). With reference to her lips, Viola emphasises that Philip's authority is purely physical. The repeated focus on the female body during the moments when Philip exerts his authority establishes Caird's use of sensational vocabulary as a technique to give voice to female suffering, as well as to emphasise that Viola's agency is located in her mental resistance.

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<sup>147</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, ed. by Susan M. Okin (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), p. 33.

<sup>148</sup> Surridge, *Bleak Houses*, p. 197.

In comparison to Ouida and Grand who exemplify the New Woman critique of the domestic sphere as a site of female repression by positioning the buildings themselves as analogous to the problem of middle-class marital violence, Caird seemingly distances the novel's events from everyday life by situating the main action of her novel within a castle more closely resembling the setting of Horace Walpole's and Ann Radcliffe's eighteenth-century Gothic novels.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, like the middle-class homes in Ouida and Grand's novels, Upton Castle, which itself symbolises abusive male power, becomes Viola's Bluebeard-esque torture chamber that like the 'frantic horror-stricken helplessness of a nightmare' (WA, 164) she cannot escape.<sup>150</sup> Caird evokes the Bluebeard tale directly as she creates what Philip terms a 'bluebeard chamber' (WA, 201). Casie Hermansson argues that the Bluebeard story became a 'coded commentary on the Victorian oppression of women's freedoms, intellectual ambitions, and sexuality'.<sup>151</sup> Caird combines a sensational focus on the suffocating atmosphere of 'Bluebeard' with an investigation of the New Woman topics that Hermansson identifies, making the inclusion of the tale a crucial aspect of Caird's use of the language of Sensation. Moreover, Pykett claims that 'like the sensation novelists Caird focuses on the constraining and

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<sup>149</sup> In *The Beth Book* and *Moths*, apparently respectable Victorian middle-class marital homes are positioned as spaces which harbour a husband's cruelty against his wife. Surridge contends that Upton Castle serves to collapse the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thus 'refuting Victorian liberal claims to marital reform'. Surridge, *Bleak Houses*, p. 190.

<sup>150</sup> 'Bluebeard' is a French folktale ('La Barbe bleue') made famous by Charles Perrault. Married to Bluebeard whose previous wives have all mysteriously disappeared, the heroine of the tale is given the keys to all the rooms in Bluebeard's house and told she can enter every room but one while he is away. Driven by her curiosity, the woman opens the forbidden door to find the room filled with the blood and bodies of Bluebeard's previous wives. In her shock she drops the key, which is now stained with blood that cannot be removed and so when Bluebeard returns his wife's disobedience is revealed to him. However, just before she meets the same fate as her predecessors, her brothers return and kill Bluebeard. The Grimm brothers in their version of the tale entitled 'The Forbidden Chamber' reverse the ending of the story and have the wife's younger sister, not the brothers, defeat Bluebeard. It is this version of the tale that Caird can be seen drawing on as she likewise has Viola, rather than Harry (who waits outside until he hears Philip's scream), defeat Philip.

<sup>151</sup> Casie Hermansson, *Bluebeard: A Reader's Guide to the English Tradition* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), p. 122. Hermansson's comment is made with reference to Alcott's Sensation fiction but I am using it in a wider sense.

claustrophobic nature of the domestic space'.<sup>152</sup> The 'cavernous echoes', 'gaunt passages' and 'unutterable melancholy' (WA, 295) of a disused room in the west wing that has been the scene of various family deaths, including the murder of a female relative of Philip's, creates a 'sinister fascination' (WA, 295) for Viola. Like the fated women in 'Bluebeard' she is drawn to the room that with its 'haunting danger' (WA, 198) will expose Philip's true horror but will also ultimately result in his death. However, this 'bluebeard's chamber' is likewise the space in which Viola stores the knife, given to her by Harry just prior to her wedding that becomes the symbol of her individuality: 'I accepted this gift, not as your wife, but as *myself*. I was not your wife then. Will you not leave me even a little remnant of individuality?' (WA, 155, emphasis in the original). In a sense this becomes Viola's 'key' in Caird's remodelling of the Bluebeard tale: although the knife results in her downfall, it also provides her with the freedom she always wanted, even if this is in death.<sup>153</sup>

Upton Castle becomes a physical extension of the brutality that Viola suffers within its doors when upon returning home after a church service in which Philip has been in one of his 'most biting moods' (WA, 217), Viola is confronted by '*blood*; a stream which seems to be oozing slowly under the door, stealthily moving forward to the steps till it dripped, dripped—' (WA, 225, emphasis in the original). As the blood seeps onto the threshold, Caird, like Sensation authors, reveals the hidden secrets masked by seemingly respectable houses. Caird's use of onomatopoeic words such as 'oozing' and 'dripping' draw attention to the physicality of the experience

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<sup>152</sup> Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 146.

<sup>153</sup> Viola refers to the 'solution' (WA, 261) of death repeatedly throughout the novel. In a foreboding of her future suicide, Viola imagines death to be a peaceful and liberating experience: 'the pain would go, and the waters would creep up to her softly and tell her not to grieve, and she would fling herself into the beautiful waves, and then—' (WA, 7).

and reinforce the connection between blood and Viola's body. This 'phantom bloodstream' (WA, 225) that only Viola can see is prefigured earlier in the novel in the imagery of Viola and Philip's wedding. As Viola stands beneath a stained-glass window during her wedding ceremony, the after-effects of rape or a woman's first sexual encounter are suggested as 'upon her bosom a deep blood-red stain glowed in fiery brilliance, like the symbol of some master-passion in her heart, or perhaps a death-wound' (WA, 153). Caird further implies that the red light on the wedding dress may become a mark of violence with Viola's declaration just prior to their wedding that she is not marrying Philip of her own free will. Moreover, given Viola's religious upbringing and her mother's silence regarding the practicalities of marriage, Viola is seemingly unprepared for the extent to which Philip is able to use her body to fulfil his desires.

However, while the bloody doorstep and wedding imagery can be seen to reinforce the rape analogy, the stain could alternatively symbolise Viola's 'master-passion'. Philip's brutality is shown to have the power to create female agency as it forces Viola to realise her situation and in some sense provides her with the inner strength to overcome his control; a feat she will achieve in the concluding episode of *The Wing of Azrael*. In this sense the bloody doorstep can be read as a foreshadowing of the violence Viola will inflict on Philip and, as the blood seeps out of the house and into public consciousness, as a metaphor of how the secrets of the marital chamber will be exposed. The climatic final attack is prefigured earlier in the novel when, while using the 'bluebeard's chamber' as a place of sanctuary, Viola is frightened by Philip for 'instructive' (WA, 202) purposes. As she 'awoke to consciousness' to find that the 'canopy of the carved bedstead was above her head, and she was lying on it weak and helpless' (WA, 201), Viola only remembers that

prior to this she had seen ‘something dark standing above her [...] approaching’ before she ‘knew no more’ (WA, 201). Viola’s inability to comprehend properly what happened before she lost consciousness is reminiscent of modern trauma narratives.

First identified by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer in the 1890s, trauma theory developed extensively in the twentieth century first in response to the Holocaust and then post-traumatic stress disorder. More recently focus has diversified to cover areas such as perpetrator trauma, chronic trauma (which incorporates domestic violence) and postcolonial trauma. However, despite the focus on twentieth-century events, Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben argue that the nineteenth century was to ‘some extent the cradle [...] of contemporary trauma studies and notions of subjectivity’.<sup>154</sup> Indeed, Jill Matus finds that the word ‘trauma’ first emerged in the late nineteenth century with the term ‘psychic traumata’.<sup>155</sup> Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega identify a symptom of trauma to be the inability to ‘narrativise the traumatic experience in logical terms’ and so the ‘subject gives expression to his or her trauma by means of sensorial images instead of words’.<sup>156</sup> Viola’s recollection of the events are based on her broken memory of being touched: ‘for out of the shadows of that bedstead—merciful Heaven! it was no fancy, but a ghastly fact!—a figure *did* rise up and a pair of arms *did* stretch out to clutch her!’ (WA, 201, emphasis in the original). As Viola struggles to exert control

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<sup>154</sup> Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, ‘Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century’, in *Neo Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-34 (p. 2).

<sup>155</sup> Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 10.

<sup>156</sup> Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, ‘Introduction: Performing the Void: Liminality and the Ethics of Form in Contemporary Trauma Narratives’, in *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form*, ed. by Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-19 (p. 3).

over her narrative, its repetitive breaks and illogical meaning emphasise her inability to comprehend what has happened. In fact, it is only by the sensory imprint left on her body that Viola realises that this ghostly figure with its ‘white face and two white hands’ (WA, 201) is real.

Caird’s depiction of Viola’s inner struggle to comprehend and articulate what has happened is reminiscent of Rhoda Broughton’s sensational short story ‘The Man with the Nose’ (1872). During her honeymoon, Elizabeth, the protagonist of the short story, is haunted by dreams of a man with distinctive facial features whose large nose is clearly emblematic of the phallus:

[his nose] was very prominent [...] and very chiselled; the nostrils very much cut out [...]. His eyebrows were one straight black line across his face, and under them his eyes burnt like dull coals of fire, that shone and yet did not shine; they looked like dead eyes, sunken, half-extinguished, and yet sinister.<sup>157</sup>

Like Viola, while Elizabeth initially believes the man to have been the product of a nightmare, her certainty begins to fade: ‘I was asleep [...] at least I thought so—and suddenly I opened my eyes, and he was *there*’.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, Elizabeth reasons that ‘in a dream I should have been somewhere else, but I was here—*here*—on that bed’.<sup>159</sup> Drawing on Bessel van der Kolk and his notion of traumatic nightmares, Karen Hagerman Muller states that nightmares are an ‘almost universal symptom of rape trauma syndrome’.<sup>160</sup> Ernest Hartmann has qualified this somewhat by arguing

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<sup>157</sup> Rhoda Broughton, ‘The Man with the Nose’, in *Twilight Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. 14-31 (p. 20).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>160</sup> Karen Hagerman Muller, ‘Jasmine: Dreams in the Psychotherapy of a Rape Survivor’, in *Trauma and Dreams*, ed. by Deirdre Barrett (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 148-58 (p. 148). Van der Kolk’s theory of traumatic nightmares has since been challenged by various academics including Alan Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

that the ‘post-traumatic nightmare is a different phenomenon [...]—not truly a nightmare at all’ but rather a ‘memory intrusion’.<sup>161</sup> Elizabeth’s nightmares originate from ‘something dreadful that happened’ several years previously which she ‘tr[ies] to think about as little as possible; but sometimes, in the dead black of the night [...] it comes back to me so strongly’.<sup>162</sup> Given that Elizabeth associates this memory with ‘that dreadful bed!’, combined with the sexual symbolism of the man’s description, this implies her trauma to be sexual.<sup>163</sup>

Like Elizabeth, Viola also never ostensibly imposes her attacker into her memories, rather she inserts disjointed parts of Philip’s body to emphasise her own fragmented memories. This suggests that, as Cathy Caruth argues, the

wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that [...] is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.<sup>164</sup>

Alongside Caruth’s reading of trauma narratives, Viola’s loss of consciousness reinforces her failure to access this memory. Here, sensational vocabulary enables Caird to provide an insight to her heroine’s emotive response while at the same time demonstrating the severe psychological implications of Philip’s actions.

In a similar strategy to Caird, George Moore uses sensational language to evoke modern trauma narratives in his portrayal of rape in ‘John Norton’ published

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<sup>161</sup> Ernest Hartmann, ‘Who Develops PTSD Nightmares and Who Doesn’t’, in *Trauma and Dreams*, ed. by Deirdre Barrett (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 100-13 (p. 113).

<sup>162</sup> Broughton, ‘The Man with the Nose’, p. 15; *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.

in the collection *Celibates* (1895). Echoing *The Wing of Azrael's* rhetorical strategy, Moore employs frequent ellipses and punctuation breaks during the aftermath of Kitty Hare's rape to not only emphasise her inability to mentally process the events, but also to suggest that there is something which she cannot yet verbalise: 'what a horrible man...he attacked me, ill-treated me...what for? [...] ...Perhaps to rob me; yes, to rob me, of course, to rob me'.<sup>165</sup> Kitty is unable to access the language needed to detail her experience and so imposes a less sinister reason onto her memories. Recalling Viola's fragmented memory of Philip's disjointed body, Kitty is only able to identify her rapist as a 'tall, gaunt figure'.<sup>166</sup> She excludes John, the perpetrator of the violence, from the event altogether as she questions what would happen if 'John knew'.<sup>167</sup> It is only as she slowly grows 'conscious that these thoughts were fictitious thoughts, and that there was a thought, a real thought, lying in the background of her mind, which she dared not face' that she begins to draw connections between John and her attacker: 'the large sinewy hands were, oh, so like!'<sup>168</sup> Yet she still cannot impose him onto her memories. In line with Caruth's analysis of trauma, Kitty experiences the event, and gives meaning to it, through repetitive nightmares in which she attempts to tell others of the 'fatal stain'.<sup>169</sup> Ultimately, Kitty is never able to verbally acknowledge John as her attacker before she falls to her death in a desperate attempt to escape his forced intrusion into her bedroom.

In Caird's novel, unlike the previous assaults that are voiced from Viola's memory or with metaphoric imagery, Philip's final attempted rape occurs as it is narrated. This enables Caird to build tension and force the readers to experience

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<sup>165</sup> George Moore, 'John Norton', *Celibates* (London: Walter Scott, 1895), pp. 315-452 (p. 414). Ellipses in the original.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415; *Ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 425.

Philip's act of brutality as Viola does while simultaneously creating a sympathetic audience for her murderous response. Moreover, this is the first time that Philip's voice directly figures in the abuse scene to leave his intentions in no doubt. Caird relies less on Viola's sensory response during this final scene as she alters her use of sensational vocabulary to focus on legitimising her heroine's actions:

he smiled in a particular way that always maddened her as he advanced quickly and took her in his arms, bending down to kiss her as she struggled violently to free herself. [...] 'It's no use struggling, my dear [...] if it pleases me to kiss you, I shall kiss you. It is my right [...]' Overcoming her frantic resistance, he kissed her long and steadily on the lips, partly because it pleased him to do so, partly it seemed, because it tortured her '[...] by fair means or by foul, I intend to reduce you to submission [...]' he moved close up to her to take possession of the knife and to lead her away. 'Don't touch me, don't touch me, or'— The rest of the sentence was lost in a sound of loathing and horror, for Philip had disobeyed her. Advancing till she was driven against the corner of the window and there was no possible loophole of escape, he took her in his arms deliberately. [...] his touch, constraining, insolent as it was, forcing her in spite of all her resistance towards the door, excited her to very madness. He laughed, and bent down till his lips touched her cheek; his hand was seeking hers to seize the knife, while at the same time he was still drawing her away with him, steadily, resistlessly. He bent yet closer, and said something in her ear in a whisper, with an insulting laugh. (WA, 315)

While Caird continues to build the sense of personal invasion by focusing on the ease with which Philip can gain control of Viola's body, she centralises her heroine's struggle to determine how she will ultimately overcome his power. For the first time in the novel, Philip attempts to gain both psychological and physical control of Viola by governing her language as well as her body. Previously Viola was able to gain a kind of agency from her ability to narrate her own experience; however, here she is drowned out by Philip and only able to offer a feeble resistance before he manages to silence her with his unwanted kisses. Consequently, Caird employs the language of

Sensation not to give the primary focus to Viola's affective response, but to show the potential effect of her heroine's subject position. It seems that once Viola realises that Philip means to control more than her body her self-control breaks.

Philip's use of 'my dear' rather than Viola's name further serves to depersonalise the experience, making this passage indicative of the collective experience of abused women. With the absence of her heroine's name, Caird is showing that Philip's treatment is not unique and, regardless of the Gothic setting, that this is an ordeal many Victorian women have to face. The language is raw and far less poetic than it is in other similar episodes to reinforce that Viola is not given the time to mentally process these events and find her own way to represent them. It is as a result of these final moments that Viola severs Philip's physical control by overpowering him and destroying what has enabled him to control her: his body. Indicative of the Old Man and his patriarchal beliefs regarding male ownership of the wife's body, Philip, Caird suggests, must be defeated in order for Viola to gain autonomy and a new, more desirable masculinity to prosper. Reminiscent of the ending of the Brothers Grimm version of the Bluebeard story, 'The Forbidden Chamber', Viola, in an 'instant of blinding passion' (WA, 315), stabs Philip with the knife given to her by Harry, a New Man figure, prior to her wedding. However, instead of placing the narrative in judgement of Viola, Caird suggests her actions are a consequence of her desperate situation. She seems to argue that such a response is overdetermined if society does not recognise and address the gendered injustice of the current marital laws.

It is poignant that in capturing a topic aligned with New Woman rather than Sensation fiction, Caird looks back to the earlier genre and its linguistic methods to centre the female experience through a focus on physicality. Caird's use of the

language of Sensation enables her to counteract the seemingly all-powerful male outside forces with a woman's ability to retain mental agency which ultimately empowers her to regain control of her body. Consequently, like *Nigel Bartram's Ideal*, Caird's novel serves to confuse notions of fixed genre boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the role heroines play in destabilising Victorian assumptions of gender and genre to establish the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction that will be further developed in the subsequent chapters. The female protagonists of Sensation and New Woman literature are typically linked by the threat they pose to male authority and the middle-class domestic realm. However, this chapter has sought to expand this connection to identify a further link in the way the heroines of both genres are employed to comment on larger societal issues, particularly with regards to the socio-political construction of gender. By using their heroines to expose the inherently problematic nature of femininity, the authors of Sensation and New Woman fiction depict the ease with which it can be manipulated and used by women to generate power.

This instability reappears in the structural hybridity of *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* and *The Wing of Azrael* as the boundaries of genre also become blurred. Both novels confuse the definitions of Sensation (novel-revealing-a-secret) and New Woman (novel-with-a-purpose) fiction established at the beginning of this thesis to blur the margins between the two: Wilford by positioning Marion as a formative New Woman writer and Caird by employing the language of Sensation to represent a woman's experience of marital violence. The next chapter examines the emergence

of the New Woman's ideals concerning the New Man in Sensation fiction, as well as the presence of a continuous dialogue regarding Victorian anxieties of masculinity between Sensation and New Woman literature.

## Chapter Three

### A Perfect Match? The Emergence of the New Man

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‘The mistake is that you should have to ask forgiveness for what any one who loved you ought to be proud of,’ exclaimed Fabian, no longer able to restrain himself.

Florence Wilford, *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (1868)<sup>1</sup>

If anywhere on earth exists the perfect ideal of that which the modern woman desires to be—of a labouring and virile womanhood, free, strong, fearless and tender—it will probably be found imaged deeply in the heart of the New Man; engendered there by his own highest needs and aspirations[.]

Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (1911)<sup>2</sup>

When William Thompson published the impressively titled *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery* (1825), he not only anticipated many central issues of the later women’s movement, he also predicted the supportive model of masculinity expressed by Olive Schreiner in *Woman and Labour* (1911): ‘[women] and men [shall] salute each other with a real and mutual modesty, founded on mutual benevolence, on a just estimate of your several characters, and a knowledge of the mutual dependence of each on the other to elicit the highest degree of happiness’.<sup>3</sup> Schreiner, writing in the 1880s, argues that ‘there exists at the present day another body of social phenomena, quite as important, as radical, and if possible more far-reaching in its effects on the present and future,

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<sup>1</sup> Florence Wilford, *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1869), p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1911), pp. 271-2. Schreiner began drafting *Woman and Labour* in the 1880s but it was not published until 1911. Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> William Thompson, *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery; in Reply to a Paragraph of Mr Mill’s Celebrated ‘Article on Government’* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825), p. 204.

which yet attracts little conscious attention or animadversion, though it makes itself everywhere felt [...]—*the New Man!*”<sup>4</sup> The male counterpart to the New Woman and the opposite of Sarah Grand’s deplorable ‘Old Man’, the New Man offered the prospect of a ‘political ally’ who would support her in the campaign for women’s rights, and enable a new form of relationship in which the union of the sexes would be based on shared beliefs and intellectual as well as moral equality, rather than bodily and matrimonial ties.<sup>5</sup> However, as *Appeal* and the construction of Fabian Ord’s masculinity (as evidenced in the first epigraph) in Florence Wilford’s Sensation novel *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal* (1868) illustrate, a fictional model of this new masculinity had already emerged earlier in the century.

Reacting to James Mill’s essay, ‘Essays on Government’ (1820), a piece that negated the need for female suffrage, Thompson lays out the arguments for the enfranchisement of women in the ‘most important feminist work between Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and the High Victorian masterpieces of George Drysdale [...] and J.S. Mill’.<sup>6</sup> He contends that ‘nothing could be more easy than to put the *rights* of women, political and civil, on a perfect equality with those of men’ if only the ‘neglected banner which a woman’s [Wollstonecraft] hand [raised] nearly thirty years ago [was] unfolded boldly, in the face of the prejudices of thousands of years’.<sup>7</sup> Thompson takes up this banner and although he is careful to credit ‘Mrs Wheeler’ for those ‘bolder and more comprehensive views’ expressed within *Appeal*, he demonstrates the importance of

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<sup>4</sup> Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, pp. 266-7. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup> Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*, 3 vols (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *Appeal*, p. xiii. Emphasis in the original; *Ibid*, p. vii.

male support because, as he emphasises, women's perceived lack of authority meant that a public audience would give less weight to their opinions.<sup>8</sup>

Described by Elizabeth Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder as the 'forgotten man of the woman's movement', Thompson is among the many men whose contribution has historically been overlooked.<sup>9</sup> While Caroline Norton, Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Emily Davies, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy and Millicent Garrett Fawcett are recognisable figures of the burgeoning Victorian women's movement, the campaign for female emancipation was not taken up or advanced by women alone; many men added their support to the debates and were actively involved in the public battle. The participation of men was significant in part because the exclusion of women from the political system meant men had to be relied upon to pass laws advancing the independence and bettering the lives of women. Their support was welcomed by female activists including Davies and Fawcett who identified the benefits of 'active co-operation with influential men' such as John Stuart Mill, Ben Elmy and George and Charles Drysdale.<sup>10</sup>

These four men play a pivotal role in illustrating the significance of male involvement in the women's campaign: George Drysdale, as well as recognising the need for female doctors with whom women would be able to discuss their sexual health, was an advocate of contraception; Charles Drysdale, also a birth-control activist, campaigned against the Contagious Diseases Acts and was a founding

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. vi. Thompson is referring to Anna Wheeler, the author of *The Right of Women* (1830), who campaigned for the enfranchisement of women, female education and contraception. Thompson's sense of debt to a woman's genius was echoed later in the century when John Stuart Mill detailed in his *Autobiography* (1873) the important role his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, played in the formulation of his philosophies: 'the most valuable ideas and features in these joint productions [...] originated with her, were emanations from her mind'. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1873), p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> Helsinger, Lauterbach Sheets and Veeder, *The Woman Question*, vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Jose Harris, 'John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2012), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18711?docPos=9>> [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016].

member of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage which was established in 1907; Elmy, the partner of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, encouraged parents to educate their children about sexual physiology in several radical publications including *The Human Flower* (1894) and *Baby Buds* (1895) and was a member of the National Society for Women's Suffrage; and Mill acted as a political representative for the women's movement during his time as an MP by petitioning Parliament to alter the Married Women's Property Act and increase the legal rights of women.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, anticipating Mona Caird's conviction that 'human happiness is cruelly murdered by our systems of legalized injustice', Mill protested against the privileges the law gave him over his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, by adding a clause to his marriage contract that abdicated his rights as a husband:

the whole character of the marriage relation as constituted by law being such as both she and I entirely and conscientiously disapprove, for this among other reasons, that it confers upon one of the parties to the contract, legal power and control over the person, property, and freedom of action of the other party, independent of her own wishes and will; I [...] feel it my duty to put on record a formal protest against the existing law of marriage [...] and a solemn promise never in any case under any circumstances to use them.<sup>12</sup>

The contribution of these men helped shape the utopian ideal of masculinity that was expanded into the figure of the fictional New Man in New Woman fiction.

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<sup>11</sup> All biographical details for George and Charles Drysdale and John Stuart Mill are from *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/>> [accessed 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016]. Biographical details for Ben Elmy from Maureen Wright, *Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy and the Victorian Feminist Movement: The Biography of an Insurgent Woman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). After an earlier breakdown, George Drysdale went missing while on a walking tour of Europe in 1844 with his brother, and friend Edward Lane. It was presumed that George had drowned after his clothes were found on the bank of the River Danube; however, George reappeared two years later confessing he had faked his death after failing to commit suicide. Although he was diagnosed with a nervous collapse from intellectual stress, George's later publications reveal that he was in fact suffering from sexual neurosis brought on by fear of his sexual appetite. Kate Summerscale, *Mrs Robinson's Disgrace: The Private Diary of a Victorian Lady* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 22-5.

<sup>12</sup> Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review*, 130.1 (1888), 186-201 (p. 200); John Stuart Mill, *The Letters of John Stuart Mill*, ed. by Hugh S. R. Elliot (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), cited in Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (London: Virago, 1998), p. 67.

Yet as Tara MacDonald has recently demonstrated, the literary New Man was not solely a figure of the *fin de siècle*. She convincingly argues that the fiction of mid-century writers including Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Anne Brontë incorporates ‘sensitive, nurturing and domestic men who attempt to build relationships with their female partners that, while not exactly equal, value friendship and intellectual exchange in ways that predict the New Man and New Woman’s more radical reformulation of romantic relations’.<sup>13</sup> However, despite the influence many of these mid-century writers including Dickens and Brontë had on the genre, MacDonald fails to associate the prior emergence of the New Man (or a new masculinity) with Sensation fiction. In this chapter I seek to expand MacDonald’s argument by locating a similar interrogation of masculinity within Sensation literature, thus contending that the genre’s representation has parallels with New Woman fiction. Indeed, given the proximity of George Drysdale’s and Mill’s polemic works (*Physical, Sexual, and Natural Religion* [1855, known as *The Elements of Social Science* after 1857] and *The Subjection of Women* [published in 1869 but completed in 1861]) to the era of Sensation fiction, as well as the genre’s use of contemporary news stories as inspiration for its subject matter, it was perhaps inevitable that the public discussion surrounding male involvement in the women’s movement would inspire Sensation writers to explore alternative models of masculinity within their fiction.

Drawing attention to the importance of his role as a romantic partner to the New Woman, MacDonald defines the fictional New Man as a ‘character that desires intellectual equality with the New Woman and attempts, with varying degrees of

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<sup>13</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 3.

success, to build a relationship freed from the bonds of traditional gender models'.<sup>14</sup> Fabian, the marginalised would-be lover of the heroine in Wilford's *Sensation* novel, adumbrates the late-century utopian figure and his romantic ideology. Constructed in opposition to Marion's husband, Nigel Bartram, Fabian does not seek to reduce Marion to a Ruskinian ideal of femininity. Instead, he encourages her to fulfil her literary ambitions by aiding her in the process of publishing. In a poignant scene, Nigel's suppression of Marion's intelligence is contrasted to Fabian's celebration of her intellect. While Nigel patronises Marion, claiming that she 'is the last person to [...] wish to be thought clever', Fabian praises and acknowledges her as being 'cleverer than any of us' and therefore the ideal person to 'help us to a solution' (*NBI*, 156). Fabian anticipates Schreiner's vision of the New Man as an advocate for the New Woman's ideals (as quoted in the second epigraph) by repeatedly enjoining Marion not to abandon her literary talents and accept a domestic role. His liberal ideas regarding women's employment and ability to see beyond Marion's biological gender and its associations with passivity and domesticity in recognition of her equality, and even superiority, characterise him as *Sensation* fiction's New Man. This is further demonstrated by Fabian's desire for a relationship founded on the New Man's principles of 'active companionship and co-operation rather than passive submission'.<sup>15</sup> His declaration that he 'could have loved you as your husband never will and never can—never could even if he would; it is not in him!' (*NBI*, 241) implies that, as in New Woman literature, the New Man of *Sensation* fiction is identified by his progressive romantic principles. However, once again pre-empting New Woman fiction, Marion is unable to recognise Fabian's superior suitability as a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, p. 269.

romantic partner and instead clings to her Old Man husband, trying to mould herself into his ideal.

In New Woman literature, the male and female protagonists who represent a ‘new’ way of life are portrayed by the authors as soul-mates, yet typically they never enter into a relationship with each other because they are forever attracted to the ‘Old’ Man or Woman. In part this mismatch in romantic attachments served New Woman writers for impact, as it could only leave readers frustrated by the heroine’s unfulfilling relationship with the ‘wrong’ kind of man. These unsatisfactory relationships acted as a warning against ‘choosing a husband as [you] might choose a parrot—for his power to please, his talk and his plumage’ by representing the consequences of such a decision.<sup>16</sup> They also revealed women to be underprepared for the realities of marriage because, as Grand states, ‘such information as a girl has been able to obtain on the subject [...] has for the most part been admirably calculated to mislead her’ and thus since he did not comply with male stereotypes, women were not able to realise the superior suitability of the New Man.<sup>17</sup>

The New Woman’s attraction to the Old Man also indicates that women have to resist external pressures by rejecting those men ‘who are brilliant abroad [but] often deadly dull bores at home’, as well as battle their internalised self-subjection to the ideal of the ‘strong man’.<sup>18</sup> This is reflected beyond the pages of their novels in the feminist writers’ lives. Despite her feminist polemics, Schreiner’s attraction to her husband, Samuel Cronwright, was founded on an admiration of his physical prowess. In a letter to her friend Edward Carpenter, Schreiner wrote that ‘I do not

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah Grand, “On the Choice of a Husband”, *Young Woman*, 1898, vol. 7, pp. 1-3’, repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 106-11 (p. 106).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

think you would wonder, if you knew him that I had chosen him for my life's companion [...]. He's a man; & that's a great things [sic]'.<sup>19</sup> However, her friends did wonder at her choice.<sup>20</sup> Schreiner's emphasis on Cronwright's prototypical manhood exposes the powerful effect societal ideals of stereotypical masculinity had on women. When projected into the genre's novels, these illogical relationships help to reiterate the desirability of men who do not conform to male stereotypes.

However, it is not just the New Woman who consistently chooses the incorrect partner; the New Man is also attracted to the wrong love object. As MacDonald identifies, the New Man

presented ideological and narrative challenges for Victorian writers who sought to incorporate him into their fiction: not only was his gentleness at odds with definitions of manliness based on professional competitiveness or physical strength, but his inclusion in feminist narratives often re-established the romance plot and so risked challenging the heroine's desire for independence.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, the majority of New Woman novels culminate with the New Man rejecting the New Woman in favour of her more socially and politically conventional counterpart. In Grant Allen's *The Typewriter Girl* (1897), Mr Blank's willingness to discard Juliet Appleton, the woman for whom he has repeatedly declared his love, in favour of Michaela (Meda) with her 'maidenly modesty' and 'concrete feminine humanity', suggests that, like the New Woman, the New Man is not able to escape the confines of patriarchal ideology.<sup>22</sup> The New Man's failure to marry the New

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<sup>19</sup> Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter (8<sup>th</sup> October 1894), *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online*, <<https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=71&letterid=73>> [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016].

<sup>20</sup> Liz Stanley, *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Grant Allen, *The Type-Writer Girl*, ed. by Clarissa J. Suranyi (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004), p. 111.

Woman not only resembles a ‘critique of restrictive gender identities and marital models’, it also demonstrates that the world outside of the novels had not yet progressed to a stage where this new form of relationship could be celebrated.<sup>23</sup>

In *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal*, although all of Fabian’s actions demonstrate his support of Marion, as in New Woman literature, it is not enough to produce a union of souls and ultimately his love is unrequited. Marion rejects Fabian because ‘there had not—there had never been—any feeling for him in her heart beyond that of kindly regard, and a sort of elder-sister anxiety’ (*NBI*, 243). Fabian is overlooked because Marion considers him to be a supportive figure more akin to a sibling than a romantic partner. The absence of any sexual tension between them reinforces the idea that relations between the New Woman and New Man are held back by women’s internal subjection to patriarchal ideology. Although Fabian’s feminine nature could symbolise his sexual inversion, it also has associations with impotence, which are further emphasised by his retreat into a monastery (*NBI*, 288) and Marion’s inability to conceive him as other than a brother. Fabian’s potential incapability to perform sexually is threatening because, as John Tosh notes, ‘sexual intercourse amounted to a *rite de passage* to manhood, and repeated intercourse was a form of display intended to impress other males’.<sup>24</sup> Fabian’s withdrawal to a monk’s life after Marion has rejected him can be read as the sensationalist equivalent of the rejected maiden retreating into a convent, thus emphasising his feminised status. Furthermore, his departure from the world indicates that neither society, nor women, are ready for this new model of masculinity. Fabian’s identity as a proto-

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<sup>23</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 108. Emphasis in the original.

New Man serves to demonstrate the validity of drawing a connection between the representation of masculinity in the two genres.

To contextualise the New Man and his earlier incarnation in Sensation fiction, the following section explores public anxiety towards the increasingly unstable state of masculinity during the mid to late-Victorian period before moving on to consider the homoerotic hero in Sensation literature. Given the prevalence of the public discussion surrounding Oscar Wilde's trials and the publication of an English translation of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* in 1895 (the German edition was published in 1892), fears of homosexuality have typically been associated with the *fin de siècle*. However, an exploration of the hyper-masculine heroes in George Alfred Lawrence's *Guy Livingstone; or, 'Thorough'* (1857) and Ouida's *Under Two Flags* (1867) will be used to contest this assumption. In the final section, the critically neglected Diavolo Hamilton-Wells from Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) will be positioned as a New Man more in line with the new masculinity constructed in Sensation fiction. Although scholarly criticism has recently begun to take note of their absence, the male characters of Sensation literature have typically been overlooked in favour of their more openly divisive female counterparts.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the critical discussion of sensational male protagonists has rarely moved away from the canonical novels to provide a broader overview of the genre's representation of masculinity. This chapter aims to redress this absence by examining these understudied and socially disruptive characters.

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<sup>25</sup> These include Rachel Heinrichs, 'Critical Masculinities in *Lady Audley's Secret*', *Victorian Review*, 33.1 (2007), 103-20; Simon Petch, 'Robert Audley's Profession', *Studies in the Novel*, 32.1 (2000), 1-13; and Richard Nemesvari, 'Manful Sensations: Affect, Domesticity and Class Status Anxiety in *East Lynne* and *Aurora Floyd*', in *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 88-115.

**‘But here’s the old confusion. I am a man; you are a woman’: The Threat to Victorian Masculinity**

In George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* (1893), Edmund Widdowson’s dismissal of his wife’s conviction that ‘there’s [not] much real difference between men and women. That is, there wouldn’t be, if women had fair treatment’ reveals an anxiety that permeated late-Victorian society.<sup>26</sup> When Edmund declares ‘I am a man; you are a woman’ to counter Monica’s statement regarding the inherent similarities between men and women, he relies on the stability of gender categories to affirm his ‘natural’ dominance as a man.<sup>27</sup> However, ‘man’ was no longer a definitive nor secure term by the 1890s. This volatility had been assisted by Mill who advocated the creation of a ‘gender-blind’ society in which men were no longer distinct from women when he proposed changing the word ‘man’ to ‘person’ in legal documentation during a debate on the Second Reform Act in 1867.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, as women became more visible in the public world during the 1880s and 1890s, a threat made explicit by Monica’s desire to wander the city unchaperoned, gender binaries became increasingly unstable.<sup>29</sup> It was feared that if the New Woman and the Victorian women’s movement succeeded in remodelling gender roles, men and women would become virtually indistinguishable and the foundations of patriarchal society would be undermined. Thus, the need to (re)assert a ‘traditional’ masculine identity became ever more pressing.

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<sup>26</sup> George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 183.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>28</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> Gissing, *The Odd Women*, p. 184.

One way in which men differentiated themselves from women was through facial hair. Coinciding with the start of the Victorian women's movement that saw traditional masculine ideals threatened, facial hair had by the mid-1850s become a staple of British male identity. Aided by the increasingly relaxed rules to shaving, soldiers returning from the Crimean War helped to popularise the Victorian fashion for this 'indelible mark of masculinity' that signified the "natural" superiority of

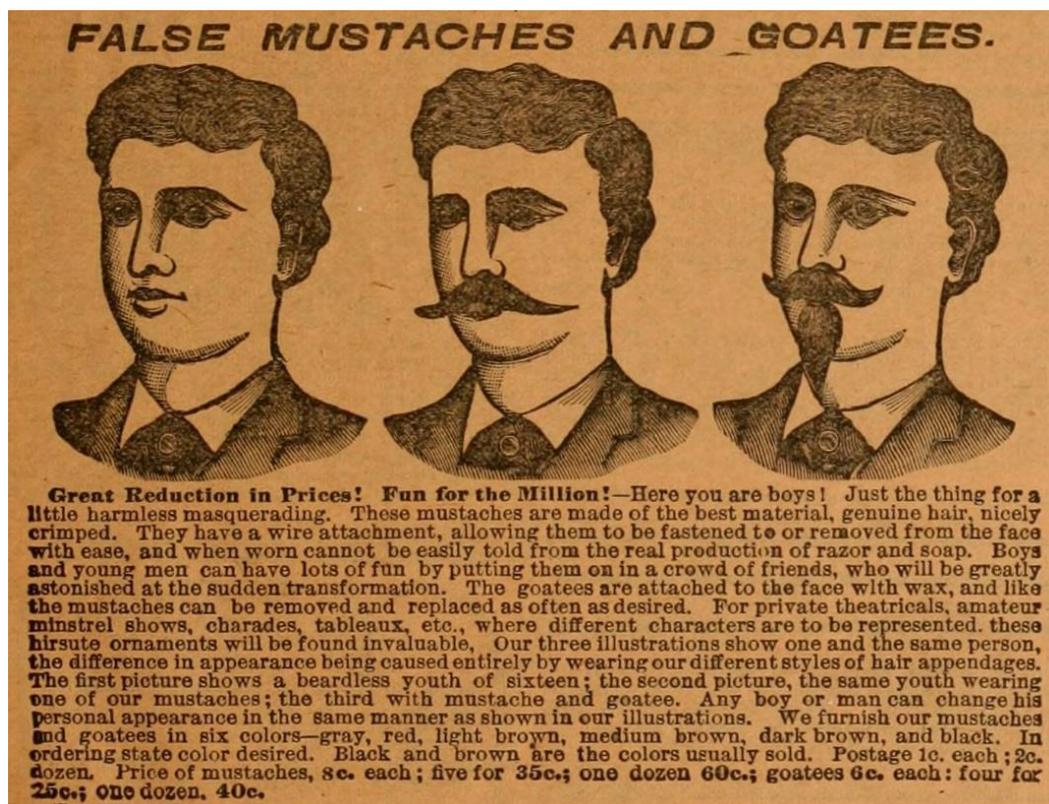


Figure 3.1 'False Mustaches and Goatees', *The Great Mail-Order Bargain House* (New York: Robert H. Ingersoll and Bro., 1898), p. 89.

men over women, and more vigorous men over their effete counterparts'.<sup>30</sup> Synonymous with manly independence and authority, beards and moustaches were similarly used in fiction to assert the hero's masculinity. In *Guy Livingstone*, Lawrence uses his protagonist's facial hair to indicate his movement from boyhood to manhood and illustrate the role his moustache plays in constructing patriarchal

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48.1 (2005), 7-34 (p. 26); *Ibid*, p. 8.

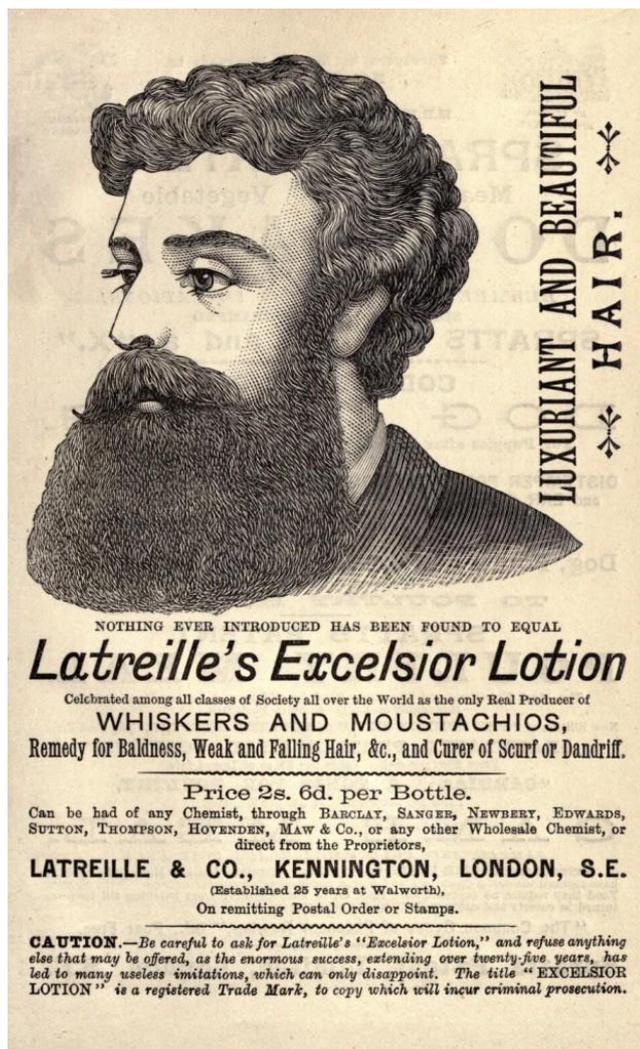


Figure 3.2 'Latreille's Excelsior Lotion', *Practical Journalism, How to Enter Thereon and Succeed* (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1888), p. 29.

authority: 'he was changed, certainly, but for the better. [...] The stern expression about his mouth was more decided and unvarying than ever—an effect which was increased by the heavy mustache [sic] that, dense as a Cuirassier's of the Old Guard, fell over his lip in a black cascade' (GL, 35-6).<sup>31</sup> Representing his heroic 'strength, decision, manliness, depth of intellect [and] solidity', Guy's beard instantly signifies his masculine power.<sup>32</sup>

However, as the popularity, and indeed normality, of facial hair grew, 'those men who did not—or could not—grow a beard, or at least substantial whiskers, were beginning to be viewed with something akin to suspicion'.<sup>33</sup> Writing in 1880, T. S. Gowing in *The Philosophy of Beards* warned that the 'absence of a beard is usually a sign of physical and moral weakness'; a connection that was also made in the press coverage

<sup>31</sup> Even Charles Dickens, who himself grew a beard during this period, published a defence of facial hair titled 'Why Shave?', *Household Words*, (13<sup>th</sup> August 1853), 560-3.

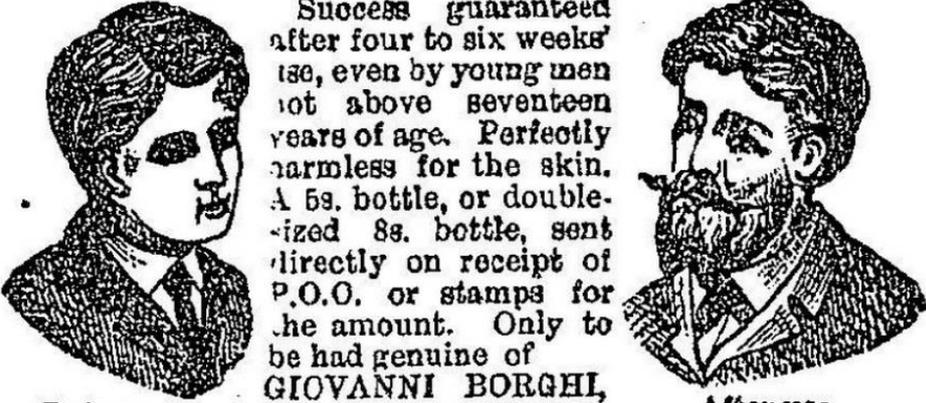
<sup>32</sup> 'A Corsair Expression', *Irish Quarterly Review*, 8.32 (1859), 1194-227 (p. 1197).

<sup>33</sup> Lucinda Hawksley, *Moustaches, Whiskers and Beards* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2004), p. 66.

of Oscar Wilde's trial.<sup>34</sup> In response to the stigma towards clean-shaven men, products to encourage and even fake facial hair began to fill the advertising pages of Victorian newspapers and periodicals (Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). While these advertisements undoubtedly played a crucial role in positioning facial hair as an indicator of masculinity by marketing themselves on their ability to make their wearers 'men', they simultaneously created anxiety about the social construction of masculinity by undermining what had come to be a natural sign of manliness.

**TWENTY YEARS' SUCCESS.—The only**  
**T** really certain means of growing a beard hitherto discovered is the use of Professor Modevi's

**BEARD GENERATOR**



Success guaranteed after four to six weeks' use, even by young men not above seventeen years of age. Perfectly harmless for the skin. A 5s. bottle, or double-sized 8s. bottle, sent directly on receipt of P.O.O. or stamps for the amount. Only to be had genuine of

**GIOVANNI BORGHI,**  
 Manufacturer of Eau-de-Cologne and Perfumery, Cologne-on-the-Rhine, Germany.

Figure 3.3 'Professor Modevi's Beard Generator', *Illustrated Police News* (4<sup>th</sup> April 1885), p. 4.

Social unease regarding the loss of a recognisable masculine identity was also fuelled by the popular press' use of gender-bending caricatures that warned of men's increasing effeminacy by placing them in docile and stereotypically feminine positions. This is evident in the *Punch* cartoons 'Man or Woman?—A Toss Up' and 'We've Not Come to that Yet' (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). Both illustrations similarly

<sup>34</sup> T. S. Gowing, *Philosophy of Beards* (Ipswich: J. Haddock, 1854), p. 5; Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 61.

undermine stable gender distinctions by representing men as visually indistinguishable from women. This is explicitly clear in the first image where, as the title indicates, the gender of the central figure is ambiguous; while the body (particularly the ‘wasp-waist’) and clothing suggest femininity, the face, haircut and height imply a masculine, if boyish, identity. In both caricatures the men’s slight bodies point to their lack of strength and inability to take a dominant role, a fact enhanced by the more robust body of the female companion in ‘We’ve Not Come to that Yet’. Protruding from behind the ambiguously-sexed figure in the foreground of ‘Man or Woman?’, the feminine foot and shoe of another distinctly soft-faced feminine man are contrasted to his dinner jacket and bow-tie. The visual break in his body, caused by the figure in the foreground, implies that society cannot reconcile masculinity and femininity in one body. Cartoons such as these sought to provoke anxiety regarding the malleability and loss of gender distinctions by showing that the New Man was inherently feminine.



Figure 3.4 Illustration by Linley Sambourne, “Man or Woman?”—A Toss up’, *Punch*, or *the London Charivari* (10<sup>th</sup> April 1880), p. 166.

Earlier in the century, Mill himself became the object of public ridicule when *Judy*, a journal intended to rival *Punch*, satirised him as a cross-dressing gender hybrid (Figure 3.6). The caricature, which ran alongside news articles and a satirical poem welcoming his defeat in the 1868 election, implies that men cannot champion the women's cause without becoming feminised.<sup>35</sup> Mill's fantasised desire to dress as a woman,



**WE'VE NOT COME TO THAT YET.**

*She.* "I WAS SO GLAD TO HEAR OF YOUR MARRIAGE! DO COME TO US AND BRING YOUR WIFE. BY THE WAY, WHAT IS YOUR NAME NOW!"  
*He.* "OH, I HAVEN'T CHANGED MY NAME. IT'S *SHE*, YOU KNOW!"

despite his distinctly male body, further suggests that he does not

*Figure 3.5* Illustration by unknown artist, 'We've Not Come to that Yet', *Punch, or the London Charivari* (6<sup>th</sup> October 1894), p. 167.

merely behave like a woman, he actively wishes to be one. In 'Miss Mill joins the Ladies', Mill is held back as he prepares to leave the room by another politician, possibly William Henry Smith, who succeeded him as MP for Westminster, placing his chair on Mill's dress. Yet Smith is also depicted holding the door open for Mill, suggesting Mill is being thrown out of the room symbolising 'Westminster' because of the deficiency in his masculinity. Moreover, his movement from the public to the private sphere points to the failure of the campaign for female suffrage to find its place outside of the home and in British politics.

The caricatures of Mill and the New Man follow the anti-feminist rhetoric of Eliza Lynn Linton who claimed that the

<sup>35</sup> 'Miss Mill Joins the Ladies', *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, 4 (1868), 43 (p. 43); 'All About Everything', *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, 4 (1868), 43 (p. 43).

less lovely the thing, the more ardently it is celebrated by the men whose main endeavour in this direction is to destroy the old ideals, and to substitute for the beautiful women of history and fiction the swaggering Wild Women of the present craze. The truth is simply this—*the unsexed woman pleases the unsexed man*.<sup>36</sup>

Linton connects the masculinisation of women to the inevitable feminisation of men to illustrate the detrimental impact female emancipation would have on the ‘race’. Walter Besant anticipates Linton’s anti-New Man rhetoric in his dystopian novel *The Revolt of Man* (1882) by illustrating the danger the unnatural effeminisation of men

posed to society. Capturing the increasingly prevalent fear surrounding a breakdown of gender norms, Besant depicts an aggressively matriarchal society in which the ‘natural order has been reversed; [and] the sex which should command and create is compelled to work in blind obedience’.<sup>37</sup> Barred from education and a professional life, men are kept in the



Figure 3.6 Illustration by unknown artist, ‘Miss Mill Joins the Ladies’, *Judy; or the London Serio-Comic Journal* (25<sup>th</sup> November 1868), pp. 46-7.

<sup>36</sup> Eliza Lynn Linton, “‘The Partisans of the Wild Women’”, *The Nineteenth Century* (March 1892), pp. 455-64, repr. in *Victorian and Edwardian Anti-Feminism*, ed. by Valerie Sanders and Lucy Delap, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2010), vol. 2, pp. 296-305 (p. 302). Emphasis in the original.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Besant, *The Revolt of Man* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1882), p. 137.

position of the middle-class Victorian maiden groomed for the marriage market and nothing else. They are married off to forty-year-old women who, having established themselves in business, now desire young men who demonstrate the traditionally feminine qualities of ‘submission and obedience’.<sup>38</sup>

George Egerton also plays with gender role reversal in her short story ‘The Spell of the White Elf’ (1893); however, in contrast to Linton and Besant, she demonstrates the positive impact ‘feminine’ men could have on society. When the New Woman and New Man couple adopt a child, it is the man who displays maternal instincts cautioning his wife not to hold the baby ‘like a book of notes at a lecture’.<sup>39</sup> His seemingly inherent maternal nature threatens gender stereotypes by implying that the New Man is more comfortable than the New Woman in the feminised domestic realm. As James Eli Adams notes, Victorian society was founded on the ‘increasingly rigorous gendering of [the] division’ between public and private which ‘led to a growing isolation of middle-class fathers from their sons’.<sup>40</sup> However, Tosh contests what he views as modern presumptions of Victorian gender anxiety regarding the breakdown between public and private by locating the middle-class man within the domestic sphere. Despite associations between the private sphere and women, Tosh claims that ‘fatherhood was seen as an intrinsic or “natural” constituent of masculinity’ because it established a man’s ability to procreate.<sup>41</sup> Thus, while it appears that a man’s capability to have children was a staple of Victorian manhood, his ability to raise them was not. Consequently, the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>39</sup> George Egerton, ‘The Spell of the White Elf’, in *Keynotes and Discords*, ed. by Sally Ledger (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 25-32 (p. 29). The woman’s inability to have children, and thus perform a defining ‘natural’ feature of womanhood, further points to her masculinisation.

<sup>40</sup> James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 79. Tosh also identifies that ‘husbands without children suffered a loss of masculine status’ because it prevented them from establishing a family legacy. Ibid, p. 80.

father was viewed as an important, yet ambiguous figure in Victorian society because he invited questions about what it meant to be a 'man' inside the home.

In comparison to Egerton and Schreiner, Linton and Besant, rather than offering the prospect of an enlightened society in which the New Man would stand 'side by side with the "New Woman"', depict relations between the New Woman and New Man to result in social anarchy because both sexes cross the gender divide.<sup>42</sup> However, New Woman writers often reclaimed the 'Old' masculinity of 'physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtue' for the New Man.<sup>43</sup> In contrast to the popular press' denunciation of degenerate masculinity, the New Man, as first envisioned by Sarah Grand in 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question' (1894), was intended to be 'manly and chivalrous', while it is the Old Man who is depicted as effeminate: 'the trouble is not because women are mannish, but because men grow ever more effeminate. [...] [W]here are our men? Where is the chivalry, the truth and affection, the earnest purpose, the plain living, high thinking, and noble self-sacrifice that make a man?'<sup>44</sup> Grand's vision of a world in which the 'child-man' would be raised up by the 'strong-hand' of the New Woman so that he may secure the future of masculinity is remarkably similar to that of Thompson who earlier in the century also identified

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<sup>42</sup> Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, p. 266.

<sup>43</sup> J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, 'Introduction', in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, ed. by J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 1-6 (p. 1).

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Grand, "'The Man of the Moment'", *North American Review*, 1894, pp. 620-7', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 50-7 (p. 50); Sarah Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', *North American Review*, 158.448 (1894), 270-6 (p. 275).

the need to ‘equally elevate both sexes’ because ‘equality with such creatures as men now are’ was unimaginable.<sup>45</sup>

However, as will be addressed in more detail in the final section of this chapter, the portrayal of the New Man in the majority of New Woman (and Sensation) literature, including Grand’s own fiction, does not emulate Grand’s original vision but instead presents a distinctly *feminine*, yet chivalrous, New Man as the most desirable romantic companion of the New Woman. The New Man protagonist in Grand’s *A Domestic Experiment* (1891) is indicative of this. With his ‘tall and slender’ stature and tendency to be an ‘idealist, and a bit of a dreamer’, Lord Vaincrecourt is far removed from the ‘manly’ figure of the New Man that Grand advocates in her non-fiction.<sup>46</sup> Anticipating Diavolo’s construction (which will be explored later in this chapter), Vaincrecourt is shown to be not quite an adult by being repeatedly referred to as a ‘boy’ throughout the narrative to reinforce that his gentle, feminine masculinity subverts social expectations. Yet, both Diavolo and Vaincrecourt also display the chivalry associated with the Old Man and whose demise Grand deplors, thus complicating the New Woman’s construction of a new masculinity.<sup>47</sup>

Schreiner’s *From Man to Man, or, Perhaps only*, published posthumously in 1926, is one of the few New Woman novels to include a muscular New Man figure. The novel’s hero, Drummond, is a writer, scientist and adventurer who is a moral and intellectual match for the New Woman, Rebekah. His physical strength is suggested by his ‘bronzed’ skin which indicates that, in contrast to Vaincrecourt who

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 273; Thompson, *Appeal*, p. xii. In comparison to Grand, who identifies that it is men who need to improve in order to become equal with women, Thompson suggests that both men and women need to undergo change.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Grand, *A Domestic Experiment* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1891), pp. 82-3.

<sup>47</sup> This contradictory portrayal of masculinity will be explored and conceptualised in the final section of this chapter.

is more comfortable ‘lounging on a couch’, he is ‘long habituated to the open air’.<sup>48</sup> However, Schreiner’s inability to finish this novel despite working on it for over forty years illustrates the difficulty New Woman writers faced in finding a resolution which incorporated this new model of masculinity in their narrative universe.<sup>49</sup>

While anti-New Man caricatures and novels were undoubtedly designed to incite fears of male degeneracy and combat any desire for the emergence of the New Man, Phillip Mallett’s observation that ‘Victorian manhood was by definition [in] a state of permanent crisis’ is contentious.<sup>50</sup> MacDonald disputes Mallett’s claim in her assessment of the New Man and instead employs Judith Gardiner’s argument that the term ‘crisis’ ‘falsifies history by implying there was once a golden time of unproblematic, stable gender’ to depict masculinity as a ‘complex construct’.<sup>51</sup> New Woman fiction was not unique in offering an interrogation of masculinity during the nineteenth century. Foreshadowing the New Woman ideal of the feminine, emotional, girlish boy, Romanticism challenged the ‘very link between authority, political power, and masculinity itself’ by depicting a version of masculinity which privileged the life of emotion, passion, feminine intuition and the spiritual.<sup>52</sup> Anne Mellor argues that in contrast to the Byronic figure of masculine strength, Romantics such as John Keats ‘complicate the issue of gender and ideology [...] by occupying the position of the woman in life or in discourse, or by blurring the distinction

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<sup>48</sup> Grand, *A Domestic Experiment*, p. 238; Olive Schreiner, *From Man to Man, or, Perhaps only* (London: Virago Press, 1982), p. 446.

<sup>49</sup> Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, *Fictions of the Female Self: Charlotte Brontë, Olive Schreiner, Katherine Mansfield* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Academic and Professional, 1991), p. 83.

<sup>50</sup> Phillip Mallett, ‘Preface’, in *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity*, ed. by Philip Mallett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. vi-xiii (p. vii).

<sup>51</sup> Judith Kegan Gardiner, ‘Introduction’, in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. by Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 1-30 (p. 14); MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 19.

<sup>52</sup> Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 9.

between genders'.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between Keatsian sensibility, sensitivity and vulnerability and the New Man demonstrates that there has never been a time when 'men were men, [and] women were women'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, it is interesting that New Woman authors invoked Romantic notions of feminine masculinity (clean-shaven, androgynous build, emotional) at a time when the Victorian cultural ideal had instated a very different notion of masculinity (bearded Old Testament sages, stern and self-disciplined).

Although I agree with Gardiner that a discussion of crisis with its 'deliberate exaggerations and fomenting of anxieties [...] echoes the rhetoric of advertising', it is nevertheless clear that writers were interested in exploring the tension created by the changing nature of masculinity across the Victorian period.<sup>55</sup> This is illustrated by the inclusion of the homoerotic hero in Sensation fiction.

### **Queer Sensations: The Homoerotic Hero and the Mask of Hyper-Masculinity**

Accidentally anticipated by Sensation fiction's use of the 'sanctified realm of Victorian domesticity' as a façade to obscure 'scenes of horror', the Labouchere Amendment of 1885 similarly positioned the home as a site of corruption.<sup>56</sup> The last-minute addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Act criminalised 'any male person who, in public *or private*, commits, or is party to the commission of or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross

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<sup>53</sup> Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 171.

<sup>54</sup> Gardiner, 'Introduction', p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Nemesvari, 'Robert Audley's Secret: Male Homosexual Desire in *Lady Audley's Secret*', *Studies in the Novel*, 27.4 (1995), 515-28 (p. 516); Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1863), vol. 2, p. 149.

indecent with another male person'.<sup>57</sup> Although the century had already witnessed several legal changes in relation to sodomy, including the 1861 Offences against the Person Act which reduced the penalty from death to life imprisonment, the Labouchere Amendment, echoing a distinctive feature of Sensation fiction, was the first to suggest that male relationships within the private sphere were potentially dangerous.<sup>58</sup>

Undoubtedly the most famous prosecution to arise from the Labouchere Amendment was that of Oscar Wilde, who was sentenced in 1895 to two years' hard labour after being found guilty of gross indecency. Combined with the publication of an English translation of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* in 1895 and the Cleveland Street Scandal of 1889, Wilde's trial drew attention to the presence of a 'commercialised homosexual underworld [...] which existed largely to service well-heeled men of the middle and upper class'.<sup>59</sup> Issued in an English translation just three months prior to Wilde's conviction, *Degeneration* lays out Nordau's argument that society was being threatened by a 'dangerous, potentially perverse and possibly infectious version of male effeminacy' being portrayed in the art of the period.<sup>60</sup> Much as Sir Edward Clarke would attempt in his prosecution by using *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) as proof for Wilde's homosexuality, Nordau employs the fiction

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<sup>57</sup> Frederick Mead and A. H. Bodkin, *The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, with Introduction, Notes, and Index* (London: Shaw and Sons, 1885), p. 68. My emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 61. In Offences Against the Person Act of 1828 the 'requirement of proof was diminished [from penetration and emission in the body] to evidence of penetration only'. Ibid, p. 60. Indirectly affecting the legal attitude towards homosexuality, the Official Secrets Act of 1889 enabled the Government to prevent information from being publicly disclosed for 100 years. It was first used to close 'Home Offices dossiers of sentencing policies for bestiality and sodomy between men'. Ibid. Brady argues that the 'secrecy surrounding this material is indicative of the imperative to keep the discussion of sexuality between men out of the public domain'. Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 189. The Cleveland Street scandal occurred when a male brothel in London was exposed by police. The trial revealed several upper-class clients rumoured to include Prince Albert Victor. H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (London: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1976).

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 3.

of ‘decadent’ writers such as Wilde, Henrik Ibsen and Émile Zola as evidence that ‘books and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses. It is from these productions that an age derives its ideal of morality and beauty. If they are absurd and anti-social, they exert a disturbing and corrupting influence on the views of a whole generation’.<sup>61</sup> While *Degeneration* and the social commentary surrounding Wilde’s trial inevitably helped promote *fin-de-siècle* fears of non-heteronormative sexualities, an alternative view of same-sex desire was simultaneously acquiring increased public attention.

First popularised by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), sexology gained momentum in Britain when Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds challenged sexual taboos in *Sexual Inversion* (1897). Using various case studies, they attempted to scientifically explain same-sex desire by positioning sexual inversion as an ‘inborn constitutional abnormality’ that results in a ‘widespread natural instinct impelling men toward homosexual relationships’.<sup>62</sup> Yet Ellis and Symonds were not alone in advocating a “‘medical model” of homosexuality’.<sup>63</sup> Edward Carpenter, who himself lived openly with another man, put forward a similar argument in *The Intermediate Sex* (1908).<sup>64</sup> Carpenter argued that those of ‘uranian temperament’ are a natural, valued and growing section of

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<sup>61</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. by anon. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p. viii. In his attempt to show that Wilde’s novels were ‘calculated to subvert morality and to encourage unnatural vice’, John Douglas, the 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Queensberry, accused Wilde of writing a ‘certain immoral and obscene work in the form of a narrative entitled *The Picture of Dorian Gray* which said work was designed and intended [...] to describe the relations, intimacies and passions of certain persons of sodomitical and unnatural habits, tastes, and practices’. Merlin Holland, *The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Perennial, 2004), pp. 290-1.

<sup>62</sup> Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Ivan Crozier (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 98.

<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), p. 32.

<sup>64</sup> For more information about Carpenter and his life see Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2009).

society who act as a ‘guide—and really a hopeful guide—towards the future’.<sup>65</sup> In comparison to the popular press, sexologists presented a more positive representation of the homosexual as a figure who would benefit rather than corrupt society.

However, as George Chauncey illustrates, by characterising ‘homosexuality as the condition of certain, identifiable individuals’, sexologists such as Ellis and Symonds effectively separated deviant sexuality from conventional Victorian masculinity: an assumption I argue is undermined in Sensation fiction.<sup>66</sup> This distancing of masculinity and homosexuality was replicated in the press coverage of Wilde’s trial. Michael Foldy contends that Wilde and the sensational reporting that accompanied his trial were responsible for creating an image of the homosexual which ‘effectively fused into an identifiable and recognizable constellation the concepts of male effeminacy, immorality, same-sex passion, decadence, degeneration, criminality, and aestheticism’.<sup>67</sup> However, it is perhaps wise to exercise some caution in drawing such a conclusion regarding the link between the social perception of male effeminacy and same-sex attraction. As Carpenter himself illustrates, ‘effeminacy does not by any means show itself in all Urnings’.<sup>68</sup> Thus, it appears more conceivable that rather than being marked by his ‘effeminate’ nature, the homosexual became associated with a refusal to conform to ideals of ‘manliness’.

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex; a Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), p. 120; *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup> George Chauncey Jr., ‘From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: The Changing Medical Conceptualization of Female “Deviance”’, in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, ed. by Kathy Peiss, Christina Simmons and Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), pp. 87-117 (p. 87).

<sup>67</sup> Michael S. Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 92. This is echoed by Weeks who states that the ‘downfall of Oscar Wilde was a most significant event for it created a public image for the “homosexual”’. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 103.

<sup>68</sup> Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p. 32.

This is emphasised by Nordau, who finds Wilde's refusal to blend into society particularly problematic:

like Barbey d'Aurevilly, whose rose-coloured silk hats and gold lace cravats are well known, [...] Wilde dresses in queer costumes [...]. It is asserted that he has walked down Pall Mall in the afternoon dressed in doublet and breeches, with a picturesque biretta on his head, and a sunflower in his hand, the quasi-heraldic symbol of the *Æsthetes*.<sup>69</sup>

By making reference to D'Aurevilly and Wilde's 'queer costumes', Nordau unmistakably positions Wilde as a dandy. A figure of social rebellion, the dandy was perceived to threaten the 'robust, muscular brand of British masculinity deemed to be crucial to the maintenance of the British Empire' because he valued physical appearance over moral virtue.<sup>70</sup> It is not Wilde's sexual deviance which most troubles Nordau, although the dandy did become synonymous with homosexuality, but rather his refusal to obey masculine codes of restraint. Nordau seems to be implying that Wilde's deliberate public flaunting of difference is indicative of his inability to resist temptations in the private sphere.

Despite Jeffrey Weeks arguing that as 'late as 1871, concepts of homosexuality were extremely underdeveloped [...] suggesting an absence of any clear notion of a homosexual category or of any social awareness of what a homosexual identity might consist of', same-sex desire was not a new public phenomenon in late-nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, contradicting public belief in 1890 that the 'certain offence' had become 'more rife than it ever was before',

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<sup>69</sup> Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 317.

<sup>70</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 94.

<sup>71</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, p. 101.

same-sex relationships were already visible in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> One of the most famous and publicised trials was that of Ernest Boulton (Stella) and Frederick Park (Fanny), two cross-dressing homosexuals, who publicly subverted sex and gender distinction. Arrested for dressing in women's clothing in 1870, Boulton and Park, sons of two respectable middle-class families, 'served to focus anxieties about drawing the boundaries and policing the borders between public and private, respectable and illicit, modes of behaviour'.<sup>73</sup> Although not convicted of conspiracy to commit sodomy, the 1871 trial of Boulton and Park saw several high-profile figures, including the Liberal Party politician Lord Arthur Pelham-Clinton, caught up in the scandal.<sup>74</sup> The trial's widespread coverage in the popular press helped reveal the 'problematic intersection between charges of sexual deviance and conceptions of masculinity intimately linked with social class' as well as providing some of the first public evidence of the presence of a gay sub-culture in London.<sup>75</sup>

Ross Forman in his analysis of Marcus Clarke's Sensation novel *His Natural Life* (1874) further contradicts Weeks' claim by contending that 'cognitive links between effeminacy and homosexuality were reflected in mid-Victorian popular literature [...], that discussions of criminalized same-sex behaviours in the political or public sphere filtered into popular fiction [... and] that the authors of these texts expected their readers to understand coded references to homosexual acts'.<sup>76</sup> Forman employs queer theory as a critical lens to analyse Sensation fiction, contending that

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<sup>72</sup> *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3d series (London, 1890), 341:1534, cited in Morris B. Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 178.

<sup>73</sup> Morris B. Kaplan, "'Men in Petticoats': Border Crossing in the Queer Case of Mr. Boulton and Mr. Park", in *Imagined Londons*, ed. by Pamela K. Gilbert (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 45-68 (p. 45).

<sup>74</sup> H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), pp. 105-14.

<sup>75</sup> Kaplan, "'Men in Petticoats'", p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> Ross G. Forman, 'Queer Sensation', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela K. Gilbert (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 414-29 (p. 423).

the genre's 'use of a popular-fiction medium to address social and sexual transgressions and its richly ambiguous plotting of moral certitudes' encourages such an approach.<sup>77</sup> Eluding a simple definition, queer theory is broadly used to probe the 'open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically'.<sup>78</sup>

Emerging in the early 1990s in the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler, queer theory challenges notions of fixed identity both in relation to (homo)sexuality and gender. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and *Tendencies* (1993), Sedgwick positions 'queer' as a term which can be used to 'denote, almost simply, same-sex sexual object choice, lesbian or gay, whether or not it is organized around multiple criss-crossings of definitional lines'.<sup>79</sup> She depicts sexuality as fluid and unrestrained by biological sex/gender. Yet this concept would not have been alien to sexologists at the *fin de siècle*. Carpenter recognises that 'distinctions and gradations of Soul-material in relation to Sex [...] in a vast number of instances, most subtly from male to female, and *not always in obvious correspondence with the outer bodily sex*—is a thing evident enough to anyone who considers the subject'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, Andrew Smith maintains that Ellis and Carpenter 'radically problematised the relationship between gender and sex designation by suggesting that a subject's adherence to the dominant masculine script was no guarantor of that subject's sexual preferences'.<sup>81</sup> Smith contends that, by separating sex and gender, Ellis and Carpenter demonstrate that same-sex attraction is not biologically pre-determined,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 415.

<sup>78</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p. 10. My emphasis.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Victorian Demons*, p. 3.

thus aligning their approach with the premise of queer theory. Butler, on the other hand, situates gender as performative: ‘gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self’.<sup>82</sup> In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), a founding text of queer theory, she argues that a man conforms to masculine stereotypes because he has been conditioned by society that this is the ‘appropriate’ and ‘normal’ way for him to behave. Yet in reality, as Riki Wilchins summarises, ‘all gender is drag. All gender is queer’.<sup>83</sup> Sedgwick’s and Butler’s different approaches to queer theory will be used in this section to identify subversive portrayals of (homo)sexuality, and subsequently gender, in Sensation fiction.

Forman and I are not alone in using queer theory to (re)read Sensation fiction. Several other critics including Jennifer Kuchnier, D. A. Miller, Richard Fantina and Richard Nemesvari have also reassessed the genre through this critical lens.<sup>84</sup> However, apart from Forman and Fantina, their focus has been on the canonical and ‘feminine’ novels of the genre. Aided in part by the feminist-led rediscovery of Sensation fiction, criticism has traditionally concentrated on the genre’s representation of women, its female characters and female-authored novels (*The Woman in White* [1859] being the exception). This has meant that a sub-genre of Sensation fiction has been overlooked: what I term the male-sensation novel. A

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<sup>82</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 191.

<sup>83</sup> Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (New York: Magnus Books, 2014), p. 146. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>84</sup> Jennifer S. Kushnier, ‘Educating Boys to be Queer: Braddon’s “*Lady Audley’s Secret*”’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 30.1 (2002), 61-75; D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 146-91; Richard Fantina, *Victorian Sensational Fiction: The Daring Work of Charles Reade* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 77-124; Nemesvari, ‘Robert Audley’s Secret’. Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, “‘Mimic Sorrows’: Masochism and the Gendering of Pain in Victorian Melodrama’, *Studies in the Novel*, 35.1 (2003), 22-43 also examines homoerotic tension in *Lady Audley’s Secret*.

previously unnamed and unrecognised sub-genre of Sensation fiction, the male-sensation novel as I define it is distinguished by its representation of, and admiration for, heroic masculinity. Written by both men and women, the male-sensation novel rejects the genre's characteristic portrayal of marginal, feminine and subservient men. Instead, this sub-genre invites comparisons with the early-nineteenth-century muscular Christian novels of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes with their message that 'participation in sport could contribute to the development of Christian morality, physical fitness, and "manly" character'.<sup>85</sup> Thus, unlike the majority of Sensation literature, male-sensation fiction focuses on the heroes' bravery and their ability to carry out heroic acts. This is evident in mid-century novels by George Alfred Lawrence and Ouida, as well as Charles Reade's *The Wandering Heir* (1872) and (with Dion Boucicault) *Foul Play* (1869) where masculine men are placed at the centre.

However, while the male-sensation novel appears to depict men with conventional and unthreatening masculinity, in reality its portrayal of sensational masculinity serves to challenge heteronormative social structures and perceptions of desirable masculinity (a feature that is enhanced by Sensation fiction's representation of the unheroic hero). Thus, what is most subversive about this sub-genre is that unlike novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) where homoerotic tension exists between men who do not meet Victorian expectations of manhood, male-sensation novels explore potentially threatening male relationships between traditionally masculine men. After all, as Sedgwick identifies, 'for a man to be a man's man is

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<sup>85</sup> Nick J. Watson, Stuart Weir and Stephen Friend, 'The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond', *Journal of Religion and Society*, 7 (2005), 1-21 (p. 1), <<http://moses.creighton.edu/jrs/toc/2005.html>> [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017]. This sub-genre can be seen to resonate in the later *fin-de-siècle* fiction of H. G. Wells, H. Rider Haggard and Arthur Conan Doyle.

separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being “interested in men”<sup>86</sup>. The hyper-masculine heroes of Lawrence’s *Guy Livingstone; or ‘Thorough’* (1857) and Ouida’s *Under Two Flags* (1867) will be used to explore this underlying homoerotic tension and consequently reveal how, long before *fin-de-siècle* fears surfaced, Sensation fiction deconstructs ‘idealist’ notions of masculinity.

Lawrence, a popular writer of his time who is largely unknown today, specialised in constructing clichés of masculinity. Drawing inspiration from Kingsley’s use of muscular Christianity in his portrayal of Amyas Leigh in *Westward Ho!* (1855), Livingstone’s novels are characterised by their male protagonists’ physical prowess and love of masculine pursuits such as hunting and sport.<sup>87</sup> In comparison to Fabian in *Nigel Bartram’s Ideal*, whose ‘rather effeminate’ (*NBI*, 154) features are emphasised during the readers’ first encounter with him, Guy Livingstone, the hero of Lawrence’s popular novel, is introduced via his physical strength. Guy’s ‘disproportionate length of limb and development of muscle, which ripened later into the rarest union of activity and strength’ (*GL*, 4) are emphasised to immediately establish his ‘natural’ and inherent masculinity. However, while muscular bodies were meant to reinforce a man’s conformity to ideals of masculinity, as James Eli Adams notes in relation to Kingsley’s fiction, the “‘muscular’ ideal of manhood is structured by the very asceticism [it] insistently attacked”.<sup>88</sup> Adams goes on to argue that this conflict is incorporated in an ‘especially violent oscillation of discipline and abandon, which magnifies an

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<sup>86</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 89.

<sup>87</sup> David Rosen, ‘The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origins of Primal Manliness’, in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 17-44 (p. 36).

<sup>88</sup> Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, p. 17.

instability inherent in a notion of manhood as an incessant mastery of temptation'.<sup>89</sup> A similar tension is evident during Guy's first appearance in the novel. Guy's introduction does not originate from the perspective of an ungendered omniscient narrator, but rather from Frank Carew, a central character, long-term friend of Guy and narrator of the novel. As the reader comes to recognise that Guy's praise is directed through the eyes of another man, the dynamics of this scene are altered and homoerotic tension begins to emerge.

Significantly, Frank's lingering description occurs while they are at an unnamed public school and just prior to their education at Oxford University. As Sinfield notes, 'public schools were crucial in the development of homosexual identity because, despite the official taboo, they contributed, in many instances, an unofficial but powerful cultural framework within which same-sex passion might be positively valued'.<sup>90</sup> Published during a period in which increased attention was beginning to be paid to the homosocial bonds formed at public school, both *Guy Livingstone* and *Under Two Flags* emphasise the presence of this subversive sub-culture: Bertie Cecil, the hero of Ouida's novel, significantly gets his nickname 'Beauty of the Brigades' (*UTF*, 6) at Eton, while Frank remarks that during his time at Oxford Guy was a 'general favourite with all the men he knew at college, though *intimate* with but very few' (*GL*, 16, my emphasis).<sup>91</sup> In contrast to the narrative attempt to establish Bertie's and Guy's sexual agency through their sexually charged

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, pp. 65-6. See Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) for a discussion of how the study of Greek was perceived to encourage homosexuality.

<sup>91</sup> Charles Vaughan, the headmaster of Harrow, was forced to resign in 1859 when John Addington Symonds, a former pupil, revealed Vaughan had maintained relationships with certain pupils. In 1895 W. T. Stead contested that 'if all persons guilty of Oscar Wilde's offence were to be clapped in gaol, there would be a surprising exodus from Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester, to Pentonville and Holloway'. W. T. Stead, *The Review of Reviews*, (June 1895), cited in H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), p. 340.

relations with women (Guy's virile power is presented to surge 'through his veins like molten iron' [*GL*, 168], and Bertie maintains a mistress [*UTF*, 9]), ultimately they are objects of male desire. Confined to the peripheries of both texts, the references to problematic male relationships function to undermine the initial portrayal of the heroes' conventional masculinity.

However, unlike Lawrence, Ouida does not immediately draw attention to her hero's physical strength in *Under Two Flags*. Instead, she surrounds Bertie with objects that while signifying his conventional masculinity are simultaneously domesticated by their positioning in a 'silken and rose-coloured' (*UTF*, 6) dressing room, a space typically associated with women and dandies: 'a delicious confusion prevailed through it pell-mell, box-spurs, hunting-stirrups, cartridge cases, curb-chains, muzzle-loaders, hunting flasks, and white gauntlets, being mixed up with Paris novels, pink notes, point-lace ties, bracelets, and bouquets to be dispatched to various destinations' (*UTF*, 6). The detailed description of Bertie's dressing room which extends for the majority of the first chapter serves to reflect Bertie's genderqueer identity. Prefiguring his bisexual desires, the hybrid nature of Bertie's dressing room is echoed in the novel's focus on his appearance:

when the smoke cleared away that was circling round him out of a great meerschaum-bowl, it showed a face of as much delicacy and brilliancy as a woman's, handsome, thorough-bred, languid, nonchalant, with a certain latent recklessness under the impressive clam of habit, and a singular softness given to the large dark hazel eyes by the unusual length of the lashes over them. His features were exceedingly fair—fair as the fairest girl's; his hair was of the softest, silkiest, brightest chestnut; his mouth very beautifully shaped[.] (*UTF*, 6-7)

Despite Bertie's simultaneously masculine and feminine appearance (given its association with masculinity, it is significant that Bertie lacks facial hair), he remains

the ‘handsomest man in all the Household Regiments’ (*UTF*, 7) reinforcing the fact that the ‘constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically’.<sup>92</sup> Although Bertie’s paradoxical introduction to the novel initially complicates his hyper-masculinity, Ouida affirms her hero’s conventional masculinity through repeated references to his inability to think of anything but ‘horses or women’ (*UTF*, 80). The ‘first cross-country ride[r] of the Service, who had landed the mount at the Grand National Handicap, the Billesdon Coplow, the Ealing, the Curragh, the Prix du Donjon, the Rastatt, and almost every other for which he entered’ (*UTF*, 27), Bertie’s sporting achievements serve to demonstrate his masculinity throughout the novel.

Both Lawrence and Ouida are careful to ensure that their male protagonists do not overtly resemble the effeminate men scapegoated by the popular press. However, as previously acknowledged, links between effeminacy and homosexuality were destabilised by sexologists such as Carpenter who maintained that the ‘normal type of the Uranian man’ was not effeminate but ‘muscular and well-built’.<sup>93</sup> Thus, rather than stabilising notions of gender, the hyper-masculinity of the heroes in *Guy Livingstone* and *Under Two Flags* serves to complicate expectations of masculinity and (hetero)sexuality. Founded on their sporting abilities which are repeatedly emphasised throughout both novels, Bertie’s and Guy’s masculinity initially appears to be conventional and stable. However, at times this façade slips and the performative nature of the men’s hyper-masculinity is revealed. These novels foreshadow the premise of queer theory by positioning masculinity as a mask which Bertie and Guy use to disguise their problematic sexuality. In *Under Two Flags*, Bertie’s hyper-masculinity is undermined by his desire for a ‘portable lounging-chair

<sup>92</sup> Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, p. 8. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>93</sup> Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, pp. 32-3.

[...] at battues [sic], so that you might shoot sitting' (*UTF*, 63). Despite the novel's insistence that there was 'not a man who loved hunting better than Bertie' (*UTF*, 63), it appears that Bertie only participates in these 'manly' activities because society conditions him to believe that this is how men should behave. Thus, he can be seen modelling his masculinity on contemporary expectations.

Indeed, later in the novel when fighting in Africa for the French army after being wrongly accused of forging the signature of his close friend the Marquis of Rockingham, known to Bertie as Seraph, Bertie draws attention to his use of gender performance as a means to rid himself of his homoerotic desires: 'he had vanquished all the habits, controlled most of the weaknesses, and banished nearly all the frailties and indulgences of his temperament in the long ordeal of African warfare' (*UTF*, 394). Given that it is suggested that Bertie has had a relationship with a young Arab woman who had 'fallen to him once in a razzia as his share of [the] spoil' (*UTF*, 207), Bertie could be alluding to his 'weaknesses' for women. However, if so, this raises the question why he would need to control and suppress these 'natural' desires. It seems more likely that soldiery bravery is positioned as a cure for self-identified sexually taboo 'weaknesses'. Foreshadowing Carpenter, this implies that masculinity cannot be relied upon to signify a man's conformity to social norms and thus destabilises the notion that the patriarchy (which is clearly represented by Bertie and Guy given their upper-middle-class status) establishes and enforces 'normal and 'abnormal' identities and sexualities.

Like Bertie, 'Livingstone's advocacy of the manly tough is less secure than it first appears'.<sup>94</sup> After a long illness which leaves his arm 'which a month ago was

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<sup>94</sup> Holly Furneaux, *Military Men of Feeling: Emotion, Touch, and Masculinity in the Crimean War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 11.

fatal as old Front-de-Boeuf's' without 'strength enough in its loosened sinews to lift itself three inches from the coverlet' (*GL*, 252), Guy is left struggling to salvage his old masculine identity that was founded on 'orgies of wine and play' (*GL*, 251). As Guy's 'stout manhood [is] shivered within him, utterly and suddenly' (*GL*, 242), Lawrence compels his readers to question whether his protagonist's masculinity is a disguise that is consciously employed to detract from his 'intimate' relationships with other men. It is during this illness, a time when Guy's performance is suspended, that his gender masquerade slips and his deviant sexuality begins to emerge:

there have been men, they say, who, sensible of the approach of delirium, chose the one person who should attend them, and ordered their doors to be closed against all others, preferring to die almost alone to the risk of what their ravings might betray; but I have heard, also, that there are secrets—secrets shared, too, by many confederates—to which neither fever or intoxication ever gave a clue. The hot blood grew chill for an instant, and the babbling tongue was tied when the dreamer came near the frontier ground, where the oath reared itself distinct and threatening as ever, while all else was fantastic and vague. There was something of this in Guy's case. We could hear distinctly many of his broken sentences, relating something to the hunting-field, sometimes to the orgies of wine or play. There were names, too, occurring now and then, which to his mother were meaningless, but to me had an evil significance. (*GL*, 250)

As he 'trembl[es] on the verge of a revelation' (*GL*, 250), Guy struggles to maintain his performance by making desperate references to the 'hunting-field'. However, his unconscious ravings and their hidden meaning ultimately expose his use of gender masquerade and, perhaps more dangerously, reveal his previously unspoken desires. Guy's sexuality is queered because his secret desires are not explicitly heterosexual or homosocial, instead they are suspended between the two, constantly threatening to become that which cannot be articulated. It is also significant that Guy's true

meaning is only visible to Frank. Guy's mother is ignorant of the 'evil significance' of her son's words implying that there is a secret relationship between men which women are excluded from.

In *Under Two Flags* it is at the moment of Seraph's re-emergence into Bertie's life that queer tension surfaces: 'with a great cry he sprang to his feet and stood entranced, gazing at the stranger. She [Cigarette] saw the startled amaze, the longing love, the agony of recognition, in his eyes; she saw the impulse in him to spring forward, and the shuddering effort with which the impulse was controlled' (*UTF*, 389). Bertie's self-control threatens to break down at the sight of Seraph and 'shatter all the *work* of so many years' (*UTF*, 392, my emphasis). Ouida's use of the word 'work' anticipates Butler by suggesting that heterosexuality is not a biological certainty, but a construct that must be repetitively performed. Suffering an 'agony' worse than any 'torture of the battlefield' (*UTF*, 390), Bertie is only able to look on as his youthful impulses resurface. Bertie's 'gaze strained through the gleam on to the fire-lit group with a passionate intensity of yearning;—he was well used to pain, well used to self-control, well used to self-restraint, but for the first time in his exile the bitterness of a struggle almost vanquished him' (*UTF*, 390). Fearing what might happen if his self-control breaks down, Bertie wishes to regress to a time in his life when relations between men were acceptable. As 'all the old love of his youth went out to this man' (*UTF*, 390), Bertie longs for the 'gratitude of comrade to comrade, not of man to woman' (*UTF*, 395) that was acceptable in his school days. However, Cigarette, a woman who fights alongside the French army, dismisses the notion that a 'fine soldier' such as Bertie is 'weak' (*UTF*, 392). Reaffirming nineteenth-century assumptions regarding sexuality and gender, she associates hyper-masculinity with (sexual) self-control and thus distances homosexuality from masculinity.

Described as ‘more like a handsome saucy boy than anything else’ (*UTF*, 184), Cigarette further complicates Bertie’s heteronormative desires. Despite being recognised by others as a ‘pretty, impudent little Friend of the Flag that was feminine with it all’ (*UTF*, 184), Cigarette is deemed to be ‘unsexed’ (*UTF*, 207) by Bertie. He remains ignorant of her affection for him and instead views her as a sexless comrade. This is evident in the only moment of intimacy between them when ‘he stooped and kissed her; a kiss that the lips of a man will always give to the bright youthful lips of a woman, but a kiss, as she knew well, without passion, even without tenderness in it’ (*UTF*, 397). Cigarette serves to demonstrate that Bertie only displays emotions towards a woman when it is necessary for him to disguise his taboo desires. I would add that it is for this reason that he ultimately picks the more feminine Venetia Corona to mask his homosocial desires.

As in *Under Two Flags* where the Seraph’s feelings for Bertie are left largely unspoken, in *Guy Livingstone* the narrator becomes an almost silent third party in the relationship between Guy and Constance Brandon, the woman to whom Guy is briefly engaged. While Guy’s relationship with Constance seemingly combats the narrative’s homoerotic tension, Constance’s gender-hybrid last name points to Guy’s queer desires and suggests that, like Venetia, she is used to mask men’s transgressive desires. Frank, unlike Seraph (who is Venetia’s brother), does not have familial ties to the relationship. Instead he is a silent observer who relates the central events of Guy and Constance’s romance to the reader. This casts him as an outsider whose unrequited love results in dreams that are ‘haunted by that haggard face and dreary eyes’ (*GL*, 314). Occupying the unstable middle-ground between Guy and his various love interests, Frank recognises that he is ‘lapsing rapidly into the terrible *third* that spoils sport’ (*GL*, 69, emphasis in the original). Analogous to Ouida’s use

of the word ‘work’, Lawrence’s decision to portray Guy’s relationship with women as a ‘sport’ suggests that, like his hunting rituals, these heterosexual flirtations function as a performance to mask homoerotic tensions and allow Guy to maintain his ‘conventional’ masculine façade. Consequently, women in both novels are positioned as tools that Guy and Bertie use to preserve their heterosexual performance.

Inspired by René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961) who ‘traced a calculus of power that was structured by the relation of rivalry between the two active members of an erotic triangle’, Sedgwick contends that ‘in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of “rivalry” and “love”, differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent’.<sup>95</sup> This ‘triangulation of desire’, Sedgwick goes on to argue, makes ‘power relationships between men and women appear to be dependent on the power relationships between men and men’, which suggests that ‘large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangles’.<sup>96</sup> As defined by Sedgwick and Girard, these erotic triangles consist of two men who compete for the affection of one woman. While many Sensation novels including *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley’s Secret* and Thomas Hardy’s *Desperate Remedies* (1871) exhibit this rivalry, in *Guy Livingstone* and *Under Two Flags* the heroines seem to exist only to strengthen the ties between men. Jane Jordan likewise maintains that ‘Ouida’s novels of the 1860s [...] re-write the male romance in order to examine the function of the romantic heroine within the homosocial power structure and to analyse erotic borderlines of homosocial desire; women are positioned in the text solely in relation to the bond

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<sup>95</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 21.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

between male friends'.<sup>97</sup> It is these 'erotic borderlines of homosocial desire' that Guy and Bertie traverse as they hover between homosexuality and heterosexuality.

*Under Two Flags* echoes *Lady Audley's Secret* by having the central male protagonist fall in love with the sister of his male companion. During his self-confined exile in Africa, Bertie is confronted by two figures from his past. Not immediately recognising her, Bertie falls in love with Venetia but when her brother, Seraph, returns, Bertie is forced to acknowledge his repressed desires.<sup>98</sup> Ouida clearly shows that Bertie's love for Venetia is not separate from his desire for Seraph: 'these two—her face and his—must come before him' (*UTF*, 394). Anticipating Sedgwick's erotic triangle, Bertie's amalgamation of brother and sister reinforces the notion that women act as a substitute for men's affections. Gayle Rubin maintains that women are used as 'exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men'.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Venetia's role in the novel is largely disposable as she functions only to bring the two men back together. Like Robert Audley, Bertie marries the female version of Seraph in order to maintain a socially acceptable relationship with his love object. Thus, Venetia's presence in the novel serves only to enable Bertie to conceal his homosexual nature, not to represent its absence. By relocating homosocial desire within the middle-class home, Ouida anticipates the anxiety expressed by the Labouchere Amendment by positioning the Victorian home as a safe space for same-sex male attraction.

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<sup>97</sup> Jane Jordan, "'Between Men': Romantic Friendship in Ouida's Early Novels', in *Ouida and Victorian Popular Culture*, ed. by Jane Jordan and Andrew King (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 53-70 (p. 54).

<sup>98</sup> That Bertie calls him Seraph is significant given that this is the name of an angelic being who in Christian angelology is associated with ardour and purity. *OED Online*, s.v. 'seraph', <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/176342>> [accessed 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017].

<sup>99</sup> Sedgwick, *Between Men*, pp. 25-6.

Although *Guy Livingstone* similarly sets up an erotic triangle between Frank, Guy and Constance, Guy symbolically destroys this triangle:

Guy took the miniature and regarded it steadfastly for some moments, then he looked up and caught my eye. Perhaps there was an eager appeal there (for I knew well whose likeness lay before him) which displeased and provoked his sullen temper; for he frowned darkly, and then his clenched hand fell with the crashing weight of a steam-hammer. Nothing but a heap of shivered wood, glass, and ivory remained of what had been the life-like image of Constance Brandon. (*GL*, 183)

While Frank's 'eager appeal' may be taken to imply that he wants, or indeed needs, Guy to love Constance, it might also indicate that he wants him to forget her so that their relationship can prosper. Guy's brutal destruction of Constance's image demonstrates his anger at the fact that their relationship has not served its purpose and erased his homoerotic desires. Ultimately, Guy is unable to maintain a heterosexual relationship and so, unlike Bertie, he is not given the opportunity to find a way to semi-permanently disguise his same-sex attractions in Victorian society. Unlike Bertie who at the novel's conclusion has married Venetia and is living in England with her and Seraph, Guy does not have the opportunity to mask his homoerotic desires with a heterosexual relationship and so he must be removed from the narrative. At the end of the novel Guy is crushed under his horse and suffers a painful and prolonged death. Left feeling 'nothing *below the waist*' (*GL*, 319, emphasis in the original), Guy symbolically becomes the threatening figure of the celibate who 'represented a logical blindspot in the Victorian ideology of male sexual respectability' and therefore has to die as there is no woman to complete him.<sup>100</sup> However, Guy is not feminised in his illness and death. Instead the narrative makes clear that he retains his 'dangerous' strength until the very end by depicting

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<sup>100</sup> Trev Lynn Broughton, *Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late Victorian Period* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 142.

him take up a ‘small silver cup that lay near, and [crush] it flat between his fingers’ (*GL*, 325) just a few days prior to his death. This prevents Guy from becoming the effeminate and subservient man characteristic of Sensation fiction’s portrayal of dying men.

D. A. Miller argues that the endings of Victorian novels enforce homophobia by ‘supplement[ing] its misogynistic plot with a misanthropic one, in which it will detail the frightening, even calamitous consequences of unmediated relations between men, thereby administering to its hero an aversion therapy calculated to issue in a renunciation of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called “male homosocial desire”’.<sup>101</sup> However, the final scene in *Guy Livingstone* advocates a more progressive view of homosocial relations. Despite Guy’s death obeying the ‘providential punishment’ Victorian novels administered to those with same-sex desires, the absence of any women means that male bonds between Guy and Frank are, if only for a short time, made explicit.<sup>102</sup> Recalling the earlier scene when Guy’s unconscious ravings could merely hover on the brink of a revelation, this is the first time that Guy acknowledges his deeper feelings for Frank as he thanks him for bearing ‘patiently with my perverse temper since we were boys together’ (*GL*, 327). This reference to their youth evokes memories of a period in Frank’s and Guy’s lives when relations between males were if not acceptable, then at least able to go unchecked. Moreover, by leaving his house to Frank (after his mother), Guy positions Frank as his spouse in an arrangement that legally acknowledges their relationship.

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<sup>101</sup> Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, p. 186.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Given Sensation fiction's exploration of 'Victorian anxieties about gender roles and sexual identification, anxieties which became increasingly difficult to repress as the century proceeded', male-sensation novels such as *Guy Livingstone* and *Under Two Flags* can be seen to explore the fine line between male friendship and homosexuality that would come to be a central part of public discourse at the *fin de siècle*.<sup>103</sup> Exposing the secrets of men, not women, these male-sensation novels reveal the hidden secrets of Victorian society and contest the contemporary belief that sexual attraction was determined by a person's sexual organs. Subverting expectations of homosexuality with their portrayals of hyper-masculine, rather than effeminate, men, Lawrence and Ouida anticipate queer theory by positioning masculinity as a performance their heroes use to disguise and detract from their homoerotic desires. Consequently, by challenging expectations of literary heroism, Bertie and Guy can be seen as anti-heroes. While traditionally associated with Sensation literature, the contradictory hero or 'unheroic hero', a term coined by William Makepeace Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* (1837), would also emerge as a prototype for the New Man in Sarah Grand's seminal New Woman novel, *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) where the anti-hero becomes the hero.<sup>104</sup>

### **The Anti-Hero: A Sensational New Man in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)**

In 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', Grand criticises writers for being 'satisfied with the ballet dancer's legs, pretty things enough in their way, but not worth mentioning as an aid to the moral, intelligent and physical strength that make a

<sup>103</sup> Nemesvari, 'Robert Audley's Secret', p. 516.

<sup>104</sup> John Carey, 'Introduction', in William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. by John Carey (London: Penguin Group, 2001), pp. ix-xxxii (p. xxxii).

man'.<sup>105</sup> Yet Ann Heilmann argues that in contrast to Grand's non-fictional 'protest that men were growing ever more "effeminate" and "womanish"', her fiction 'celebrated femininity as the superior principle [by] projecting feminine qualities onto her heroes'.<sup>106</sup> A figure of contradiction suspended between the effeminate Old Man and the enlightened New Man, Theodore Hamilton-Wells, known as Diavolo, from Grand's novel *The Heavenly Twins* encapsulates this paradoxical representation of ideal masculinity.

Constructed in opposition to his twin sister, Angelica, who is the 'elder, taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two, the organizer and commander of every expedition' (*HT*, 9), Diavolo exhibits the 'feminine qualities' Heilmann identifies. Grand introduces Diavolo by subverting patriarchal ideals of masculinity as he and Angelica swap clothing: "What a sweet little boy, with his lovely dark curls!" was heard from all sides; but there was also an audible titter. Lady Adeline turned pale, Mrs Frayling's fan dropped. Evadne lost her countenance. The twins had changed clothes' (*HT*, 63). The ease with which Diavolo and Angelica pass as the opposite gender despite their different hair colour reinforces the impression that their nature (and gender) reflects that of their sibling more aptly than it does their own.<sup>107</sup> Although later in the novel Diavolo's masculinity is reinforced when attention is drawn to the emerging dissimilarity between his and Angelica's body, the narrative consistently focuses on the contrast between Diavolo's 'fair appearance' (*HT*, 9) and

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<sup>105</sup> Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', p. 275.

<sup>106</sup> Ann Heilmann, 'General Introduction', in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Heilmann and Forward, vol. 1, pp. 1-15 (p. 3).

<sup>107</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 64.

gentleness, and Angelica's dark features and explosive manner to demonstrate that he does not conform to traditional expectations of the Victorian literary hero.<sup>108</sup>

Dr George Galbraith, Evadne Frayling's second husband, is typically identified as the New Man of *The Heavenly Twins*. Stephanie Forward is not unique in claiming that Galbraith is the 'most appealing and credible of Grand's New Men' because he offers the 'possibility of deeper relations between the sexes'.<sup>109</sup> However, I contend that this constitutes a misreading of the text that illustrates the continuity of internalised notions of 'true' masculinity in the present day. For Galbraith demonstrably suffocates Evadne, who suffers the permanent collapse of her identity in her second marriage. Diavolo, by contrast, in offering her the prospect of a relationship founded on the New Man's ideals of equality and intellectual compatibility, materialises as the most suitable romantic partner. Galbraith's inadequacy as a New Man is immediately signalled by his profession because, as Sally Ledger states, 'doctors as a species are always objects of profound suspicion in New Woman novels'.<sup>110</sup> As MacDonald argues, the doctor was a 'particularly controversial figure for late Victorian feminists who tended to oppose the medical profession's desire to shield women from information about their own bodies', and so he frequently came to represent 'social disease and patriarchal power' in *fin-de-siècle* fiction.<sup>111</sup> Heilmann maintains that 'Galbraith's twin roles of physician and husband suggest grim analogies with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow

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<sup>108</sup> Later in the novel Grand compares Angelica's 'round and white and firm [arm], with every little blue vein visible beneath the fine transparent skin', to Diavolo's arm which is 'all hard muscle and bone, burnt brown with the sun, and coarse of texture' (*HT*, 251).

<sup>109</sup> Stephanie Forward, 'The "New Man" in *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction', *Women's Writing*, 5.3 (1998), 437-55 (p. 441).

<sup>110</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman*, p. 160. However, it is interesting to note that Emma Frances Brooke's novel, *A Superfluous Woman* (1894), casts the doctor in a more positive and supportive role.

<sup>111</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 83; *Ibid*, p. 82.

Wallpaper”, published a year before *The Heavenly Twins*.<sup>112</sup> She contends that when read in conjunction, the ‘patriarchal authority’, and I would add ulterior motive, ‘behind Galbraith’s concern for Evadne becomes transparent’.<sup>113</sup> Given Grand’s prior demonstration of the ease with which mental illness could be attributed to women, I claim that the narrative sustains a level of doubt as to whether Evadne’s deteriorating mental state is merely a tactic by which Galbraith can contain her in his medical notes and thus convert her into a ‘loyal little body’ (*HT*, 627).<sup>114</sup>

This is made particularly evident when Evadne confronts Galbraith during a walk in which she crams her pockets full of gorse flowers:

‘you will want to know why I do that, I suppose [...] you will be looking for a motive, for some secret spring of action. The simple fact that I love the gorse won’t satisfy you. You would like to know why I love it, when I first began to love it, and anything else about it that might enable you to measure my feeling for it’. This was so exactly what I was in the habit of doing with regard to many matters that I could not say a word. (*HT*, 580)

Galbraith’s desire to apply meaning to everything Evadne does illustrates the method by which he seeks to control her. However, this episode simultaneously demonstrates that Galbraith’s inference regarding Evadne’s actions is constructed to suit his own individual purpose and not based on any medical knowledge. Evadne satirises psychoanalysis by recognising that it wants to identify the exact moment of trauma and then develop a narrative around this. She shows that this is precisely what Galbraith does when, rather than realise the real cause of her problems, he determines that the root of Evadne’s issues is her refusal to have sex with her first husband.

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<sup>112</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 69.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> When Evadne refuses to live with Colonel Colquhoun after his sexual history is revealed to her, Evadne’s father threatens to put her in a ‘lunatic asylum if you do not give in at once, and consent to live with your husband’ (*HT*, 91).

In her evaluation of Galbraith as the novel's New Man, Forward fails to address the problematic role of the doctor in New Woman fiction and instead argues that Galbraith's status as a New Man is established by the emphasis placed on his desirable personality in the 'Author's Note' to Book Six:

it is easy to decipher the simple earnestness of the man, the cautious professionalism and integrity, the touches of tender sentiment held in check, the dash of egotism, the healthy-minded human nature, the capacity for enjoyment and sorrow, the love of life, and, above all, the perfect unconsciousness with which he shows himself to have been a man of fastidious refinement and exemplary moral strength and delicacy; of the highest possible character; and most loveable in spite of a somewhat irascible temper and manner which were apt to be abrupt at times. (*HT*, 529)

However, this hyperbolic praise cannot disguise the reservation Grand introduces in regards to Galbraith's suitability as a partner to the New Woman. The contradictory nature of the editorial note acts as a warning to the readers not to trust Galbraith before they are properly introduced to him. This sentiment is reiterated by Mr Hamilton-Wells' declaration that Evadne only accepts Galbraith's marriage proposal to 'save her life' (*HT*, 630). Although Galbraith 'protest[s] against the libel' by stating that he has 'never, to [his] certain knowledge, uttered a rough word either to or before my little lady in the whole course of our acquaintance' (*HT*, 630), Grand's 'Author's Note' serves to undermine his denial as well as demonstrate the unreliability of his narrative.<sup>115</sup> Galbraith's patronising language, signified by his use of the term 'little lady' to address Evadne, further illustrates his old-fashioned views of women and implies that he will not be the novel's New Man.

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<sup>115</sup> Book Six shifts from a third-person narrator to the first-person narrative of Galbraith.

Foreshadowed by Lady Adeline's reference to 'cases in which the man who was liked well enough as a companion was found to be objectionable in an unendurable degree as soon as he became a husband' (*HT*, 43), Galbraith's 'irascible temper and manner' emerge as he criticises Evadne for having 'gone off in that ridiculous tantrum simply because I did not begin by expressing my love' (*HT*, 630). Galbraith's reluctance to articulate his amorous feelings is contrasted to Diavolo who repeatedly and openly declares his intention to marry Evadne throughout the novel. Consequently, in sharp contrast to her standpoint in 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', Grand suggests that absolute manliness is not a desirable feature of the New Man. Diavolo's failure to comply with Victorian expectations of manhood, as signified by his earlier cross-dressing exploits, deconstructs Grand's representation of the 'manly' New Man and instead implies that the 'real' New Man is not 'manly'. This serves to illustrate that despite Galbraith's seemingly 'idealistic' construction, in reality it is the feminine Diavolo who encapsulates Grand's ideals of the New Man. Thus, I argue that as a New Man of New Woman literature, Diavolo is not as MacDonald argues a 'figure of failure or compromise', but instead reflects the contradictory and unstable state of masculinity presented in Sensation fiction.<sup>116</sup>

Resembling both hero and anti-hero at once, the 'sensitive antiheroes' of Sensation literature are, like their female counterparts, troubling figures intended to manipulate reader expectations.<sup>117</sup> By deconstructing the conventions of literary heroism to present male autonomy as undesirable, the majority of Sensation fiction exposes 'grand heroic gestures reminiscent of aristocratic codes of chivalry as empty or fake heroic performances', and instead celebrates 'modest, silent, distinctly

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<sup>116</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Tamara S. Wagner, *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel, 1740-1890* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 194.

unspectacular and partly feminised forms of heroism' as "truly" heroic'.<sup>118</sup> Although the muscular hero of male-sensation fiction appears to contradict this appreciation of a feminine masculinity, ultimately, both Sensation fiction and male-sensation novels use their male protagonists to expose the ambiguity of gender binaries and demonstrate that masculinity is not founded on heroism but on a man's attitude to women. Contradicting the construction of masculinity in *Guy Livingstone* and *Under Two Flags*, the majority of Sensation fiction anticipates New Woman literature by using the heroes' intermediate gender identity to emphasise their inability to conform to expectations of masculinity. However, while New Woman fiction presents this contradiction in one body that moulds together both femininity and masculinity, in Sensation fiction this is done by contrasting two variants of men.

This is evident in Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (1867) where the domineering figure of Dare Stamer is juxtaposed to James Stanley, the parson with whom Kate Chester undertakes charity work in an attempt to forget her feelings for Dare. James is depicted as a 'small, pale, delicate-looking man' who is 'not a muscular Christian at all' (*NWTW*, 170). Yet despite his unimposing appearance, the narrative emphasises that what might appear as a deficiency in his character actually shows him to be a 'gentleman and a good man' (*NWTW*, 170). As James' simultaneously masculine and feminine nature demonstrates, the new masculinity presented in Sensation fiction is associated with a paradox that foreshadows the contrasting figures of Grand's effeminate Old Man and masculine New Man in 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'.

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<sup>118</sup> Stefanie Lethbridge, 'Negotiating Modernity, Modernising Heroes: Heroes and Heroines in Gothic and Sensation Fiction of the Long Nineteenth Century', in *Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction since 1800: Case Studies*, ed. by Barbara Korte and Stefanie Lethbridge (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 31-46 (p. 38).

Broughton further enhances James' desirability as a romantic partner by contrasting him to Dare, who, for all his conventional masculinity, is demonstrated to be an unsuitable partner for the heroine. In comparison to James, Dare's appearance, in particular his eyes which have the ability to 'scorch and shrivel up' (NWTW, 90) Kate's soul, reflects his masculine authority. Broughton, like Grand, illustrates that instead of enhancing his desirability, Dare's masculine appearance signals his brutality towards women. In its review of the novel, the *Athenaeum* expressed the belief that *Not Wisely, but Too Well* had been written by the same author as *Guy Livingstone* due to its 'peculiar heroes and very peculiar morality'.<sup>119</sup> The reviewer claims that 'Guy Livingstone himself, under the name of Col. Stamer, is here again introduced to the public with his old characteristics—his gigantic strength and form, fascinating manners and delightful wickedness'.<sup>120</sup> While comparisons can certainly be drawn between the two novels, not least in the men's brutality towards women, Dare, unlike Guy, is never the novel's 'hero' and thus this cannot be classified as a male-sensation novel. Instead, Dare serves to enhance the readers' frustration that Kate does not recognise that the feminine James is the more appropriate partner.

Like James, Diavolo's contradictory appearance confuses expectations of the hero and hence, serves to question what it means to be a 'man'. Grand emulates Sensation fiction in *The Heavenly Twins* by demonstrating that masculinity is not signified by a man's stereotypically heroic actions but rather by his support of the women's cause. The danger of conventional masculinity is reflected by men like Colonel Colquhoun, Evadne's first husband, and Sir Mosely Menteith, Edith Beale's

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<sup>119</sup> 'Not Wisely, but Too Well', *Athenaeum*, (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1867), 569 (p. 569).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

husband, who both hold positions in the army.<sup>121</sup> These men expose ‘heroic’ military masculinity as dangerous for women, consequently reinforcing the superior suitability of the ‘unheroic hero’. When his uncle, the Duke of Morningquest, asks whether he is ‘coming out as a champion of women’ (*HT*, 267), Diavolo, instead of lamenting women’s failings, echoes ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’ by adamantly stating that:

‘oh, by Jove, no! [...] I haven’t the conceit to suppose they would accept such a champion, and besides, I think it’s the other way on now; *we* shall want champions soon. You see, in the old days, women were ignorant and subdued, they couldn’t retaliate or fight for themselves in any way; they never thought of such a thing. But, now, if you hit a woman, she’ll give you one back promptly,’ he asseverated, rubbing a bump on his head suspiciously. (*HT*, 267, emphasis in the original)

Unlike Galbraith and Lord Dawne, the twin’s uncle and central male protagonist of Grand’s novel *Ideala* (1888) who is also often mistaken as a New Man despite his instrumental role in preventing *Ideala* from leaving her abusive husband, Diavolo rejects the ‘authorial (and authoritarian) position Lord Dawne and Dr Galbraith espouse in their narrative appropriation (colonisation) of women’s stories and lives’.<sup>122</sup> Like Dare, Dawne and Galbraith assert their masculinity by controlling the women around them. This enables them to maintain gendered hierarchies and thus not have their dominant position threatened. In comparison, Diavolo’s status as a New Man is more in line with the retiring new masculinity put forward in Sensation fiction due to his marginal and elusive status in the narrative.

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<sup>121</sup> Both men are shown to have lived immoral lives prior to marriage, which in Mosely’s case has led him to contract venereal disease. Although Diavolo is sent to the army, he does not distinguish himself in this career.

<sup>122</sup> Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies*, p. 61. Heilmann argues that Dawne constructs himself as a New Man in *Ideala* (1888) by suggesting that in comparison to Lorrimer (the man *Ideala* considers leaving her husband for) who wants to limit women’s intellectual pursuits, he ‘envisages a public life’ for women. However, as Heilmann emphasises, Dawne’s treatment of Angelica in *The Heavenly Twins* ‘falls substantially short of this egalitarian vision’ because he fails to recognise her desire to have an occupation outside of marriage. *Ibid*, p. 57.

In comparison to Galbraith who establishes his authority by usurping narrative control in the final book of the novel, Diavolo struggles to gain any narrative agency. He occupies a peripheral position happily allowing his domineering sister, Angelica to act as his ‘mouthpiece’ (*HT*, 244). Diavolo’s retreat into the textual margins reinforces the idea that his masculinity is not associated with the old model of masculinity that viewed women as objects to be contained. Instead, echoing Grand’s viewpoint in ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’, Diavolo recognises that the social hierarchy is shifting and that it is men who now need to take inspiration from women.

One of the few times that Diavolo moves away from the sensational model and becomes the New Man Grand envisioned in her non-fiction articles occurs during another conversation with his uncle. Responding to his uncle’s assertion that women ‘compassed the fall of man’ (*HT*, 255), Diavolo declares that

‘I’ve thought a good deal about that story myself, and it doesn’t seem to me to prove that women are weak, but rather the contrary. For you see, the woman could tempt the man easily enough; but it took the very old devil himself to tempt the woman. [...] And, at any rate,’ Diavolo pursued, ‘it happened a good while ago, that business, and it’s just as likely as not that it was Adam whom the devil first put up to a thing or two, and Eve got it out of him—for I grant you that women are curious—and then both came a cropper together, and it was a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other. [...] But there is no doubt about the redemption. It was a woman who managed that little affair. And, altogether, it seems to me, in spite of the disadvantages of being classed by law with children, lunatics, beggars, and irresponsible people generally, that in the matter of who have done most good in the world, women come out a long chalk ahead of us’. (*HT*, 255-6)

Diavolo not only ‘confutes both religion and general patriarchal clichés about women by reading the Bible literally’, he also satirises society’s view of women by showing that they are in fact the superior sex despite all of the disadvantages they

face.<sup>123</sup> This open rejection of the masculinity encapsulated by Dawne and Galbraith is reinforced by Diavolo's reaction to several classical texts:

‘what I object to in these classical chaps,’ he resumed, ‘is the way they sneaked and snivelled about women's faults, as if they had none of their own! And then their mean trick of going back upon the women, and reproaching them with their misfortunes. [...] If the men were such superior beings, why don't they show it somehow?’ (*HT*, 266)

By challenging typically male readings of religion and the classics, Diavolo is distancing himself from the Old Man and his treatment of women.

Despite Grand clearly demonstrating that Diavolo is the more suitable partner for Evadne, he is nevertheless overlooked in favour of Galbraith. Marriage, even between the New Woman and New Man, posed a problem for New Woman writers who sought to find an ending that would allow their female protagonists to maintain their independence. Often, as in *The Heavenly Twins* where Evadne's second marriage results in the loss of her voice, marriage is depicted as suffocating a woman both emotionally and physically. Thus, the majority of New Woman novels represent marriage as oppressive. However, there are some exceptions where marriage is shown to provide a solution to gender conflict. Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop* (1888) and Victoria Cross' *Anna Lombard* (1901) are two of the few New Woman novels to conclude with the marriage of the New Woman and New Man protagonists. In *The Romance of a Shop*, Levy subverts Victorian societal conventions by having Lucy Lorimer and Frank Jermyn continue with their individual artistic pursuits after marriage.<sup>124</sup> However, in contrast to Grand's

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>124</sup> In *The Romance of the Shop*, Gertrude Lorimer's marriage to Lord Watergate can also be seen as a New Woman and New Man pairing. The ending to *Anna Lombard* is more complex than Levy's novel given that the 'ideal' marriage of the New Woman and New Man is predicated on child murder.

declaration that the New Woman's 'ideal of a husband is a man whom she can reverence and respect from end to end of his career, especially in regards to his relations with her own sex', in the majority of New Woman novels, including Grand's own, the New Man is often overlooked by the heroine in favour of the Old Man.<sup>125</sup>

In Grand's New Woman novel, in spite of Diavolo frequently reiterating his childhood declaration to 'marry her [Evadne] as soon as he was able' (*HT*, 12), everyone surrounding him, including Angelica, is shocked to learn that his 'wolf-cry' (*HT*, 631) had been in earnest. Marriage played an important role in the social construction of masculinity during the nineteenth century and so Diavolo's failure to even be considered as a romantic partner is significant. Tosh observes that the ability to 'form a household, to exercise authority over dependants, and to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining and protecting them—these things set the seal on a man's gender identity' and thus 'complete transition to manhood depended on marriage'.<sup>126</sup> However, this model of masculinity is defined by a man's ability to dominate women, a role Diavolo has already clearly rejected, suggesting that Diavolo, and consequently the (sensational) New Man, is not suited to be a husband. Grand accentuates Diavolo's discordance with the husband's role by repeatedly depicting him in feminised positions and spaces within the home. In a style reminiscent of a Pre-Raphaelite painting, Diavolo is portrayed in a subservient position

lying on the floor in his favourite attitude with a black satin cushion under his head, and was, with his slender figure, refined features, thick,

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Anna Lombard suffocates her mixed-race child from a previous marriage in order to give her marriage to Gerald Ethridge the opportunity to prosper.

<sup>125</sup> Grand, "The Man of the Moment", p. 52.

<sup>126</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 108.

curly, fair hair, and fine transparent skin, slightly flushed by the heat, a perfect specimen of adolescent grace and beauty. He looked like a young lover lying at the feet of his lady. Evadne was sitting in a low easy chair, with a high back, against which her head was resting. (*HT*, 582)

The sensuous focus on Diavolo's appearance and Odalisque-like pose, especially when contrasted to Evadne's description which primarily focuses on her rigid posture, echoes that typically placed on a female protagonist by casting him as an object of desire. However, even though this depiction emphasises Diavolo's feminine nature, it also arguably draws attention to his desirable characteristics. In comparison to Galbraith whose masculinity is defined by his 'irascible temper and manner', Diavolo is shown to 'pride himself upon being a gentleman [...who] never jeers or makes himself unpleasant' (*HT*, 127). Diavolo actively challenges the masculine authority which defined a 'man' and instead proposes an alternative based on respect to further increase the readers' frustration at Grand's ending. Instead of the New Man, whose potential influence over the New Woman, it is suggested, is too dangerous, Grand creates the vision of a boy who subsumes all the ideal qualities in a body that is both tantalisingly seductive and at the same time 'safe' because he does not possess penetrative sexual desire. Martha Vicinus argues that the 'boy's liminal sexual position and appearance gave him the necessary combination of familiarity, ambiguity, and distance' whilst his 'chaste innocence' was 'representative of a special, lost quality in the modern world'.<sup>127</sup> Significantly, Diavolo is a New Boy, not a New Man.

Diavolo's status as a New Boy is reiterated by Galbraith who, in astonishment at Diavolo's declaration of love for Evadne, exclaims that 'if only I had

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<sup>127</sup> Martha Vicinus, 'The Adolescent Boy: Fin de Siècle Femme Fatale?', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5.1 (1994), 90-114 (p. 100).

known! [...] Yet—how could I guess? The difference of age—’ (*HT*, 630). Given that Colquhoun has previously noted that Evadne is only ‘six or eight years older’ (*HT*, 582) than Diavolo, age does not appear to provide a legitimate reason why Diavolo’s courtship is never recognised. Rather, Grand seems to suggest that Diavolo’s contradictory status as a New Boy renders him invisible to the women around him. Indeed, as a bachelor, Diavolo, in comparison to Galbraith whose manhood is secured by becoming a husband, occupies a ‘marginal status, always in danger of being regarded as less than a man because he had renounced the office of patriarch’.<sup>128</sup> Men traditionally lived at home until they married and thus, to some extent, bachelorhood became synonymous with prolonged boyhood.<sup>129</sup> This is demonstrated by Grand as she portrays Diavolo reverting to boyish habits when he realises that Angelica is growing up and away from him. After seeing Angelica in a long dress for the first time, Diavolo returns to the schoolroom where he is found

crying as if his heart would break, his slender frame all shaken with great convulsive sobs, and the old books and playthings which had suddenly assumed for him the bitterly pathetic interest that attaches to once loved things when they are carelessly cast aside and forgotten, scattered about him. (*HT*, 268)

Diavolo’s desire to return to a place of boyhood significance symbolises his aspiration to return to a period associated with androgyny. For the twins, childhood represents a time when, in order to be provided with the same level of education, they successfully managed to defeat the patriarchy, symbolised by their father. Consequently, gender is presented as irrelevant in Angelica’s and Diavolo’s lives until the moment when Diavolo comes to realise that age and their developing bodies will ultimately drive them apart. However, Diavolo’s regression to the schoolroom

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<sup>128</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 108.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

(and characterisation as a New Boy) also indicates that there is not currently a place for the New Man in adult society, thus forcing Grand to find an alternative ending for her hero.

MacDonald notes that the majority of New Woman novels conclude either with the New Man abandoning 'New Manhood for more conventional forms of masculinity, or [...he] extends the marriage contract to include other friends or family members, or, finally, he simply leaves England [...] unable to forge a "new" relationship within the confines of British culture'.<sup>130</sup> However, in *The Heavenly Twins*, after learning of Evadne and Galbraith's engagement, Diavolo merely slips to the margins of the text: 'Diavolo's first impulse was to go and see service abroad; but he soon abandoned that idea, although it would have afforded him the distraction he so sorely needed, and resigned his commission instead; and then took up his abode at Morne, in order to devote himself to his grandfather entirely' (*HT*, 631). This echoes the fate of sensational New Men such as Fabian Ord and James Stanley who are similarly pushed to the textual boundaries. Yet while Fabian is marginalised by his retreat into the convent, Diavolo does at least manage to find a place in British society. The final image also cements Grand's movement away from a masculine model to a new more feminine ideal of masculinity as Diavolo subverts social (and gender) expectations by settling into domestic life and assuming a caring role typically reserved for unmarried daughters. However, ultimately, *The Heavenly Twins* ends with a note of reticence as Diavolo fails to save Evadne from the Old Man's desire for patriarchal authority.

Even though Diavolo poses a problem to the narrative by promoting anxiety surrounding the stability of masculinity, Grand illustrates that it is those men who

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<sup>130</sup> MacDonald, *The New Man*, p. 4.

challenge conventional ideas of manhood who are the ‘authentic’ New Men. By emulating the marginal, contradictory and unstable proto-New Man of Sensation fiction, Grand is able to deconstruct heroic conventions and consequently demonstrate that it is the feminine man who offers women the prospect of better gender relations both within and outside of the home. By subverting her own non-fictional representation of the New Man, Grand encourages her readers to question this non-fictional aesthetic as well as their understanding of masculinity. Although this has caused confusion in modern critical analyses of the novel, I maintain that by situating Grand’s depiction of Diavolo alongside the proto-New Man of Sensation fiction, Diavolo emerges as the genuine New Man (or New Boy) of *The Heavenly Twins*.

## Conclusion

As a result of the critical focus on the feminine nature of Sensation fiction that has seen critics including Lyn Pykett exclusively focus on ‘fiction written by women’ when investigating the genre, the significance of its male protagonists and the connections they invite to New Woman fiction have previously been overlooked.<sup>131</sup> However, by exposing the social anxieties at the heart of Sensation and New Woman fiction’s representation of masculinity, this chapter has demonstrated that the emergence of the sensational New Man anticipates the New Woman ideal of the New Man.

Produced during a period in which men saw their authority become increasingly threatened, Sensation and New Woman fiction undermine patriarchal

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<sup>131</sup> Lyn Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. x.

authority by showing how manliness could be constructed and used to disguise potentially dangerous social transgressions. Yet, while the contradictory portrayals of masculinity identified within Sensation and New Woman fiction establish their shared interest in destabilising Victorian expectations of ‘manliness’, the two genres’ mixing of masculine and feminine characteristics in their representation of male characters operates differently. Whereas New Woman writers select particular stereotypes from both genders in order to construct a ‘new’, socially regenerative New Man who is both caring and chivalrous, in Sensation literature masculinity and femininity does not mix in a male body. Rather, two opposing men symbolise each gender and simultaneously occupy the role of the lover forcing the heroine to choose between the macho man and the unheroic hero. Despite this difference, by offering a paradoxical representation of masculinity, both Sensation and New Woman literature’s male protagonists serve to mirror the ‘strange’ new ideals that were being shaped by the women’s movement and that differed from Victorian expectations of how men should behave. Moreover, despite the seemingly complex dichotomies of representations of masculinity in Sensation fiction, this chapter, by defining the previously unrecognised sub-genre of the male-sensation novel, has shown that regardless of their different constructions of heroism, both the male-sensation novel and Sensation fiction challenge literary constructions of the hero and deconstruct stereotypes of masculinity. Ultimately, by making the hyper-masculine heroes sexually threatening in a society structured around heteronormative relationships and the feminine men the true heroes of the novels, Sensation and New Woman literature reflects the changing and unstable nature of contemporary masculinity.

While the preceding two chapters have studied the affiliation between Sensation and New Woman literature through the genres’ protagonists, in order to

expand and advance the understanding of the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction further, the focus in the next chapter will be on the critically neglected Gothic literature produced by Sensation and New Woman authors.

## Chapter Four

### Spectral Rebellions: Gothic Adaptations in Sensation and New Woman Literature

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This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in.

John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (1865)<sup>1</sup>

Over the earth the shadows creep with deepening gloom, wrapping all objects in a mysterious dimness, in which all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible. Forms lose their outlines, and are dissolved in floating mist.

Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1895)<sup>2</sup>

While the previous two chapters examined the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction through an analysis of the genres' female and male protagonists, this chapter will focus on the shared themes and concerns common in Sensation and New Woman authors' largely critically neglected Gothic adaptations. The important role these Sensation and New Woman Gothic adaptations played in the literary fight for gender equality comes into view in the examination of their explicit inclusion of controversial subject matter. However, before defining Sensation and New Woman Gothic, the term 'Victorian Gothic' must first be conceptualised.

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<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1873), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. by anon. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p. 6.

Marked by the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1821), the death of the 'classic' Gothic novel saw the genre disperse into a 'variety of fictional forms' during the mid-nineteenth century before it 're-emerg[ed] with full force once more during the period identified as the Decadence'.<sup>3</sup> In its broadest sense, Victorian Gothic fiction captured the growing public anxiety regarding Britain's economic power and changing gender roles. Victorian Gothic also reflected the era's 'elaborate cult of death and mourning, [and] its fascination with ghosts, spiritualism and the occult'.<sup>4</sup> However, mid-Victorian Gothic is more specifically discernible by its disruption of Ruskinian ideals of the Victorian home, while *fin-de-siècle* Gothic replicates the sense of 'deepening gloom' that Max Nordau, as quoted in the second epigraph, proclaimed was suffusing late-nineteenth century society. Consequently, as will be argued in the following sections, it is the haunted house which is central to Sensation Gothic and the haunted body which distinguishes New Woman Gothic.

Modern critical understanding of Victorian Gothic has typically been shaped by the fiction of canonical male writers including Sheridan Le Fanu, Henry James, Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Machen and H. G. Wells.<sup>5</sup> However, as Eve Lynch notes, it were in fact *female* authors such as Ellen Wood, Amelia B. Edwards, Charlotte Riddell, Florence Marryat, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, Vernon Lee (pseudonym of Violet Paget) and Edith Nesbit who 'filled the volumes of *Belgravia* and *Cornhill Magazine* to popularise the

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<sup>3</sup> David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Alexandra Warwick, 'Victorian Gothic', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 29-37 (p. 29).

<sup>5</sup> These include Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *Carmilla* (1872), James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) and Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896).

spectral tradition'.<sup>6</sup> What Lynch fails to identify is the intersection between these women's primary status as Sensation and/or New Woman authors and their production of specifically Gothic fiction: an absence this chapter seeks to address.<sup>7</sup>

A genre which, as Alexandra Warwick claims, 'escapes anything but the loosest definitions' and Ellen Moers maintains is unidentifiable 'except that it has to do with fear', Victorian Gothic (like Sensation and New Woman fiction) evades a simple definition.<sup>8</sup> Instead, this literary mode is more easily distinguished by several central features: namely, the presence of a threat, real or imagined, which is typically connected to the story's central mystery or secret; a sense of disorder; transgression/subversion; impending terror and/or horror; and the ability to produce an emotive response in the reader. What is of particular relevance to an examination of *female* Gothic is how these various characteristics intersect with the portrayal of gender dynamics.

Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is the paradigmatic text of the Victorian Gothic canon and thus its representative status in the literary tradition makes it a suitable novel with which to illustrate the key elements of the genre. Engaging with fears of immigration, degeneration and female sexuality, the novel's plot centres around a small group of men and women who, led by Professor Abraham Van Helsing, seek to defeat the vampiric Count Dracula. Dracula represents the central threatening element in the novel as he invokes contemporary fears of human regression.

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<sup>6</sup> Eve M. Lynch, 'Spectral Politics: The Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 67-86 (p. 69).

<sup>7</sup> Riddell and Nesbit are the exceptions here as neither published a resolutely Sensation or New Woman novel. However, Nick Freeman in his article, 'E. Nesbit's New Woman Gothic', *Women's Writing*, 15.3 (2008), 454-69, convincingly argues that Nesbit's Gothic fiction has analogies with New Woman literature. Riddell will be situated within the Sensation Gothic tradition due to the sensational elements of her ghost stories which will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Warwick, 'Victorian Gothic', p. 29; Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: W. H. Allen, 1977), p. 90.

Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay observes that like other novels published during this period, including H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886) and Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *Dracula* plays with anxieties surfacing from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection by suggesting that 'man's ancestry and inheritance [is] ineradicably animalistic'.<sup>9</sup>

Published during a period in which the study of physiognomy was well established, *Dracula*'s appearance would have provided contemporary readers with instant evidence of his immorality and animalistic heritage:

his face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. (*D*, 42-3)

Dupeyron-Lafay argues that *Dracula*'s description, which focuses on his 'very marked physiognomy' (*D*, 42), is 'obviously refracted through [an] evolutionist prism and testifies to the contemporary anxiety about the latent bestiality in man'.<sup>10</sup>

According to Henry Frith in *How to Read Character in Features, Forms and Faces: A Guide to the General Outlines of Physiognomy* (1891), a thin mouth denotes 'coldness, [and] cruelty' while heavy eyebrows are symptomatic of a person's 'want

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<sup>9</sup> Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay, 'Fragmented, Invisible, and Grotesque Bodies in *Dracula*', in *Post/modern Dracula: From Victorian Themes to Postmodern Praxis*, ed. by John. S. Bak (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 61-74 (p. 65).

<sup>10</sup> Dupeyron-Lafay, 'Grotesque Bodies in *Dracula*', p. 65.

of frankness, a suspicious nature, perhaps a dishonest one if temptation arise[s]'.<sup>11</sup> In offering such a detailed description of Dracula, Stoker uses physiognomical markers that suggest Dracula's deviant and potentially criminal nature to signal the threat he represents.<sup>12</sup>

As well as a threatening presence, another defining feature of Gothic fiction is its sense of disorder. Fred Botting argues that 'Gothic texts are, overtly but ambiguously, not rational, depicting disturbances of sanity and security, from superstitious belief in ghosts and demons, displays of uncontrolled passion, violent emotion or flights of fancy to portrayals of perversion and obsession'.<sup>13</sup> This departure from rational order challenges the permanence and authority of existing boundaries by demonstrating their instability and the ease with which they can be transgressed. In *Dracula*, a sense of disorder is not only evident in Dracula's disruption of the values and conduct of rational British society but also in the novel's multi-genre format. Narrated through diary entries, letters, newspaper articles and ship log records, the narrative structure prevents the reader ever gaining a linear picture of the unfolding events.

Plunging its readers into a world where disorder and darkness rule, Gothic literature sustains a tense, sinister and often claustrophobic narrative atmosphere that induces feelings of terror and/or horror. In contrast to Ann Radcliffe who argued that

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Frith, *How to Read Character in Features, Forms, and Faces: A Guide to the General Outlines of Physiognomy* (London: Ward, Lock, Bowden and Co., 1891), p. 50; *Ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> However, as several critics including Carol Senf have argued, Dracula is not the only source of anxiety within the novel: Lucy Westenra also poses a threat to British patriarchal society as she challenges the norms of middle-class femininity. Mina, on the other hand, represents the intellectual predatory New Woman who threatens male intellectual authority. For a discussion of *Dracula's* threatening gender dynamics see Carol A. Senf, *Bram Stoker* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010) and Carol A. Senf, "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman', *Victorian Studies*, 26.1 (1982), 33-49.

<sup>13</sup> Fred Botting, *Gothic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 2.

‘Terror and Horror are so far opposite’, Anne Williams identifies terror and horror as ‘two complementary modes of the “un-speakable”’:

‘Horror’ is associated with the pre-Oedipal separation from the mother/material that both predates and impels the construction of the speaking subject. ‘Terror’, on the other hand, is our experience of a self-conscious of the ultimate failure of the Symbolic, the point where the system breaks down—when ‘words fail,’ where the idea of infinity faces the subject again to confront the literally unspeakable—and where, if the self exists *as* a speaking subject, it potentially or momentarily ceases to exist.<sup>14</sup>

This distinction is immediately apparent in *Dracula* when, travelling to Transylvania in order to provide legal support for Dracula, Jonathan Harker finds himself in perilous danger within the castle walls. Discovering and exploring a secret room, Jonathan instantly associates this space with femininity and the nostalgic union of a gentlewoman of the past recording her thoughts and feelings: ‘here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter’ (*D*, 59).

However, after falling asleep, Jonathan wakes to find three vampires, one of whom reminds him of somebody, hovering over him:

I suppose I must have fallen asleep; I hope so, but I fear, for all that followed was startlingly real, [...] I cannot in the least believe that it was all sleep. I was not alone. [...] In the moonlight opposite me were three

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<sup>14</sup> Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ (1826), repr. in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820*, ed. by E. J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 163-72 (p. 168); Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 72-3. Emphasis in the original. Radcliffe argues that terror ‘expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other [horror] contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them’. Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, p. 168. For an alternative definition of horror see Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990). Carroll defines ‘art-horror’ (the type of horror associated with the experience of reading books like Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* or Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* [1983]) as the ‘product of a genre that crystallized, speaking very roughly, around the time of the publication of [Mary Shelley’s] *Frankenstein* [...] and that has persisted, often cyclically, through the novels and plays of the nineteenth century and the literature, comic books, pulp magazines, and films of the twentieth’. *Ibid*, p. 13.

young women, ladies by their dress and manner. [...] Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count [...]. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. [...] There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. (*D*, 61)

In Jonathan's oedipal nightmare, the innocent, motherly woman of his former daydream is transmogrified into the threat of female predatory sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Chris Baldick claims that in order 'for the Gothic effect to be attained, a tale should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration'.<sup>16</sup> Jonathan's desire to be possessed by this woman, who is associated with the mother—'I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips' (*D*, 61)—emphasises the combined spatial entrapment and fatal inheritance that Baldick identifies as being central to Gothic fiction. As the mother is figured as both lover and predator, Jonathan's desires represent a disintegration of the family identity. The threat of human disintegration is also figured as Stoker sets up contrasts between human and undead, soft and hard, object of desire and predator, ecstasy and horror. These binaries serve to create a sense of confusion and unease intensifying the feelings of terror and horror. Although Jonathan first perceives the vampiric sisters to be 'three young women, ladies by their dress and manner' (*D*, 61), they soon morph into animalistic beings devoid of any gender when they cannibalise an infant: 'awful women. Faugh! [...] there is nought in common [with ordinary women]' (*D*,

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<sup>15</sup> The oedipal situation is made even clearer when Count Dracula intervenes and declares that 'this man belongs to me!' (*D*, 62), the father not the mother.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Baldick, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, ed. by Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. xi-xxiii (p. xix).

75). The sisters hover between masculine and feminine, animal and human states, inciting contemporary fears of bestiality and atavism as they evade any form of binary categorisation.

Haunted by the memory of his mother, Jonathan's ghostly experience is both literal (supernatural) and bodily (psychological) as his initial supernatural vision makes way for a more physical encounter that causes the loss of his rational control. Martin Scofield claims that the 'ghostly and the figurative are closely connected: ghosts are already "figures"—whether in a supernatural, psychological or simply literary sense—and they can be seen as metaphors which suddenly become literal'.<sup>17</sup> María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren extend this by maintaining that 'non-figurative and figurative ghosts haunt each other, and should therefore be considered in tandem, in this case through a *conceptual* approach to the ghost'.<sup>18</sup> It is in the play between the real and the imaginary, namely whether the female vampires are physical presences or figures of his imagination, that Jonathan suffers feelings of terror and horror. Yet, using ghosts to define the Gothic is somewhat problematic. Addressing this complexity, del Pilar Blanco and Peeren contend that while in 'literary studies, [the ghost] is integral to the gothic, as a primary genre characteristic', the 'two concepts [Gothic and ghosts], [...] are far from equivalents—while they do frequently impinge on each other, each also has its own (after)life to live'.<sup>19</sup> Despite the problem of including ghosts in a definition of the Gothic, haunting and ghosts are nevertheless key tropes of Gothic fiction and ones which I repeatedly draw on throughout this chapter.

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Scofield, 'Introduction', in Henry James, *Ghost Stories of Henry James* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), pp. vii-xxii (p. xi).

<sup>18</sup> María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Introduction', in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. ix-xxiv (p. x). Emphasis in the original.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv; *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

Given its sinister narrative atmosphere and sense of impending danger, it is unsurprising that Gothic fiction plays on its readers' emotive response. Botting contends that 'melancholic gloom, loneliness and loss' in addition to 'fear, anxiety, terror, horror, disgust and revulsion' are all 'staple emotional responses' to a Gothic text.<sup>20</sup> However, Botting notes that at times this technique also appears to 'license male fantasy' by placing the reader in the position of the villain, thereby enabling them to 'salivat[e] over the images of defenceless and vulnerable femininity'.<sup>21</sup> This is clearly evident when Van Helsing along with Lucy's three suitors, John Seward, Arthur Holmwood (Lord Godalming) and Quincey Morris, mutilate Lucy's body in order to 'release' her from the world of the un-dead.<sup>22</sup>

While a case could be made for other central elements of Victorian Gothic fiction, I argue that the five features identified earlier—namely a threatening presence, the sense of (narrative) disorder, an element of transgression, impending terror and/or horror and the ability to produce an emotive response in the reader—are the main distinguishing features of a Victorian Gothic text. An important point to note here is that I do not perceive an element of the supernatural to always be a necessary signifier of Gothic fiction. As in Radcliffe's novels, many of the texts discussed within this chapter set up the premise of a ghostly haunting or event only to provide a rational explanation for this otherworldly phenomenon. For example, Charlotte Riddell's 'The Open Door' (1882) which will be discussed in the final

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<sup>20</sup> Botting, *Gothic*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> As the stake is aggressively driven through Lucy Heart by her fiancé in an act indicative of rape on their intended wedding night, the reader is placed in the position of the other men who passively, yet in some sense gleefully, gaze on. Lucy states in a letter to Mina that she and Arthur are 'to be married on 28 September' (*D*, 124). Dr Seward's diary entry relating to the events surrounding Lucy's staking is dated the 29<sup>th</sup> September (*D*, 212) but refers to the previous night's events.

section of this chapter establishes the premise of a haunted house only to reveal that the ‘ghost’ is in fact a female intruder hunting for a lost will.<sup>23</sup>

To explore the important and critically neglected role Sensation and New Woman Gothic play in the literary battle for gender equality as well as to further conceptualise these Gothic adaptations’ sexual challenge, this chapter will first define and give context to the terms ‘Sensation Gothic’ and ‘New Woman Gothic’. The subsequent section will then turn its attention specifically to New Woman Gothic fiction and its concern with middle-class men’s sexual contamination of women. I will use Esther Peeren’s concept of ‘living ghosts’ to argue that those persons infected with sexually transmitted diseases become the ghosts that haunt the narratives.<sup>24</sup> Despite the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1886 after a seventeen-year campaign led by Josephine Butler, a woman’s legal right to her own body remained unaddressed. New Woman Gothic’s response to this social problem will be explored by examining the various ways in which the writers use the Gothic to give voice to this injustice by bestowing on infected women the power to tell their own stories. This section includes discussion of the Gothic dimensions of realist texts including Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story ‘The Third Generation’ (1894) and Emma Frances Brooke’s *A Superfluous Woman* (1894) alongside Edith Nesbit’s Gothic short story, ‘The Shadow’ (1905).

Like New Woman Gothic’s use of the metaphor of the haunted body to indict patriarchal control of the female body, in the following section, Sensation Gothic will be shown to put forward a similar protest in its exploration of the socio-legal

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<sup>23</sup> Equally, I maintain that a sinister atmosphere can turn even primarily realist novels such as Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1853) and Mona Caird’s *The Wing of Azrael* (1889) into Gothic novels despite the absence of a physically realised supernatural.

<sup>24</sup> Esther Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2014).

representation of the haunted house. Published the same year as the Married Women's Property Act was altered to enable women to own and control property, Charlotte Riddell's Sensation Gothic short story collection, *Weird Stories* (1882) illustrates the earlier genre's engagement with a topic more usually considered to feature in New Woman fiction while also demonstrating Sensation fiction's use of Gothic to comment on contemporary social problems affecting women.

### **Conceptualising Sensation and New Woman Gothic**

Victorian Gothic principally distinguished itself from the eighteenth-century Gothic fiction of Horace Walpole, Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe by abandoning the 'antiquated or seemingly antiquated space—be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, [or] a primeval frontier or island'.<sup>25</sup> Instead, these Gothic locations were, as David Punter and Glennis Byron note, 'replaced with something more disturbingly familiar: the bourgeois domestic world or the new urban landscape'.<sup>26</sup> Urban Gothic pervaded mid-nineteenth-century fiction as it converted the city from a place of security and sanctuary to a space of danger and liminality by situating terror in identifiable locations, typically London, in order to offer a critique of modern society. This is evident in G. W. M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* (1845-48) in which London is transformed into a shadowy and unrecognisable place where danger seems to lurk behind every corner:

it seemed to me that I was wandering amongst all the haunts of crime and appalling penury of which I had read in romances, but which I never could have believed to exist in the very heart of the metropolis of the

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<sup>25</sup> Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-20 (p. 2).

<sup>26</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 26.

world. Civilisation appeared to me to have chosen particular places which it condescended to visit, and to have passed others by without even leaving a foot-print to denote its presence.<sup>27</sup>

Here, Reynolds exploits the contrasts of the city as he depicts a member of middle-class ‘civilised’ society being forced to interact with ‘swarms [of] disgusting, loathsome, and venomous objects, wearing human shapes’.<sup>28</sup> By juxtaposing the affluent middle classes with the disorder and barbarity of the working-class labourers, Reynolds dehumanises the latter and casts them as the Gothic Other. However, whereas urban Gothic makes the familiar unfamiliar, in domestic Gothic fiction this distinction is broken down as “‘Gothic’ and domestic spaces come increasingly to look the same’.<sup>29</sup>

One example of a domestic Gothic setting is Satis House, the home of the ethereal Miss Havisham in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1861). A ‘large and dismal house’ that to Alison Milbank is a ‘showcase—in the manner of a sensation novel—for a marketable product: a nubile young woman [Estella]’, Satis House serves as a source of subversive and demonic female power.<sup>30</sup> Although Miss Havisham never leaves the domestic sphere of Satis House, her influence extends to the public world via Jaggers (her lawyer) and Estella whom she grooms for her femme fatale mission. Using Pip as her first test case, Estella manipulates Pip’s romantic feelings for her in order to place him in a position of vulnerability. Estella, in response to Pip’s declaration of love, responds coldly:

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<sup>27</sup> George W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, 4 vols (London: Geo. Vickers, 1845), vol. 1, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick R. O’Malley, ‘Gothic’, in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela K. Gilbert (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 81-93 (p. 85).

<sup>30</sup> Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. by Edgar Rosenberg (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), p. 44; Alison Milbank, ‘The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 145-66 (p. 159).

it seems [...] that there are sentiments, fancies—I don't know how to call them—which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all.<sup>31</sup>

Estella's mechanical and emotionless response which leaves Pip distraught demonstrates the success of Miss Havisham's scheme and also reinforces the domestic sphere as a source of female power over patriarchal dominance.

Undermining the ideals of middle-class domesticity, domestic or 'suburban' Gothic moves away from a focus on the city as a place of liminality and danger and instead positions the home as a 'place of Gothic strife and suffering rather than a healthy and harmonious refuge from the conflicts of public life'.<sup>32</sup> By 'escaping from the tomb and castle, the monastery and mansion' and depicting the Victorian home as a site vulnerable to supernatural corruption, domestic Gothic becomes potentially more terrifying as the familiar and domestic settings expose controversial and taboo subjects hiding behind seemingly respectable facades.<sup>33</sup> Punter and Byron argue that this 'domestication of the Gothic is partly the result of its appropriation by the sensation novel'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the domestic setting (or haunted house) is a defining feature of Sensation Gothic.<sup>35</sup>

Henry James emphasises this link between Sensation and Gothic fiction by maintaining that the credit belongs to Wilkie Collins for having

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<sup>31</sup> Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 270.

<sup>32</sup> Lillian Nayder, *Wilkie Collins* (London: Twayne Publishers, 1997), p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> However, it is important to note that while Gothic fiction written by sensationalists typically occurs in stereotypical Victorian dwellings, they nevertheless seem to stand on the margins of civilised society. For example, in Wilkie Collins' 'The Ostler' (1855) the ghostly woman who tries to stab the protagonist, Isaac Scatchard, appears at a 'lonely road-side inn, standing on the outskirts of a thick wood'. Wilkie Collins, 'The Ostler', *Household Words*, (25<sup>th</sup> December 1855), 9-18 (p. 10). This story is often referred to as 'The Dream Woman' in modern publications.

introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors. This innovation gave a new impetus to the literature of horrors. It was fatal to the authority of Mrs Radcliffe and her everlasting castle in the Apennines. [...] Instead of the terrors of 'Udolpho,' we were treated to the terrors of the cheerful country-house and the busy London lodgings. And there is no doubt that these were infinitely the more terrible.<sup>36</sup>

Sensation fiction exposes the 'secret theatre of [the] home' by transforming 'seemingly well-ordered, respectable homes' into spaces which '[harbour], if not actively produc[e] crime'.<sup>37</sup> As Lynda Hart observes, Sensation fiction suggests that the 'trajectory of "normal" femininity and that of "fallen" womanhood were not two parallel lines incapable of meeting; on the contrary a slippery slope lay between the two states'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Sensation fiction positions the domestic sphere as a space which is haunted by female transgression to thus suggest that the middle-class home, rather than being a sanctuary, is in fact a space which fosters female discontent. As will be explored in the final section of this chapter, Sensation Gothic similarly situates the domestic sphere as an unsettling space within which crimes can be disguised; however, in this case the focus is on crimes committed against, not by, women.

Although the relationship between Gothic and Sensation fiction is well established, few critics have examined the specifically Gothic literature written by the authors of Sensation fiction. Punter and Byron briefly address what they term 'Gothic sensation fiction' by contending that it can be split into two main categories. They argue that 'some novelists, often male, work within the female Gothic tradition of the heroine imprisoned within the home or some substitute institution. These texts

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<sup>36</sup> Henry James, 'Miss Braddon', *Nation* (1865), cited in O'Malley, 'Gothic', p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Wilkie Collins, *Basil*, ed. by Dorothy Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 64; Tamara Wagner, 'Gothic and the Victorian Home', in *The Gothic World*, ed. by Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 110-20 (p. 112).

<sup>38</sup> Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 29.

demonstrate a particular interest in questions of identity and the transgression of borderlines'.<sup>39</sup> In comparison, Punter and Byron determine the second type of Gothic Sensation fiction to be 'associated with the sensational spectacle of the mad or criminal female protagonist'.<sup>40</sup> Finding transgression to be even more central to these texts, Punter and Byron identify this second category of Gothic Sensation fiction by its inclusion of a woman who 'assume[s] the roles of both heroine and monster, and provoke[s] anxieties about the instability of identity and the breakdown of gender roles'.<sup>41</sup> However, Punter and Byron come to this conclusion based only on an analysis of Sensation fiction, not on an exploration of the specifically Gothic texts written by Sensation authors. Consequently, their conceptualisation of Sensation Gothic fails to recognise that this literary mode is primarily characterised by its politicised disruption of the ordinary, everyday world, an aspect that will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

In contrast to Sensation fiction, the intersection between New Woman literature and the Gothic has rarely been addressed. Instead criticism has tended to focus on the male-authored *fin-de-siècle* Gothic novels that have become synonymous with the genre. At the end of the century anxiety regarding scientific and social advances arising from Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, fears of degeneration, immigration, female promiscuity and the breakdown in middle-class gender ideology as well as socio-medical discourse infiltrated Gothic literature as the human body (or indeed, the mind) became a site vulnerable to supernatural corruption.

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<sup>39</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*.

In a reaction to scientific and medical advances of the period, the scientist became a familiar figure in *fin-de-siècle* Gothic fiction. Byron observes that science is depicted as a ‘transgressive and disruptive force’ which bears ‘much of the responsibility for challenging the stability and integrity of the human subject’.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, as Victoria Margree and Bryony Randall contend, the scientist is frequently portrayed as an anti-hero whose actions ‘reveal the unpalatable proximity of the human to the animal and the Gothic possibility of degenerating into a state of bestiality’.<sup>43</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) centres around perhaps one of the most famous depictions of a scientist in *fin-de-siècle* Gothic fiction. A respected member of the medical community, Dr Jekyll’s scientific experiments lead him to discover a means by which he can transform himself into the ‘ape-like’ Mr Hyde.<sup>44</sup> Originating as he does from Jekyll’s own psyche, the dark, atavistic Hyde provoked contemporary fears that an outwardly rational and intelligent man could disguise such a primitive nature within.

This anxiety also figures in Rider Haggard’s *She* where the Gothic heroine regresses into a ‘monkey’:

now the skin had puckered into a million wrinkles, and on the shapeless face was the stamp of unutterable age. [...] She, who but two minutes gone had gazed upon us—the loveliest, noblest, most splendid woman the world has ever seen—she lay still before us, near the masses of her own dark hair, no larger than a big ape, and hideous—ah, too hideous for words!<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Glennis Byron, ‘Gothic in the 1890s’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2015), pp. 186-96 (p. 189).

<sup>43</sup> Victoria Margree and Bryony Randall, ‘Fin-de-siècle Gothic’, in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 217-33 (p. 224).

<sup>44</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> H. Rider Haggard, *She, a History of Adventure* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), pp. 286-7.

In response to Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) which by the turn of the century were widely known, Gothic fiction of this period frequently portrays bodies undergoing some form of mutilation or reverse evolution. Capturing what Judith Wilt argues is the 'ultimate Darwinian nightmare', Ayesha's degeneration into a bestial being exposes Victorian concerns regarding cultural and national decline.<sup>46</sup> However, Ayesha also expresses fears of social degeneration and female power appropriation that were associated with the New Woman and her challenge to traditional ideals of Victorian womanhood.

Given that the Gothic is a genre which according to Punter and Byron 're-emerges with particular force during times of cultural crisis and which serves to negotiate the anxieties of the age by working through them in a displaced form', it is unsurprising that *fin-de-siècle* Gothic texts 'repeatedly produce powerful and sexually aggressive females as alien or monstrous'.<sup>47</sup> The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the breakdown of traditional middle-class gender ideology and family hierarchy as the New Woman emerged into society. In this context, Haggard's heroine Ayesha, or as she is otherwise known She-Who-Must-Be-Obedy, an 'all-knowing, all-powerful ruler of matriarchal society', can be viewed as a fictitious representation of the 'pathological anxiety about female generative authority' that was ignited by the New Woman.<sup>48</sup> Ruling a society which, in 'direct opposition to the habits of almost every other savage race in the world', grants women 'conditions of perfect equality with the men' and does not hold them

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<sup>46</sup> Judith Wilt, 'The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic, and Science Fiction', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 14.4 (1981), 618-28 (p. 624).

<sup>47</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 39; *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>48</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Rider Haggard's Heart of Darkness', in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, ed. by Lyn Pykett (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 39-46 (p. 40); Anne McClintock, 'Maidens, Maps and Mines: *King Solomon's Mines* and the Reinvention of Patriarchy in Colonial South Africa', in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. by Cheryl Walker (London: James Currey, 1990), pp. 97-124 (p. 104).

by any 'binding ties', Ayesha threatens patriarchal society because, according to Alison Martin, she is an 'odd blend of the New Woman and the *femme fatale*'.<sup>49</sup> Thus, ultimately, like *Dracula*, the novel must end with the destruction of Ayesha in order to allay Horace Holly's fears that she may infiltrate British society and take over the throne. However, in contrast to the male-authored canonical Gothic fiction of the period which reacted by portraying the New Woman figure as a monstrous half beast, half human, Gothic texts written by New Woman authors use the Gothic genre to expose persisting gender inequality, inviting a comparison with the female Gothic of Radcliffe: a connection to which I will return shortly.

Like other late-Victorian Gothic fiction (and indeed Sensation Gothic), New Woman Gothic is characterised by its concern with questions of history and context; however, it is particularly imbued with contemporary politics relating to women and the feminine experience. Thus, for the New Woman the Gothic became an alternative means of expressing feminine desires and anxieties that were otherwise marginalised by rationalist discourse. In contrast to Sensation Gothic which explores issues of gender through the politicised disruption of the domestic sphere, New Woman Gothic studies women's experience of patriarchal society via their bodies. In response to *fin-de-siècle* Gothic novels such as *She* and *The Great God Pan* (1894) which position women's bodies as dangerous and corrupting forces connected with social degeneration and the breakdown of gender binaries, New Woman Gothic serves as a counternarrative by having the male, rather than female, body 'set degeneration in motion, initiating ruinous consequences from which the female

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<sup>49</sup> Haggard, *She*, p. 81; Alison E. Martin, 'Potentially the Noble Creature? Picturing Heroism in Henry Rider Haggard's *She*', in *Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction since 1800: Case Studies*, ed. by Barbara Korte and Stefanie Lethbridge (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 47-66 (p. 49).

victims will never recover'.<sup>50</sup> For example, as will be explored in the following section, it is the husband in Nesbit's new Woman Gothic short story 'The Shadow' who predicates the destruction of the middle-class home by infecting his innocent wife with syphilis. However, despite this gendered role reversal, by the endings of New Woman Gothic fiction female bodies have frequently fallen foul of increasingly explicit violent acts that were in part due to the 'relaxation of censorship that went with the collapse of the library system, and to the increasingly explicit coverage of murder and other violent crimes in the popular press'.<sup>51</sup> Yet rather than punishing women for their transgressions, these endings, as will be shown during the course of this chapter, shed light on politically charged issues affecting women in patriarchal society.

Nick Freeman and Patricia Murphy are two of the few critics to analyse the intention behind New Woman fiction's inclusion of Gothic motifs. Freeman uses Nesbit's short story 'Man-Size in Marble' (1893) to contend that 'although there was considerable misogyny in late Victorian Gothic, the genre could also be used to interrogate, rather than merely reinforce, such attitudes': a claim I argue can also be made for Sensation Gothic.<sup>52</sup> He goes on to argue that 'by injecting Gothic fantasy into what seems at first an unexceptional tale of newly wedded bliss, Nesbit is able to provide both the shock expected of the genre, especially in short stories, and imbue her fiction with an underlying sense of ideological dissatisfaction'.<sup>53</sup> 'Man-Size in Marble' is the story of a pair of young middle-class newlyweds who settle down to country life but are soon warned of an ancient curse that sees the marble

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<sup>50</sup> Patricia Murphy, *The New Woman Gothic: Reconfigurations of Distress* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2016), p. 173.

<sup>51</sup> Freeman, 'E. Nesbit's New Woman Gothic', p. 463.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 455.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 466.

statues in the local church come to life each year on All Saint's Eve. The story ends with Jack, who has previously dismissed the story and Laura's nervousness, discovering Laura dead with a finger from one of the marble statues clenched in her fist.

Despite Freeman coining the phrase 'New Woman Gothic' in the title of his essay, he offers no definition or analysis of the term. However, he does identify the symbolic role of the (haunted) body in New Woman Gothic by arguing that late Victorian Gothic studies including those by Kelly Hurley and Roger Luckhurst 'make convincing cases for Gothic's preoccupation with the body and its importance as a means of investigating and dramatizing the recurrent anxieties of the *fin de siècle*'.<sup>54</sup> Although Laura is dead by the end of Nesbit's short story, rather than serve as a punishment it illustrates the suppressed violence of late-nineteenth-century sexual politics. Betrayed by her husband and significantly Dr Kelly who prevents Jack from returning home when he discovers the statues are gone from the church by laughing at his story and inducing him to join him for a nightcap, Laura is abandoned by the patriarchy and left to suffer a violent death. However, ultimately her symbolic rape and death centralises the female body and its experience of violence (as well as male culpability) emphasising New Woman Gothic's connection to contemporary sexual politics.

Like Freeman, Murphy, overlooking mid-Victorian Gothic fiction, argues that the 'second pivotal example of Gothic literary influence occurs during the Victorian *fin de siècle*, in this case through a re-emergence of the form now linked to

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 454. Kelly Hurley, 'British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 189-208. Roger Luckhurst, *Late Victorian Gothic Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Darwinian uneasiness and attendant fears of degeneration'.<sup>55</sup> Conceptualising the term 'New Woman Gothic' (from which I extrapolated the phrase Sensation Gothic), Murphy identifies the figure of the New Woman as the central catalyst in this late-century revival since she 'both generated and experienced an extensive array of cultural anxieties as she acted as advocate for improved educational, marital, and professional opportunities'.<sup>56</sup> Though Murphy sees the term 'New Woman Gothic' to be 'imbued with complexity, multivalency, and elasticity', she uses it to refer to texts in which the 'presence of gothic elements—derived from the conventions and characters indicative of the romantic era form—[...] specifically address the status, concerns, and experiences related to this controversial late-Victorian individual', the New Woman.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to Murphy, who largely examines realist fiction which *incorporates* Gothic tropes, I only use the terms Sensation Gothic and New Woman Gothic to denote specifically Gothic fiction *written* by the authors of these genres.

In part the distinction between Sensation and New Woman realist fiction which includes Gothic tropes and specifically Gothic fiction written by the authors of Sensation and New Woman fiction is defined by market sales. Gothic was a pervasive and distinctive literary medium whose marketable form Sensation and New Woman authors exploited. The period in which Sensation and New Woman Gothic appeared witnessed a 'boom in short fiction and magazine publishing promoted by the progressive educational legislation of the 1870s and 1880s'.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, advances in printing technologies and the 'explosion of new daily, weekly, and monthly magazines' which pitched themselves to 'certain classes of readers and began to be identified with certain types of stories' helped the growth of

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<sup>55</sup> Murphy, *The New Woman Gothic*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Freeman, 'E. Nesbit's New Woman Gothic', p. 456.

Gothic short stories.<sup>59</sup> Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert also credit the growing middle-class 'relatively unsophisticated [...] literary tastes' for the rise of the Gothic (short) story during the last four decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Recognising the marketability of Gothic short stories, Sensation and New Woman authors turned to the 'transgressive space' of this literary mode.<sup>61</sup> Their short stories were typically published in various periodicals and magazines before being collected together in one volume. For example, Ellen Wood penned numerous short stories many of which appeared in *Argosy* before they were published in volumes such as *Told in the Twilight* (1875).

Yet, as well as being financially lucrative, the Gothic genre, and in particular the ghost story, also gave women the opportunity to 'write in politically coded terms about their ghostly role in society'.<sup>62</sup> Jenny Uglow notes that because 'they were written as unpretentious entertainments, ghost stories seemed to give their writers a licence to experiment, to push the boundaries of fiction a little further'.<sup>63</sup> Emma Liggins similarly maintains that the Gothic 'allowed authors to explore issues around the acquisition and loss of property, inheritance, and material possession, as well as women's financial dependency, [and] their positions as wives, mothers and daughters'.<sup>64</sup> Granting the writers the ability to explore controversial and taboo subjects more explicitly than they would have been able to in their realist novels,

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<sup>59</sup> Roger Luckhurst, 'Introduction', in *Late Victorian Gothic Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. ix-xxxi (p. xvi).

<sup>60</sup> Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. ix-xx (p. xii).

<sup>61</sup> Hilary Grimes, *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny and Scenes of Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 91.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Jenny Uglow, 'Introduction', in *The Virago Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Richard Dalby (London: Virago, 1992), pp. ix-xvii (p. xiv).

<sup>64</sup> Emma Liggins, 'Introduction', in Charlotte Riddell, *Weird Stories*, ed. by Emma Liggins (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2009), pp. i-vi (p. iii).

Sensation and New Woman Gothic fiction can be seen as an important part of the female protest movement of the mid- to late nineteenth century.

This becomes immediately apparent in the way in which the writers conclude their Gothic stories. In contrast to the endings of their realist novels, which, as Liggins identifies, were moulded by the publishers in order to be ‘fit to appear in public lending libraries’, in their Gothic fiction, the ‘author[s] could conclude [...] in alternative, ambiguous ways or obliquely address themes, such as female sexuality or racial otherness, which might be considered too risqué or shocking for polite readers of the novel’.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, while for example Broughton was forced to censor the ending of her novel *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (1867) for its publication in triple-decker form, her Gothic short story ‘The Man with the Nose’ (1872) ambiguously and shockingly concludes with the male protagonist learning that his wife has disappeared with a mysterious foreign stranger whom she has previously dreamt of.

If Gothic fiction is considered a form of literary protest to question whether ‘masculine control is not just another delusion in the nightmare of absurd historical reality’, then Sensation and New Woman Gothic can be associated with the female Gothic tradition.<sup>66</sup> First defined by Moers in 1976 as the ‘work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called “the Gothic”’, the female Gothic has since been more conclusively conceptualised in terms of its role in exposing the condition of women.<sup>67</sup> Simultaneously, though unconsciously, presenting an adept definition of Sensation and New Woman Gothic,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. iv-v.

<sup>66</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, ‘Deserts, Ruins, and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel’, in *The Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), pp. 71-112 (p. 99).

<sup>67</sup> Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 90.

Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith situate the female Gothic as a ‘politically subversive genre articulating women’s dissatisfactions with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body’.<sup>68</sup> Like Radcliffe, who, Moers contends, ‘firmly set the Gothic in one of the ways it would go ever after: a novel in which the central figure is a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine’, Sensation and New Woman writers can be seen turning to the Gothic genre in order to verbalise marginalised fears and repressed desires.<sup>69</sup> While the Gothic mode gave Sensation authors the opportunity to include subjects which could not otherwise be discussed explicitly within their realist fiction, New Woman Gothic emotionalises the political message of their realist fiction.

In comparison to male Gothic fiction that is characterised by ‘masculine transgression of social taboos’, ‘violent rape and/or murder’ and a resistance to closure, the female Gothic plot ‘centralised the imprisoned and pursued heroine threatened by a tyrannical male figure, it explained the supernatural, and ended in the closure of marriage’.<sup>70</sup> Radcliffe’s *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797) exemplifies the female Gothic plot.<sup>71</sup> It follows the standard outline of a young woman ‘enjoying an idyllic and secluded life; [...] followed by a period of imprisonment when she is confined to a great house or castle under the authority of a powerful male figure or his female surrogate’; the heroine, Ellena Rosalba, is

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<sup>68</sup> Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith, ‘Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic’, in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-12 (p. 2). Alison Milbank also provides an important challenge to Moers’ definition by blurring the boundaries between the male and female Gothic in Alison Milbank, *Daughters of the House: Modes of Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 16-7.

<sup>69</sup> Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 91.

<sup>70</sup> Wallace and Smith, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2011).

faced with various perils including kidnap and attempted murder.<sup>72</sup> Peace is finally restored in Radcliffe's novel when the revelation of Ellena's noble lineage enables her to marry Vincentio di Vivaldi, the man she loves. As in other female Gothic texts, this results in the novel reaching its climax with the heroine attaining 'some kind of agency and power in the patriarchal world' as the emphasis changes from 'general identity politics to a more specific concern with gender politics'.<sup>73</sup> However, in eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, this 'happy' resolution re-encloses the rebellious heroine in a patriarchal marriage. In comparison, New Woman (and to some extent Sensation) Gothic concludes with the heroine freeing herself from these patriarchal structures.

Vanessa Dickerson maintains that in comparison to Radcliffe's female Gothic, from the 1850s onwards the 'Gothic formulation of the pure, innocent persecuted female, dependent on some male, usually an uncle who either owns or has appropriated her property and thus her financial and social power, began to be reversed' as the supernatural story came to 'share the scene with the sensation novel, which in its focus on such subjects as bigamy, adultery, and female eroticism would anticipate the second bedfellow of the supernatural tale, the writing of the New Woman, with its emphasis on sexual and social literature and its critique of marriage'.<sup>74</sup> Dickerson's comments emphasise the socio-political intentions behind Sensation and New Woman Gothic by revealing that these literary modes hold a shared interest in exposing issues affecting women. Radicalising eighteenth-century female Gothic, Sensation and New Woman Gothic reject many of the perceived staples of this genre. For example, both literary modes 'gothicise' the 'happy ending'

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<sup>72</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 279.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Vanessa D. Dickerson, *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 133.

of eighteenth-century Gothic: Sensation Gothic with its controversial conclusions that deny any sense of closure and New Woman Gothic by rejecting the oppressive forces of patriarchal society, typically marriage, in favour of the heroine discovering her independence.

The latter of these is evident in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892) which details the young female protagonist's descent into madness. Alan Ryan contends that it is 'one of the finest and strongest tales of horror ever written' because it 'may be a ghost story [...or w]orse yet, it may not'.<sup>75</sup> Confined to her bedroom, an old nursery, by her physician husband, the unnamed heroine documents her fascination and eventual obsession with the yellow wallpaper that covers the walls of the room: '[I] follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you'.<sup>76</sup> Although at first the 'big, airy room [...] with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore' appears to offer her a kind of freedom, as the story progresses the room is revealed to be a space of female imprisonment.<sup>77</sup> The husband's diagnosis of 'temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency' covertly functions to control and disempower the female patient.<sup>78</sup> This is reflected in the female protagonist's interpretation of, and identification with, the wallpaper which at 'night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, [...] becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be'.<sup>79</sup> She imagines there to be a woman trapped within the wallpaper who is 'all the time trying to climb through'; however, as she acknowledges, 'nobody could climb

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<sup>75</sup> Alan Ryan, *Haunting Women*, ed. by Alan Ryan (New York: Avon Books, 1988), p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women, 1890-1914*, ed. by Angelique Richardson (London: Penguin Books, 2005), pp. 31-47 (p. 37).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

through that pattern—it strangles so’.<sup>80</sup> Although Gilman’s heroine is kept captive in this room, Susan Lanser maintains that the wallpaper simultaneously enables the female protagonist to find a ‘space of text on which she can locate whatever self-projection’ and thus she ultimately refuses to be controlled by the patriarchy.<sup>81</sup>

As exemplified by Gilman’s ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ and its representation of the husband’s command over his wife’s body, the female body was a site of contested control during the nineteenth century, not least in terms of female sexuality. While the bed in ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ can be read as indicative of repressed female sexuality, in another of Gilman’s short stories, ‘The Vintage’ (1916), she depicts the horrifying effects of sexually transmitted diseases on the middle class. As Rodger Moore and Leslie Montroy, whose perfect health has up until this moment been repeatedly stressed, are married, Howard Faulkner, a doctor, watches on and ‘held his tongue’ as he ‘saw the woman he had loved so long, all white and radiant in her bridal glory, marry the man with the worst of communicable diseases’.<sup>82</sup> In having a male doctor maintain his silence for reasons of ‘professional honor’, Gilman critiques the practice of male solidarity that enables women to be kept ignorant of their husband’s infection.<sup>83</sup> Yet Gilman was not alone in using the Gothic to draw attention to this issue.

The focus in the subsequent section will centre on New Woman writers’ use of the Gothic to address the contemporary legal debates surrounding venereal disease, in particular the Contagious Diseases Acts, through representations of the haunted (or infected) body. While the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>81</sup> Susan S. Lanser, ‘Feminist Criticism, “The Yellow Wallpaper”, and the Politics of Color in America’, *Feminist Studies*, 15 (1989), 415-41 (p. 421).

<sup>82</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, ‘The Vintage’, in *The Yellow Wall-Paper, Herland, and Selected Writings*, ed. by Denise D. Knight (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 297-304 (p. 299).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

1886 initially appeared to mark a change in public attitudes towards female sexuality, the pervasiveness of plots centring on venereal disease in New Woman fiction suggests that little progress had been made.

### **Bodily Hauntings: Spectres of Contamination in New Woman Gothic**

Given the prevalence of venereal diseases during the nineteenth century—for example, in 1859 for every thousand soldiers in the army there were 422 admissions into hospital for venereal disease—it is unsurprising that literature, particularly towards the end of the century, became concerned with the spread of venereal diseases and their infiltration into the middle-class family home.<sup>84</sup> One such example is Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1881) which, when first performed in Britain to a small private audience in 1891, was met with horror over its frank portrayal of controversial subject matter.<sup>85</sup> Infected with syphilis inherited from his dissolute father, Oswald Alving returns home to discover from his long-suffering mother that the woman he has fallen in love with, Regina Engstrand, is in fact the illegitimate daughter of one of his father's affairs, and thus his half-sister. The title of the play, *Ghosts*, or *Gengangere* in the original Norwegian, refers to the social beliefs and values which, as Helene Alving makes explicit, haunt the lives of the living:

I almost think we are all of us ghosts [...]. It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that 'walks' in us. It is all sorts of

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<sup>84</sup> Myna Trustram, "‘Distasteful and Derogatory?’: Examining Victorian Soldiers for Venereal Disease", in London Feminist History Group, *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), cited in Myna Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 118.

<sup>85</sup> In their review of the play, the *Daily Telegraph* lamented 'Ibsen's positively abominable play' and denigrated it as an 'open drain: a loathsome sore unbandage; a filthy act done publicly'. Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), p. 2.

dead ideas, and lifeless old beliefs, and so forth. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we cannot shake them off.<sup>86</sup>

However, as Peter Watts notes, the Norwegian word, *Gengangere*, more accurately translates as ‘Those Who Walk Again’.<sup>87</sup> This alternative title, combined with the knowledge that Oswald’s syphilis is hereditary, gives a greater significance to Helene’s reference to the inherited ghosts she perceives to ‘walk’ within society by suggesting that these ‘revenants’ are persons infected with hereditary syphilis. Moreover, her allusion to ‘dead ideas’ and ‘lifeless old beliefs’ implies that tradition itself becomes an infectious disease.

As the ‘sins of the fathers are visited upon’ Oswald, syphilis becomes the haunting presence in what Mary Spongberg perceives to be a ‘drama of biological decay’.<sup>88</sup> Ibsen’s presentation of this ‘worm-eaten’ disease which seemingly affects only the male line reflects, and to a certain extent anticipates, the contemporary medical debates surrounding syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases by having, ‘for the first time since the eighteenth century[,] the source of syphilitic contagion [...] represented iconographically as a man’ rather than a woman at the very time that the medical profession and the law incriminated diseased women.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, Ibsen’s inclusion of a disease whose symptoms could potentially lie dormant until adulthood captures the *fin-de-siècle* terror surrounding hereditary

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<sup>86</sup> Henrik Ibsen, ‘*Ghosts*’, in *The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen*, trans. by William Archer, 13 vols (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), vol. 7, pp. 157-295 (p. 225).

<sup>87</sup> Peter Watts, ‘Notes’, in Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts and Other Plays*, trans. by Peter Watts (London: Penguin Group, 1964), pp. 291-301 (p. 291).

<sup>88</sup> Ibsen, ‘*Ghosts*’, p. 247; Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 162.

<sup>89</sup> Ibsen, ‘*Ghosts*’, p. 247; Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 162.

syphilis. It is this ‘terror’ that I argue is employed by New Woman writers as those infected persons become ‘living ghosts’ that haunt the narratives.<sup>90</sup>

Ibsen acknowledged that in including a ‘subject which is not usually discussed outside the walls of an [sic] hospital’ *Ghosts* would cause ‘some disquiet in certain quarters, but if it weren’t to do so, I shouldn’t have needed to write it’.<sup>91</sup> Venereal disease was a serious, yet rarely discussed, public health concern in Britain from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In 1864 one out of three sick cases in the army was reported to be venereal in origin, compared to one out of eleven in the navy.<sup>92</sup> In a reaction to this, the government imposed the first of the Contagious Diseases Acts the same year. This law sought to regulate prostitution in army and navy towns through the compulsory examination and hospitalisation, for up to three months, of any woman suspected of being a prostitute infected with venereal disease. The powers of the Contagious Disease Act were subsequently widened in 1866 to allow a woman to be detained in a Lock hospital for up to six months where she would be forced to undergo ‘moral and religious instruction’.<sup>93</sup> The law was further extended in 1869 to permit women to be detained for up to nine months and increased the total subjected districts to eighteen.

The Contagious Diseases Acts reflect mid-century social and medical belief that venereal disease was the product of the diseased and degenerate female body. Although during the early nineteenth century doctors claimed that ‘no matter how pure a woman was, it was possible for her to transmit disease through “impure” intercourse’, by the middle of the century the medical community was largely in

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<sup>90</sup> Peeren’s concept of the ‘living ghost’ will be returned to later in this section.

<sup>91</sup> Henrik Ibsen, cited in Peter Watts, ‘Introduction’, in Ibsen, *Ghosts and Other Plays*, trans. by Peter Watts (London: Penguin Group, 1964), pp. 7-18 (p. 11).

<sup>92</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 49.

<sup>93</sup> Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 63.

agreement that it was the prostitute who was responsible for the spread of sexual diseases.<sup>94</sup> In part a result of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the prostitute was no longer portrayed as a fallen woman who deserved society's pity. Instead she was viewed as an 'abnormal woman who not only transgressed the accepted code of female morality, but who threatened the social and political order by [...her] excesses'.<sup>95</sup> In comparison to the middle-class woman who was increasingly desexualised as the century progressed, William Acton states that the prostitute is a

woman with half the woman gone, and that half containing all that elevates her nature, leaving her a mere instrument of impurity; degraded and fallen she extracts from the sin of others the means of living, corrupt and dependent on corruption, and therefore interested directly in the increase of immorality—a social pest, carrying contamination and foulness to every quarter to which she has access.<sup>96</sup>

Spongberg contends that 'from the 1830s onwards, the female body came to be medicalized not merely as a sexed body but as a diseased body—a space where disease could and did fester'.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the prostitute was viewed not only as an agent of transmission but 'somehow inherently diseased, if not the disease itself'.<sup>98</sup> Holmes Coote, an army surgeon, writing in 1857, maintained that syphilis was 'engendered by the mode of life to which prostitutes are exposed':

it can be shown [...] that the poison [syphilis] may acquire a positive increase of virulence through habits of excess in promiscuous intercourse

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 43. In contrast to Spongberg, Frank Mort argues that the 'Contagious Diseases Acts not only involved a subtle shift in the balance of forces within moral environmentalism, they also marked a new and more particular specification of sexuality within sanitary discourse' of mid-nineteenth century preventative medicine. Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 57.

<sup>95</sup> Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 45.

<sup>96</sup> William Acton, *Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects, in London and other Large Cities and Garrison Towns. With Proposals for the Control and Prevention of its Attendant Evils* (London: John Churchill and Sons, 1870), p. 166.

<sup>97</sup> Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 35.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

by the woman[;] I see no difficulty in imagining that this is the source whence the poison may have originated from the beginning.<sup>99</sup>

Viewed as a site of contagion, the body of the prostitute became synonymous with sexual disease and thus it was she, rather than her male clientele, that the law sought to regulate.<sup>100</sup>

In a response to the increasing powers of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was formed in 1869 by Josephine Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. They argued that the Contagious Diseases Acts were ‘part of a continuum of oppressive legislation against women that equated control of venereal disease with control of women’.<sup>101</sup> In an article titled ‘Women’s Protest’, published in the *Daily News* in 1870, Butler lays out the various reasons for the protest:

so far as women are concerned, they remove every guarantee of personal security which the law has established and held sacred, and put their reputation, their freedom, and their persons absolutely in the power of the police. [...] It is unjust to punish the sex who are the victims of vice, and leave unpunished the sex who are the main cause, both of the vice and its dreaded consequences; and we consider that liability to arrest, forced medical treatment, and (where this is resisted) imprisonment with hard labour, to which these Acts subject women, are punishments of the most degrading kind. [...] We hold that we are bound, before rushing into experiments of legalising a revolting vice, to try to deal with the *causes* of the evil, and we dare to believe that with wiser teaching and more capable legislation, those causes would not be beyond control.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Holmes Coote, *A Report upon Some of the More Important Points Connected with the Treatment of Syphilis* (London: John Churchill, 1857), p. 6; *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> In 1857 the Report of the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army had advocated the discontinuation of genital examination of soldiers because it destroyed their self-respect and was not medically effective. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 74.

<sup>101</sup> Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 101.

<sup>102</sup> Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London: Horace Marshall and Son, 1898), pp. 9-10. Emphasis in the original.

The Ladies National Association saw the law as emblematic of women's unequal position in society, especially in relation to women's sexual education, and the double sexual standard which legitimised predatory male sexuality whilst at the same time punishing its female equivalent.<sup>103</sup>

These double sexual standards are clearly evident in the language of the 1871 Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases which states that there is 'no comparison to be made between prostitutes and the men who consort with them. With the one sex the offence is committed as a matter of gain; with the other it is an irregular indulgence of natural impulse'.<sup>104</sup> Seeking to re-evaluate the legal limits of male sexual expression which encouraged men to have pre-marital sex, social purists advocated male abstinence.<sup>105</sup> As Sally Ledger notes, the social purity movement, which she argues grew out of the Anti-Contagious Diseases campaign, contended that it was male sexuality 'which most needed controlling, it was the male body which was responsible for social degeneration'.<sup>106</sup> Although the Contagious Diseases Acts were finally repealed in 1886 (compulsory examination had been suspended in 1883), the plight of infected wives remained a concern for the New Woman. New Woman fiction came to echo the mid-century Anti-Contagious Diseases campaign as well as the end-of-the-century medical debate surrounding venereal diseases by placing more definitive blame on men for the infection of their families.

Perhaps the most famous literary depiction of hereditary syphilis in New Woman fiction is to be found in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893). Married

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<sup>103</sup> Ledger, *The New Woman*, p. 112.

<sup>104</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts 1866-69* (1871), cited in Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 71.

<sup>105</sup> As quoted earlier in this thesis, John Tosh notes that 'sexual intercourse amounted to a *rite de passage* to manhood, and repeated intercourse was a form of display intended to impress other males'. John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 108. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>106</sup> Ledger, *The New Woman*, p. 112.

to the profligate Mosely Menteith, Edith Beale, an innocent Bishop's daughter and Angel in the House archetype, contracts syphilis from him and subsequently gives birth to a syphilitic son before going insane and suffering a painful death. Echoing Jean Alfred Fournier's assertion that such children 'come into this world small, singularly weak and puny, poorly developed, wrinkled and shriveled [sic], stunted, with the "old man look", as it is usually termed', Edith's son is depicted as a 'little old man baby [...] with a cold in his head' (*HT*, 282).<sup>107</sup> Likewise, Jessamine Halliday, the heroine of Emma Frances Brooke's New Woman novel *A Superfluous Woman* (1894), is infected with syphilis by her dissolute husband, Lord Heriot. When Jessamine gives birth to two children, the 'secrets of the House of Heriot' are revealed: in their 'frail tiny forms lay heavily the heritage of the fathers. The beaten brows, the suffering eyes, expatiated in themselves the crimes and debauchery of generations'.<sup>108</sup> Ann Heilmann contends that New Woman writers foreground issues of 'sexual exploitation, violence and disease in order to suggest not only that relevant legislation did not go far enough, but that it had not even begun to touch on the central question of consent and women's essential right to own and protect their bodies'.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the syphilis plot made explicit the need for 'sex education for all, an end to the sexual double standard, and the civic duty of (male) chastity'.<sup>110</sup> Edith and Jessamine are shown to have no protection against their husbands because, along with other sexual matters, middle-class women were not educated about the dangers of venereal disease.

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<sup>107</sup> Alfred Fournier, *Syphilis and Marriage*, trans. by P. Albert Morrow (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), p. 55.

<sup>108</sup> Emma Frances Brooke, *A Superfluous Woman*, ed. by Barbara Tilley (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2015), p. 200.

<sup>109</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

Elaine Showalter notes that ‘while boys and men were lectured, warned, or even terrorized about venereal disease, well-brought-up girls were not supposed to know that such dangers existed’.<sup>111</sup> With an education that equips Edith to ‘move in the society of saints and angels only’ (*HT*, 157), Grand demonstrates that she is accordingly ignorant of the dangers her husband poses to her and her child:

instinct is not safeguard enough for creatures living under purely artificial conditions; they must have knowledge; and Edith had been robbed of all means of self-defence by the teaching which insisted that her only duty as a wife consisted in silent submission to her husband’s will. [...] The shadow of an awful form of insanity already darkened her days. The mental torture was extreme; but she fought for her reason with the fearful malady valiantly; and all the time presented outwardly only the same dull apathy, giving no sign and speaking no word which could betray the fury of the rage within. (*HT*, 274)

In comparison to Edith, Evadne Frayling comprehends the danger of her own husband’s pre-marital relations and so when her attention is drawn to his past life on her wedding day, she refuses to consummate their marriage. With her self-taught medical education, Evadne realises that there is ‘no past in the matter of vice. The consequences become hereditary, and continue from generation to generation’ (*HT*, 81). Thus, unlike Edith, Evadne, although she still suffers the mental consequences of such a marriage, is able to escape the fate of the majority of women married to syphilitic husbands in New Woman fiction.

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<sup>111</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 196. Henry Allbutt produced *The Wife’s Handbook* (1885) to specifically address women’s ignorance regarding venereal disease; however, as Emma Liggins notes, the introduction ‘downplayed the male role of introducing disease into marriage, instead equating women’s “ignorance of Nature and her unchanging laws” with her potential physical unfitness for motherhood. The “feeble and puny children, born but to suffer and die” are not then necessarily the visible signs of the husband’s infection of his innocent wife, but symbols of the potential unfitness of both parents, prey to the degenerative tendencies of the age’. Emma Liggins, ‘Writing against the “husband-fiend”: Syphilis and Male Sexual Vice in the New Woman Novel’, *Women’s Writing*, 7.2 (2000), 175-195 (p. 179).

As in *Ghosts*, syphilis in *The Heavenly Twins* is characterised as a ‘shadow’ that haunts the (female) protagonists and consequently transforms those innocently infected into what Esther Peeren terms a ‘living ghost’. In contrast to the ghost whose ‘incomplete and intermittent embodiment not only makes it ungraspable, but often leaves it unable to affect the physical world directly or effectively’, Peeren views the ‘living ghost’ to be imbued with agency.<sup>112</sup> Using this term to denote people and social groups ‘generally considered to occupy marginal, contentious social positions’, she argues that these ‘living ghosts’ ‘call attention to and assign responsibility for social practices of marginalization and erasure, and for cultural and historical blind spots’.<sup>113</sup> Once infected with syphilis, Edith serves to fulfil this role. Although little agency can be associated with Edith, she nevertheless emphasises male culpability in the spread of venereal diseases, as she draws attention to this otherwise marginalised and taboo topic.

Edith Nesbit similarly places the horrors of syphilis at the centre of her New Woman Gothic short story aptly titled ‘The Shadow’ (1905). Published the same year that Fritz Schaudinn and Erich Hoffman discovered the causative agent (*Spirochaeta pallida*, later referred to as *Treponema Pallidum*) of syphilis, Nesbit’s story plays on the concept that, for the Victorians, the ‘peculiar terror of syphilis lay not only in its ghastly symptoms but in the hidden and undetectable nature of its progress’.<sup>114</sup> Syphilis had the potential to remain invisible during latent stages and yet inflict ‘incurable damage on various organ systems while the victims believe[d]

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<sup>112</sup> Peeren, *The Spectral Metaphor*, p. 3. Although Peeren discusses only twentieth and twenty-first century texts, her concept of ‘living ghosts’ is applicable to nineteenth-century novels as well. Indeed, Peeren introduces her argument with a discussion of Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Canterville Ghost’ (1887).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5; *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> M. Tampa, I. Sarbu, C. Matei, V. Benea and S. R. Georgescu, ‘Brief History of Syphilis’, *Journal of Medicine and Life*, 7.1 (2014), 4-10, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3956094/>> [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017]; Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Health, Medicine, and Society in Victorian England* (Oxford: Praeger, 2010), p. 72.

that they [...were] cured, or that their symptoms [...were] due to some other condition'.<sup>115</sup> Exploiting the mysterious, and it could be argued spectral, nature of syphilis during the nineteenth century, Nesbit centres her ghost story around this invisible disease and the hidden effects it could have on a middle-class family. Initially set up as a traditional haunted house narrative, 'The Shadow' begins with the female protagonist, Margaret Eastwich, recalling the story of two married friends who move into a house seemingly haunted by some invisible presence that 'wasn't exactly a ghost' ('S', 172). Asked by the unnamed male protagonist to 'come and stay, because his wife was ill, and I should cheer her up, and cheer him up as well; for it was a gloomy house, and he himself was growing gloomy too' ('S', 172), Margaret resolves to visit the friends whom she loved 'more than anything in the world' ('S', 172). Yet, upon her arrival the house is revealed to be 'warm and welcoming' ('S', 173) contrasting with the male protagonist's statement and implying that the haunting presence emanates from something other than the house.

It is not until the end of Nesbit's short story that the truth about the 'shadow' is disclosed. Just as it is revealed that the couple's daughter is asleep in the next room, one of the girls to whom Margaret is recounting the story witnesses Margaret see something that

seemed not quite to reach the height of the dressing-room door handle. Her eyes followed it down, down—widening and widening. Mine followed them—all the nerves of them seemed strained to the uttermost—and I almost saw—or did I quite see? I can't be certain. But we all heard the long-drawn, quivering sigh. ('S', 177)

The couple's daughter's death is diagnosed to be a result of the heart disease she 'inherited from her mother' ('S', 178); however, the young listener admits that she

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

has ‘sometimes wondered whether she may not have inherited something from her father. I have never been able to forget the look on her dead face’ (‘S’, 178). Spongberg notes that it was during the 1890s that the ‘British medical establishment came to recognize the risks to wives and children posed by syphilis’ as an ‘increasing concern developed for those who “innocently” acquired syphilis’.<sup>116</sup> Attitudes towards venereal diseases, especially in relation to its transmission, were slow to change throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Spongberg points out, in the ‘Majority Report of the 1882 Select Committee into the workings of the CD Acts there was no mention of hereditary syphilis’.<sup>117</sup> However, between 1880 and 1900, the period in which the New Woman emerged into the literary and cultural landscape, Showalter reports that ‘fifteen hundred infants died annually of hereditary venereal infections’.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, by the end of the century, the medical profession was being forced to consider the role men played in the spread of infection, particularly in relation to congenital and hereditary syphilis.<sup>119</sup>

While Abraham Colles and Paul Diday had suggested the possibility of congenital and hereditary syphilis at the beginning of the century, the majority of the medical community throughout the Victorian period continued to identify women as the carriers and transmitters of sexual disease. Thomas Ballard, author of ‘What Are the Signs of Congenital Syphilis?’ (1873), contended that ‘if the causes of death resided in the germ, it surely would not grow. The defective state of the soil seems sufficient to account for the blight of the young creature, which is so dependent on it

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<sup>116</sup> Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 155.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>118</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Writers, from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago Press, 2009), p. 334.

<sup>119</sup> Congenital syphilis is defined as syphilis acquired at conception while hereditary syphilis refers to syphilis which develops after conception.

for nourishment'.<sup>120</sup> It was not until Johnathan Hutchinson's lectures 'On Colles' Law, and on the Communication of Syphilis from the Foetus to its Mother' (1876) that male responsibility in the spread of congenital and hereditary syphilis began to garner attention in Britain. Hutchinson argued in his lectures that in a 'large majority of instances in the English practice, inheritance of syphilis is from the father, the mother having never suffered before conception'.<sup>121</sup> However, in comparison to other European venereologists, Hutchinson's conclusions regarding paternal infection were limited. Fournier, a French dermatologist who specialised in venereal diseases, was more forthright in his assertions. In *Syphilis and Marriage* (1880, translated into English in 1881) he laments the 'deplorable' actions of men who 'give a virtuous young woman the pox as a wedding present!'<sup>122</sup> Detailing the various ways in which a syphilitic man could become dangerous to his family, Fournier connects hereditary syphilis with degeneration, an association he expanded upon in 1904: 'syphilis can, because of its hereditary consequences, debase and corrupt the species by producing inferior, decadent, dystrophic and deficient beings'.<sup>123</sup> By implicating men in the spread of syphilis, doctors such as Fournier challenged the connection between femininity and venereal diseases which had been perpetrated by the Contagious Diseases Acts. Thus, as Andrew Smith notes, by the end of the century it was the 'behaviour of the middle-class client, rather than the working-class prostitute, which concerned the medical profession'.<sup>124</sup> However, the medical establishment was wary of contesting traditional family values which were

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<sup>120</sup> Thomas Ballard, 'What Are the Signs of Congenital Syphilis?', *The Lancet* (1873), cited in Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 148.

<sup>121</sup> Johnathan Hutchinson, 'On Colles' Law, and on the Communication of Syphilis from the Foetus to its Mother', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2 (1876), 643-6 (p. 644).

<sup>122</sup> Fournier, *Syphilis and Marriage*, p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Alfred Fournier, *La Ligue contre la syphilis* (Paris, 1904), cited in Claude Quézel, *History of Syphilis*, trans. by Judith Braddock and Brian Pike (London: Policy Press in Association with Blackwell, 1990), p. 167.

<sup>124</sup> Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 95.

built on male sex-privilege and as a result the blame they assigned to men was restricted.

This debate is evident in Hutchinson's introduction to the translated edition of Fournier's *Syphilis and Marriage*. Responding to Fournier's assertion that 'three or four years' is the 'necessary indispensable minimum' that a man must wait before marrying after the initial outbreak of symptoms, Hutchinson states that

no one can doubt that many patients who seek medical advice on this point receive permission to marry far too early, and under conditions when such permission had much better been withheld. Having said this, however, I must next in honesty add, that I feel scarcely prepared to go the full length which M. Fournier suggests, in the direction of caution and of prohibition.<sup>125</sup>

Hutchinson goes on to add that the 'surgeon who, on account of syphilis, forbids marriage to an otherwise eligible man, must remember that he forbids it, at the same time, to some woman who possibly, if well informed as to the risks, would willingly encounter them'.<sup>126</sup> However, Frederick Lowndes, a surgeon at Liverpool Lock Hospital and supporter of the Anti-Contagious Diseases campaign, contests Hutchinson's statement by arguing that 'no woman should be permitted to encounter such risks, and neither man or woman is justified in exposing to this risk an unborn child'.<sup>127</sup> Despite the accountability the medical profession was beginning to assign to men for the transmission of venereal diseases at the *fin de siècle*, legal protection for women contracting syphilis from men remained non-existent well into the twentieth century.

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<sup>125</sup> Johnathan Hutchinson, 'Prefatory Remarks', in Alfred Fournier, *Syphilis and Marriage*, trans. by Alfred Lingard (London: David Bogue, 1881), pp. v-ix (p. vii).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.

<sup>127</sup> F. W. Lowndes, 'Syphilis, and Marriage', *The Lancet*, 2 (1882), 7-9 (p. 8). In comparison, C. R. Drysdale advised that a 'woman who had primary syphilis should never marry'. C. R. Drysdale, 'The Prognosis of Syphilis in Women and Children', *British Medical Journal*, 2 (1882), cited in Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease*, p. 154.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman acknowledges this in *The Man-Made World* (1911): ‘if a man gives his wife arsenic, he is held criminally responsible [...]. Wherein is a man less guilty who knowingly transmits disease to a trusting wife, who causes blindness and deformity and idiocy in his children, whose lightest offense is to bring sterility and merciful death?’<sup>128</sup> Consequently, New Woman writers used their fiction to make visible the plight of infected wives by ‘invert[ing] the traditional male rhetorical strategies that had presented prostitutes as the source of sexual contagion’ during the mid-nineteenth century and positioning the seemingly respectable middle-class husband as the crux of the problem.<sup>129</sup> Nesbit extends this further by drawing on contemporary medical debates surrounding syphilis in her New Woman Gothic short story ‘The Shadow’ as she challenges Victorian gender politics. Being at first only perceptible to the unnamed male protagonist, the ‘shadow’ remains an elusive presence that is ‘always just not visible’ (‘S’, 174). He describes to Margaret the sensation of ‘something follow[ing] me about—only when I turn round, there’s never anything, only my shadow’ (‘S’, 174). This imagery also features in Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story, ‘The Third Generation’ (1894).<sup>130</sup> Visiting Dr Horace Selby, a specialist in venereal diseases, the eminent Sir Francis Norton has his worst fears confirmed when he is diagnosed with syphilis passed down through the paternal line from his grandfather. After Francis leaves with an unsteady conviction that he must break off his engagement, Horace observes Francis’ ‘shadow [...] trail[ing] up the wall as he passed the lights, and yet it looked to the doctor’s eye as though some huge and sombre figure walked

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<sup>128</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture* (New York: Charlton Company, 1911), p. 69.

<sup>129</sup> Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 108.

<sup>130</sup> Doyle wrote his MD thesis in 1885 on tertiary syphilis and therefore would have been well acquainted with the symptoms of the disease. Wilson Carpenter, *Health, Medicine, and Society*, p. 87.

by a mannikin's [sic] side, and led him silently up the lonely street'.<sup>131</sup> The story concludes the following morning with Horace waking to hear that Francis has died in an apparent act of suicide.

In both Nesbit's and Conan Doyle's Gothic short stories these haunting shadows which originate from the male protagonists come to symbolise syphilis. While Francis is explicitly diagnosed with the disease, Nesbit hints at her male protagonist's infection through the use of this metaphor. This is apparent as Margaret finds herself beginning to 'notice things' ('S', 174) after being taken into the unnamed male protagonist's confidence:

on the staircase the feeling used to be so awful that I have had to bite my lips till they bled to keep myself from running upstairs at full speed. Only I knew if I did I should go mad at the top. There was always something behind me—exactly as he had said—something that one could just not see. [...] I have sometimes almost seen something—you know how one sees things without looking—but if I turned round, it seemed as if the thing drooped and melted into my shadow. ('S', 174)

Margaret is seemingly unable to bring herself to acknowledge what it is that actually haunts the house and her two friends. However, significantly, given that Otto Rank argues that staircases 'almost always symbolize coitus', this episode emphasises the sexual dimension of the spectral presence in Nesbit's New Woman Gothic story.<sup>132</sup> As syphilis becomes a ghostly presence that haunts the middle-class home and its inhabitants, the shadow threatens to expose the male protagonist's 'secret' illness to his otherwise unsuspecting female partner. Indeed, rather than being afraid of the

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<sup>131</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Third Generation', *Round the Red Lamp being Facts and Fancies of Medical Life* (London: Methuen and Co., 1894), pp. 46-64 (pp. 62-3).

<sup>132</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'A Staircase Dream (Reported and Interpreted by Otto Rank)', *Interpreting Dreams* (London: Penguin Group, 2006), pp. 381-3 (p. 381).

shadow itself, the male protagonist in Nesbit's 'The Shadow' is more concerned that his wife, Mabel, does not 'guess there's anything wrong' ('S', 174).

Given that women were not meant to be educated in such matters, the treatment of women infected with syphilis by their husbands was problematic and thus some doctors, including Fournier, recommended keeping the diagnosis a secret from the wife:

in the large majority of cases, these things happen in such a way that the wife is entirely ignorant of the disease with which she is attacked, and it is your [the doctor's] moral duty to deceive her in this matter, by dissimulating the real name and nature of her affection.<sup>133</sup>

Revealed to be pregnant half way through the short story, with the pregnancy giving a more sinister dimension to her potential infection, Mabel is described by Margaret as not 'exactly ill, only weak and excitable' ('S', 173). A much-discussed phenomenon during the late nineteenth century was the means by which women could give birth to congenitally infected children and yet remain apparently free from the disease themselves. In *The Lancet* in 1894, Dr J. A. Coutts details a case in which a father and child are infected with syphilis while the mother apparently remains free from infection until after giving birth when she begins to exhibit symptoms: 'about a week after the child's mouth and lips became affected, the mother, who had continued to suckle the infant, noticed two small sores about the right breast nipple'.<sup>134</sup> Discussing this case at length, Alfred Cooper, who published his treatise on the subject titled *Syphilis* in 1895, argues that pregnancy itself could disguise the presence of the disease: 'the symptoms in the mother do not always appear during the first pregnancy or immediately after it. She may remain apparently

<sup>133</sup> Fournier, *Syphilis and Marriage*, p. 154.

<sup>134</sup> J. A. Coutts, 'Case of Congenital Syphilis; Infection of the Mother by her Own Child', *The Lancet*, 143.3693 (1894), 1443-4 (p. 1443).

healthy, or the symptoms may be of a very slight, ill-defined character'.<sup>135</sup> Like Edith in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, Mabel is apparently ignorant of the dangers her husband poses to her, perhaps in part because there are seemingly no outward symptoms of her infection. Instead, it is Margaret who exposes the truth about the ghostly shadow and its connection to Mabel.

In a literal figuration of the trope of skeletons in the cupboard, Margaret, alone in the kitchen one night, suddenly realises that

I knew that now it was not going to be 'almost' any more. Yet I said, 'Mabel?' not because I thought it could be Mabel who was crouching down there, half in half out of the cupboard. The thing was grey at first, and then it was black. And when I whispered 'Mabel', it seemed to sink down till it lay like a pool of ink on the floor, and then its edges drew in [...], and it flowed into the cupboard till it was all gathered into the shadows there. ('S', 175)

It is in this moment that Margaret realises what it is that truly haunts her friends' house. Emanating from the cupboard in which the family's 'empty boxes and things' are stored, the shadow serves to expose 'all the horror of the house' ('S', 175), and thus what is intended to remain suppressed. However, Margaret's subconscious connection of the ghostly shadow with Mabel starts to reveal the real reason why the house is haunted. A marginal figure with no narrative authority, Mabel functions, quite literally here, as a 'living ghost' by 'call[ing] attention to and assign[ing] responsibility' for the injustices women were facing at the hands of their syphilitic husbands in a society that preferred to ignore their plight. By recognising that the shadow represents the husband's 'alter-ego'—the illness that he will inflict on his wife—Margaret realises at this moment that it is Mabel who will be the eventual victim of this haunting presence.

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<sup>135</sup> Alfred Cooper, *Syphilis* (London: Churchill, 1895), p. 349.

Nesbit's story reaches its climax just after Mabel has given birth and neither the unnamed male protagonist nor Margaret has 'seen or heard anything for three days; our anxiety about Mabel was lessened' ('S', 176). However, passing Mabel's bedroom door one night, Margaret witnesses the shadow being 'sucked under the door of Mabel's room' ('S', 176). It is in this moment that Margaret prays that 'Mabel might never know the terrors that he and I had known' ('S', 176). In contrast to Edith's violent death, Mabel passes away peacefully seemingly still unaware of the infection she received from her husband: 'my prayer was answered. She never saw, never heard anything more in this world' ('S', 177). It is only at this moment when the shadow is 'gathered together and drawn till it ran into the nearest shadow' ('S', 177), that shadow being Mabel's, that the haunting element disappears, at least until the end of the story when it re-emerges as Mabel's daughter dies.

Leaving the readers of her New Woman Gothic short story in little doubt that it is the father, not Mabel, who is responsible for the early death of their child, Nesbit uses the Gothic genre to emphasise the horrors of congenital syphilis. Although the father never explicitly acknowledges his responsibility, the last sentence of the short story—'I sometimes wondered whether she may not have inherited something from her father. I have never been able to forget the look on her dead face' ('S', 178)—suggests his culpability. As the shadow of the father's illness haunts the text and its female characters, Nesbit looks back to the arguments of the mid-Victorian Anti-Contagious Diseases Campaign while also incorporating contemporary medical discussions of the *fin de siècle* to demonstrate that the law did not protect women from venereal diseases. Given the ineffectiveness of the law and the way in which some doctors colluded with infected men, it was possible for them to hide their infection from their unsuspecting families, thus allowing them, as the anonymous

married middle-class male protagonist of 'The Shadow' does, to remain unaccountable and invisible in society. Consequently, Nesbit, along with several other authors of New Woman fiction, uses the 'shadow' to make visible her male protagonist's infection. However, whereas those infected women become 'living ghosts' in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, in Nesbit's 'The Shadow', it is syphilis which is figured as the haunting presence.

Married women's vulnerability to venereal disease was used by campaigners to emphasise the ineffectiveness of the law to protect women from destructive middle- and upper-class male sexuality. Yet as the story of a 'very industrious and decent woman' included in an early pamphlet discussing married women's property rights identifies, it was not only women's bodies that men could legally control.<sup>136</sup> Several years after leaving her husband, this woman's peace is interrupted when the 'monster comes to claim his marital rights over her earnings and her person—he comes in the name of the English Law, and who shall resist or gainsay him?'<sup>137</sup> Identifying the relationship between women's sexual and economic rights, the married women's property campaign transferred the conversation from women's need to control their bodies to women's broader right to own their own property. Published during the same year that the second Married Woman's Property Act was passed by Parliament, *Weird Stories* by Charlotte Riddell rewrites the Victorian property plot by using the haunted house to advocate for greater economic rights for women and a corresponding transformation in the marriage relationship.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Remarks on the Law of Marriage and Divorce; Suggested by the Honourable Mrs Norton's Letter to the Queen* (London: James Ridgway, 1856), p. 22.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>138</sup> According to Geoffrey Gilbert, the Victorian property plot involves a 'vision of property consolidated by its relation to land and signalling social organisation giv[ing] way catastrophically onto an era of speculation'. Geoffrey Gilbert, 'The Origins of Modernism in the Haunted Properties of

### **Haunted Houses: The Ghost of Women's Hidden Inheritance in Charlotte Riddell's *Weird Stories* (1882)**

Haunted houses are a staple of Victorian Gothic fiction. Margaret Oliphant, herself an author of various Gothic stories, claimed that 'of all the productions of the supernatural school, there is none more perfect in its power of sensation, or more entirely effective in its working out, than the short story of the "Haunted House," most thrilling of ghostly tales'.<sup>139</sup> Influenced by the transgressive domestic spaces of Sensation fiction, haunted house narratives of the mid- to late nineteenth century disrupt Victorian ideals by situating the home as a 'source of dangerously concealed secrets, even of literal skeletons in the cupboard'.<sup>140</sup> One such example is Charlotte Riddell's short story collection *Weird Stories* (1882).

Although little-known today, Riddell was a prolific and relatively popular author during her lifetime. Born in what is now Northern Ireland, Riddell and her mother were forced to move to London after the death of her father as the 'property passed into other hands' and they were left with only a 'small jointure'.<sup>141</sup> It was whilst in London that Riddell turned to writing in order to support herself. However, Riddell was again to suffer financial hardship during her marriage when she repeatedly found herself having to pay her husband's debts. Unsurprisingly given Riddell's personal experience, Emma Liggins notes that an 'ongoing interest in property, inheritance and the world of business' frequently features in her realist novels; these include *George Geith of Fen Court* (1864), *Mortomley's Estate* (1874)

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Literature', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 239-57 (p. 249).

<sup>139</sup> Margaret Oliphant, 'Sensation Novels', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 91 (1862), 564-84 (p. 565).

<sup>140</sup> Julia Briggs, 'The Ghost Story', in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 176-85 (p. 181).

<sup>141</sup> Helen C. Black, *Notable Women Authors of the Day*, ed. by Troy J. Bassett and Catherine Pope (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2011), p. 32.

and *The Head of the Firm* (1892).<sup>142</sup> Yet it is in her Sensation Gothic short story collection, *Weird Stories*, that I maintain Riddell most strongly confronts issues surrounding women's financial dependency and the changing inheritance laws.<sup>143</sup>

Published around December 1882, just four months after the Married Women's Property Act was passed by Parliament, *Weird Stories* reflects the arguments of the hard-fought campaign. Mary Lyndon Shanley contends that the 'passage of the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 was arguably the single most important change in the legal status of women in the nineteenth century'.<sup>144</sup> However, as discussed in Chapter One, it was also one of the most controversial as it was feared that by altering the economic position of married women, the gender dynamics of the marital home would be restructured. Given that Riddell was writing during this 'period of intense debate about the economic rights and responsibilities of married women', I argue that the haunted house motif, central to four ('Walnut-Tree House', 'The Open Door', 'The Old House in Vauxhall Walk', 'Old Mrs Jones') of the six stories contained within *Weird Stories*, is used by Riddell to explore the plight of married women in regards to their inability to own and control property.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, I contend that contemporary fears surrounding the change in married women's legal status are both reflected in and refuted by Riddell's haunted house narratives.

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<sup>142</sup> Liggins, 'Introduction', p. i.

<sup>143</sup> In contrast to her realist novels which have little in common with the Sensation genre, Riddell's Gothic short stories, as Liggins identifies, clearly 'borrow from sensation fiction in their emphasis', and thus can be placed in the Sensation Gothic tradition. Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1989), p. 103.

<sup>145</sup> It is currently unknown if these six stories were published individually before being collated into this collection. It is important to note that Victorian writers sometimes explored past grievances in their novels. For example, Sarah Grand wrote about the abolished Contagious Diseases Acts in her novel *The Heavenly Twins*.

Like much of Sensation fiction which was undoubtedly informed by the public debates surrounding the Married Woman's Property Acts, Riddell's tales of 'dissolution, greed and murder behind the façade of splendid houses' similarly disrupt Victorian patriarchal ideals of the middle-class home as a place of 'shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division'.<sup>146</sup> The majority of Riddell's short stories involve the decline of formerly eminent middle-class homes. In 'Walnut-Tree House', the house which was once a place of 'considerable pretention' ('WTH', 2) is now described as 'grim and lonely [and...] more than ordinarily desolate and deserted' ('WTH', 3), while in 'The Old House in Vauxhall Walk' the house that was 'once inhabited by well-to-do-citizens' is 'now let out for the most part in floors to weekly tenants' ('OHVW', 100). This decay of the middle-class home is used by Riddell to mark a shift in patriarchal dominance and, as will be argued, to call for a further breakdown in other out-dated ideals. By combining a Gothic exploration of external and interior geography and an interrogation of the interplay between old and new palimpsest with the sensational representation of the middle-class home as a space of entrapment and oppression, Riddell reveals it to be a place haunted by the effects of women's financial dependency.

Issues of property and inheritance are not uncommon in Sensation fiction. Lyn Pykett argues that this preoccupation with inheritance stems from the genre's anxiety about the way the law organises and controls the family, as well as its obsession with 'issues arising from women's lack of legal identity and rights (for example, the inability of married women to own property [...])'.<sup>147</sup> This is evident in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Taken at the Flood* (1874), which in some sense rewrites

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<sup>146</sup> Liggins, 'Introduction', p. vi; Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, p. 91.

<sup>147</sup> Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: From The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 10.

the plot of her more famous novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). The heroine of *Taken at the Flood*, Sylvia Carew, marries the old and rich Sir Aubrey Perriam in the hope of gaining the fortune and social position she has always desired. However, upon their marriage, Sir Aubrey declares that 'I do not understand or approve the modern system of making a wife independent of her husband. Dependence is one of woman's sweetest attributes—her most winning charm. I should not like my wife [...] to possess an independent income during my lifetime'.<sup>148</sup> Frustrated by Sir Aubrey's old-fashioned views, Sylvia seizes her opportunity when others remark on the physical similarity between Sir Aubrey (who by this point has suffered a stroke that paralyses one side of his body) and his brother. When Sir Aubrey's brother dies, Sylvia switches him with Sir Aubrey and thus convinces everyone that her husband has died, leaving her to inherit his fortune. Although Sylvia's deception is eventually revealed, Braddon places little judgement on her. Instead, as Anne-Marie Beller identifies, she questions the 'economic vulnerability' of women by 'calling into question the ideal of female dependency advocated by dominant Victorian ideology'.<sup>149</sup> A similar sentiment can be found in Riddell's *Weird Stories* as her complication of the Victorian domestic ideal exposes 'financially motivated forms of exploitation and abuse as a hidden underside to respectable middle-class society'.<sup>150</sup>

The consequences of married women's economic powerlessness are central to the four haunted house stories which make up the focus of this section. In 'Walnut-Tree House', Edgar Stainton inherits a dilapidated house in South London which he soon discovers is haunted by the ghost of a young boy. Edgar eventually

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<sup>148</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Taken at the Flood*, 3 vols (Leipzig, B. Tauchnitz, 1874), vol. 2, pp. 30-1.

<sup>149</sup> Anne-Marie Beller, *Mary Elizabeth Braddon: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction* (London: McFarland and Company, 2012), p. 109.

<sup>150</sup> Victoria Margree, 'Other Worldly Goods: Gender, Money and Property in the Ghost Stories of Charlotte Riddell', *Gothic Studies*, 16.2 (2014), 66-85 (pp. 67-8).

learns that this is the rightful heir to the house who, as a result of neglect by his uncle, starved to death. ‘The Open Door’ tells the story of Theophilus Edlyd (known as Phil), a young man who is fired from his monotonous city job and so in an effort to win the respect of his sweetheart’s family attempts to solve the mystery of a door which will not stay closed. In ‘The Old House in Vauxhall Walk’, the young male protagonist, Graham Coulton, is visited in his dreams by a monstrous woman whose murderers he eventually manages to bring to justice. ‘Old Mrs Jones’, the final story in *Weird Stories*, differs to some extent from the others. Soon after the Tippens move into Dr Jones’ former house, neighbourhood rumours of a ghost are proved to be true when lodgers report seeing his wife, Zillah Jones, with her throat marked by strangulation bruises. However, in this case it is a woman, Anne Jane Tippens (a cousin of the family), who reveals the hiding place of Dr Jones and the embalmed remains of Zillah.

Liggins argues that the majority of the stories included within *Weird Stories* follow the largely similar formulaic pattern of a ‘narrator buying or renting a suspiciously cheap house and living there despite the mysterious warnings of the locals, and usually conclude with revelations of unavenged murders and acts of violence, lost or stolen wills, or buried family traumas’.<sup>151</sup> While ‘Walnut-Tree House’, ‘The Open Door’, ‘The Old House in Vauxhall Walk’ and ‘Old Mrs Jones’ do indeed all revolve around a house which is rumoured to be haunted, what Liggins does not identify is the important, and often complicated, role women play in Riddell’s Gothic short stories. As Victoria Margree notes, given ‘Riddell’s acute awareness of women as economic agents (actual and potential)’, it is consequently surprising ‘that in her ghost fiction it is exclusively male protagonists whose actions

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<sup>151</sup> Liggins, ‘Introduction’, p. iii.

unlock money's potential for good, while women in possession of wealth acquire monstrous dimensions'.<sup>152</sup> Miss Tynan in 'The Old House in Vauxhall Walk' is one such example. After arguing with his father, Graham finds himself at the mercy of William, an old family acquaintance, who permits him to stay the night in the residence he has just vacated. It is during his night here that Graham's sleep is interrupted with vivid dreams of an old woman, who he later learns is Miss Tynan, the former resident of the house, selfishly protecting her fortune. Miss Tynan is described as an

old, wrinkled hag, her clothes poor and ragged, a mop cap barely covering her scant white hair, her cheeks sunken, her nose hooked, her fingers more like talons than aught else as they dived down into the heap of gold, portions of which they lifted but to scatter mournfully. ('OHVW', 105)

Miss Tynan's concern for her individual wealth over her relationship with her brother (she refuses to help him when he finds himself in financial difficulties) has led critics such as Melissa Edmundson Makala to argue that Riddell uses these seemingly monstrous female characters to show her readers that 'money cannot improve a person's life unless that person learns how to live generously'.<sup>153</sup> While this image of Miss Tynan undoubtedly initially suggests that she is a cruel and selfish woman bent on protecting her wealth, Graham's description of her also offers a comment on society's view of women who possess their own fortune.

Apparently never married, Miss Tynan's economic rights would have differed dramatically to those of a married woman prior to the Married Woman's Property Acts. Referred to by law as a *feme sole*, unmarried women were not subject

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<sup>152</sup> Margree, 'Other Worldly Goods', p. 67.

<sup>153</sup> Melissa Edmundson Makala, *Women's Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 104.

to the same legal or financial disabilities as their married sisters. They were able to own and bequeath property, sue or be sued, draw up contracts and were liable to pay their own debts. Thus, as Lee Holcombe identifies, ‘it was not the fact of being female but the status of wife that entailed severe legal disabilities’.<sup>154</sup> I contend that Miss Tynan can be read, not as a judgement on financially secure single women, but rather, by embodying what Sharon Marcus terms the ‘urban deformation of the domestic ideal’, a comment on the way the law forced unmarried women to be selfish.<sup>155</sup> This becomes apparent in one of Graham’s dreams as Miss Tynan, a kind of female Scrooge, appears to repent her decision not to help those less fortunate than herself:

with haggard eyes the figure regarded the poor she had repulsed, the children against whose cry she had closed her ears, the old people she had suffered to starve and die for want of what would have been the merest trifle to her; then, with a terrible scream, she raised her lean arms above her head, and sank down—down—the gold scattering as it fell out of her lap[.] (‘OHVW’, 189)

As Graham awakes with the ‘heart-rending cry—“Oh! my lost life”’ ringing in his ears, the story implies that Miss Tynan was unable to recognise a means by which she could be simultaneously independently rich and charitable. Riddell suggests that given that the legal system only permitted women to be individually wealthy or financially dependent subject to their marital status, a woman such as Miss Tynan was left with little option. However, this is not to say that Riddell supported this position but rather, as will be argued later in this section, that she used such characters to advocate for legal change.

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<sup>154</sup> Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women’s Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 122.

'The Open Door' also reveals the desperation caused by women's economic dependency. The mystery of the open door revolves around the murder of Lord Ladlow and his lost will. While the murdered Lord Ladlow had originally disinherited his nephew in favour of his new young wife, he sends for his nephew just prior to his death in order to assure him 'he had resolved to repair that wrong' ('OD', 49). Although the nephew, the current Lord Ladlow (referred to hereafter as Ladlow in an attempt to avoid confusion), reportedly 'tried to induce him [his uncle] to leave the lady a handsome sum in addition to her jointure' ('OD', 49), this alteration of Lord Ladlow's will would have meant that his wife was left without financial support. However, this new will is never discovered and so Lady Ladlow, described by Ladlow as 'vindictive' ('OD', 49), 'put in the former will, leaving her everything' ('OD', 50). 'The Open Door' concludes with Phil, the man employed to discover the mystery of the open door, locating the lost will after finding a woman, presumably Lady Ladlow's maid, searching for it in the room Lord Ladlow was murdered, the room with the door that will not stay closed. Although Riddell never states outright that Lady Ladlow was involved in the murder of Lord Ladlow, this is the implication. However, much like Braddon's *Taken at the Flood*, the narrative does not place harsh judgement on Lady Ladlow and she is allowed by Ladlow to flee abroad without retribution, although presumably she is not permitted to keep her former husband's money.

Though both Miss Tynan and Lady Ladlow are presented to be more concerned with protecting their economic status than forging familial relations, Riddell subtly hints that this is an inevitable consequence of the law. She suggests that the current economic status of married women means that women are forced to decide between having a family or being part of a community and their individual

financial security. Thus, Riddell can be seen to advance the message of the Manchester Married Women's Property Committee who advocated that granting a married woman the same economic rights as her husband would transform marriage from a relationship based on male dominance to one of equality and friendship. This alteration in the dynamics of marriage was promoted by the thousands of pamphlets produced by the Married Women's Property Committee. During a speech to Parliament, which was subsequently printed and circulated by the Married Women's Property Committee, Russell Gurney ridiculed the suggestion that the implementation of this law would 'promote divisions in families, and that the husband will be deposed from his headstone'.<sup>156</sup> Instead, these pamphlets sought to show that a change in marital relations would benefit both men and women. Annie Besant, a close friend of several influential members of the Married Woman's Property Committee, argued that 'marriage ought no more to affect a woman's position than it does a man's, and should carry with it no kind of legal disability; [...] marriage should be regarded as a contract between equals, and not as a bond between master and servant'.<sup>157</sup> After all, as Arthur Hobhouse observed, it was a 'monstrous thing to assume that the husband must always be right'.<sup>158</sup> Like the Married Women's Property Committee, Riddell centralises the family unit in her Sensation Gothic short stories to suggest that if husbands and wives are given the same economic rights, marriage and family, and therefore also community life, will consequently become more secure and desirable.

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<sup>156</sup> Russell Gurney, *Speech of the Right Hon. Russell Gurney, M.P., on Moving the Second Reading of the Married Women's Property Bill* (London: Cornelius Duck, 1870), p. 5.

<sup>157</sup> Annie Besant, *Marriage, as It Was, as It Is, and as It Should Be: A Plea for Reform* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1882), p. 28.

<sup>158</sup> Arthur Hobhouse, *On the Forfeiture of Property by Married Women* (Manchester: A. Ireland and Co., 1870), p. 5.

This is most notable in ‘Walnut-Tree House’ where the story ends with the marriage of Edgar and Mary Fenton, the now adult sister of the young boy, Georgie, who haunts the house. Learning the pitiful story of Georgie’s short-lived life as well as the role his family played in the neglect, Edgar strives to recover the lost second will of Felix Stainton, the children’s grandfather, that is rumoured to have made Georgie the sole inheritor (the will that was implemented was the original one that left everything to Alfred Stainton, the boy’s uncle). After managing to locate this will, Edgar sees to it that Mary receives the 10,000 pound inheritance bequeathed to her. Edgar’s actions in reinstating the correct will facilitate a peaceful conclusion to ‘Walnut-Tree House’ as the ghost is eliminated from the marital home and he and Mary are united in a relationship based on respect. This implies that the survival of the middle-class home is dependent on men and women’s financial and legal equality. Moreover, Edgar’s transformation from a ‘rough sort of fellow’ (‘WTH’, 5) to a man willing to share his fortune with his newly discovered family and the community surrounding him looks forward to a new era (and perhaps the birth of the New Man) after the Married Women’s Property Acts. Like Graham’s recognition in ‘The Old House in Vauxhall Walk’ that ‘mingled with all [...] there seemed to have been some lesson for him’ (‘OHVW’, 106), Edgar comes to the realisation that his attitudes towards money must change. Edmundson Makala argues that both Edgar and Graham

must use their supernatural encounters to create something more positive, something that breaks with a haunted, limiting past and provides them with the means of living more positive and productive lives, for the benefit of themselves and others. Only then can they begin to build the ‘ideal’, comfortable Victorian home.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Edmundson Makala, *Women’s Ghost Literature*, p. 112.

Thus, in centring her happy ending on the completion of the family unit, Riddell implies that it is men's relationship with and dominance of the family finances that must alter before equality between husband and wife will be realised.

*Weird Stories* concludes with the short story 'Old Mrs Jones'. As already identified, this tale differs somewhat from the others previously discussed (in part because the ghost poses a threat to the people who occupy the house and due to the female, rather than male, detective). Margree argues that the plot of 'Old Mrs Jones' echoes 'Frances Power Cobbe's warning that wife abuse was an inevitable consequence of a legal principle that established a husband in a position of effective ownership over his wife'.<sup>160</sup> Thus in this Sensation Gothic short story, Riddell can be seen to adumbrate a future issue that would occupy many New Woman writers: marital abuse.

Power Cobbe's article 'Wife-Torture in England' was published in 1878 during the height of the campaign for married women's property rights. In it she states that the

general depreciation of women *as a sex* is bad enough, but in the matter we are considering, the special depreciation of *wives* is more directly responsible for the outrages they endure. [...] Every brutal-minded man, and many a man who in other relations of life is not brutal, entertains more or less vaguely the notion that his wife is his *thing*.<sup>161</sup>

Similar imagery can be found within 'Old Mrs Jones' as Dr Jones is rumoured to have used a 'cutting whip' ('OMJ', 149) on Zillah in an attempt to control her. However, whereas Power Cobbe's article refers exclusively (and strategically) to the

<sup>160</sup> Margree, 'Other Worldly Goods', p. 77.

<sup>161</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, "'Wife-Torture in England'", *Contemporary Review* (April 1878), repr. in *'Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. by Susan Hamilton (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 111-44 (p. 117). Emphasis in the original.

‘artisan and labouring classes’, Riddell, like her later New Woman counterparts, situates domestic violence at the centre of the middle-class marital home.<sup>162</sup> As addressed in Chapter Two in relation to Mona Caird’s *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), this was a technique used by New Woman writers to comment on the continuing inadequacy of the law to protect women from their abusive husbands.<sup>163</sup> Zillah’s refusal to give her husband a ‘shilling of her money’ (‘OMJ’, 149) despite the fact this is what ‘he married her for’ (‘OMJ’, 137) infuriates Dr Jones who consequently assaults her. The ‘red mark round her throat’ (‘OMJ’, 141), visible to those who see her ghost, is evidence of the cruel treatment and violent death Zillah suffered at the hands of her husband. Margree argues that in ‘linking the bondage and abuse that some women suffered within the home, to legal arrangements around property in marriage, Riddell was [...] revealing how relationships in the so-called “private” sphere were shaped by decisions made in the “public”’.<sup>164</sup> Like her New Woman counterparts, Riddell can be seen using her fiction to advocate for changes in the legal position of married women.

Despite the forthcoming legal alterations to married women’s property rights, Riddell echoes the rhetoric of the Married Women’s Property Committee by using the four haunted house stories contained within *Weird Stories* to suggest that a dramatic transformation of the marriage relationship was still needed before husbands and wives could enjoy financial equality. Riddell, writing at a moment of great legal change, demonstrates that women’s financial dependency is not only a result of the law but also men’s attitude to money. Indeed, apart from in ‘Old Mrs

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<sup>162</sup> Power Cobbe, ‘Wife-Torture in England’, p. 113.

<sup>163</sup> The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878 attempted to solve this issue by granting abused wives the right to legally separate from their husbands. However, due to women’s economic dependency, divorce was often not an option for the majority of women.

<sup>164</sup> Margree, ‘Other Worldly Goods’, pp. 77-8.

Jones', she shows that harmony can only be reinstated into the character's lives and the middle-class marital home when the male protagonists prioritise the family over their desire for individual wealth. Thus, it is emotional, not financial, profit that Riddell celebrates.

### **Conclusion**

A genre which from its inception has been used to express contemporary anxieties, the Gothic mode enabled Sensation and New Woman writers to produce a gender-aware commentary that protested against the legal and socio-political injustices faced by women. By drawing on Gothic motifs like the haunted house, transgressive femininity and the trope of the haunted body to introduce topical issues such as venereal disease and married women's property rights into their specifically Gothic fiction, these authors demonstrate a shared interest in examining and exposing controversial and often taboo issues at the heart of Victorian society. Consequently, the largely unrecognised sub-genres of Sensation Gothic and New Woman Gothic can be seen to play an important role in the literary fight for gender equality, as well as to further blur the boundaries between Sensation and New Woman fiction.

Despite the term being coined by Freeman and then somewhat conceptualised by Murphy, New Woman Gothic has not previously been recognised as a separate and distinctive sub-genre. Likewise, Sensation Gothic, in part due to the conflation of the two genres, has also not been distinguished from realist Sensation fiction containing distinctly gothic tropes. Although academic criticism is beginning to take note of gothic writing by authors such as Ellen Wood, Charlotte Riddell, Rhoda Broughton and Edith Nesbit, its failure to identify the connection between these

authors and their association with two popular genres of the mid- to late-nineteenth century means the significance of these specifically Sensation and New Woman Gothic stories and their radical message has been overlooked.

Recognising the popularity of the Gothic literary mode and the political message connected to these tales, Sensation and New Woman writers turned to this genre in order to expand the limits of their realist literature. For example, unlike Sensation fiction which centralises female transgression, the focus in Riddell's Sensation Gothic, as in New Woman fiction, is on crimes committed *against* (not by) women. This provides a clear indication of Sensation Gothic anticipating the main strategies of the later genre as it attempts to generate a reaction in its readers by emphasising the legal injustices affecting women. New Woman Gothic can similarly be seen to look back to the previous genre as it draws on its readers' emotions by sensationalising the political message of its realist fiction. Although New Woman writers were already including contentious discussions in their realist fiction, the popularity and reception of the Gothic genre granted them a new kind of power as it enabled them to appeal to a different, and perhaps wider, audience. Similarly defined by their concentration on the feminine experience, Sensation and New Woman Gothic share a concern with capturing women's fears and desires. Yet there is a central difference between these sub-genres which is important to acknowledge: Sensation Gothic focuses on illuminating issues of gender through the politicised disruption of the domestic realm (typically through the use of the haunted house), whereas New Woman Gothic uses women's bodies to engage with gender-based socio-political issues marginalised by realist discourses. In part this distinction mirrors the concerns of other contemporary Gothic fiction, yet it also reinforces the public/private split that characterises Sensation and New Woman realist fiction.

While controversy is at the centre of these Sensation and New Woman Gothic adaptations, in comparison the endings of the realist novels often appear unsatisfactory as women are re-inscribed in patriarchal bounds or punished for their transgression. However, on closer inspection, the endings of Sensation and New Woman novels often are more subversive than they at first appear.

## Conclusion

### The Problem with Endings

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After all that we three have suffered together, [...] there can be no parting between us, till the last parting of all. My heart and my happiness, Walter, are with Laura and you. Wait a little till there are children's voices at your fireside. I will teach them to speak for me, in *their* language; and the first lesson they say to their father and mother shall be—We can't spare our aunt!

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (1859)<sup>1</sup>

The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass; they knew that their hour had come. She raised one hand and pressed the stiff fingers against the glass. They were growing very stiff. She tried to speak to it, but she would never speak again. The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth.

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)<sup>2</sup>

The heroines presented at the endings of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859) and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) appear in sharp contrast to the resilient and iconoclastic female protagonists depicted in the quotations used as the epigraphs to this thesis' Introduction. By the novels' conclusions, both Marian Halcombe and Lyndall have, to differing extents, seemingly succumbed to the pressures of nineteenth-century patriarchal society as they are either domesticated or written out of the text completely. Yet *The Woman in White* and *The Story of an African Farm* are not unique in their punitive outcomes. Indeed the endings of Sensation and New Woman fiction rarely prove to be 'happy' for the heroine. Instead they appear to delimit her rebellion by confining her to a male-defined sphere or by removing her to the textual margins. This is evidenced by

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, *The Woman in White*, p. 621. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, p. 252.

the majority of the texts studied throughout this thesis which conclude with either the heroine's death (*Taken by the Flood* [1874] and *A Superfluous Woman* [1894]), a resignation to marriage and domestic life (*No Name* [1862] and *The Daughters of Danaus* [1894]), a loss of narrative voice (*The Woman in White* [1859] and *The Heavenly Twins* [1893]) or uncertainty regarding the future of the heroine ('The Man with the Nose' [1872] and *The Wing of Azrael* [1889]).<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the endings of Sensation and New Woman fiction have traditionally been read as dramatising the heroine's punishment for her earlier transgressions. Abeer Zahra argues that the 'pressure of the age's ideologies on the sensation novel [are] clear in the genre's conformist endings. The heroines rebelled, transcended, only to fall back, almost always at the moment of self-fulfilment, and their rebellion seldom achieves positive consequences'.<sup>4</sup> Like Sensation fiction, New Woman literature is similarly confronted with the problem of finding a satisfactory resolution for its feminist heroines that 'convincingly portrayed the heroine's chances of happiness either outside the dangers of marriage [...] or within a sexual union which did not compromise her feminist ideals'.<sup>5</sup> In her discussion of the endings of New Woman novels, Ann Ardis claims that there are two kinds of 'retreats' for the New Woman:

the 'boomerang' plotting of novels [such as Elizabeth Robins' *George Mandeville's Husband* (1894) and Lucas Cleeve's (pseudonym of

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<sup>3</sup> This is adapted from Robyn Penrose, the protagonist in David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) who argues that 'in short, all the Victorian novelist could offer as a solution to the problems of industrial capitalism were: a legacy, a marriage, emigration or death'. *Nice Work* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Abeer Zahra, 'The Construction of Womanhood in Victorian Sensation Fiction, 1860-70' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 1990), p. 41. Patrick Brantlinger also contends that the 'subversive tendencies of novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret* are reined in by their endings, which restore order, reward virtue, and punish villainy'. *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Emma Liggins, 'Writing against the "husband-fiend": Syphilis and Male Sexual Vice in the New Woman Novel', *Women's Writing*, 7.2 (2000), 175-195 (p. 183).

Adeline Kingscote) *The Woman Who Wouldn't* (1895)] that punish New Women for their political and artistic ambitions and the representation of honourable retreat in self-reflexive novels [including Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899) and Gertrude Dix's *The Image Breakers* (1900)] about the antagonism New Women encounter as they pursue their utopian visions.<sup>6</sup>

Yet neither Zahra nor Ardis offer an explanation for the genres' unsatisfactory endings. In contrast, I suggest that the difficulty faced by Sensation and New Woman writers when concluding their novels is best summed up in an episode in Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) when Mary Erle's editor instructs her that women are meant to write 'breezy book[s] with a wedding at the end'.<sup>7</sup> This implies that to create a 'happy' alternative ending for the radical heroine, (women) writers had to overcome gender-based literary stereotypes and contest nineteenth-century society's view of marriage as the ultimate objective in a woman's life.

As Alison Booth observes, 'endings conventionally are the most emphatic and often the most memorable parts of novels, and they are often the most notorious or critically famed parts as well'.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it seems paradoxical that Sensation and particularly New Woman writers given the intention of their literary message would choose to end their novels with the failure of the heroine. In her consideration of nineteenth-century narrative endings, Rachel Blau DuPlessis claims that 'authors went to a good deal of trouble and even some awkwardness to see to it that *Bildung*

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<sup>6</sup> Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 165. Ardis asserts that this latter 'retreat' sustains the New Woman protagonist's 'commitment to radical politics and unwomanly artistic ambitions, yet [...she is] also made to understand the intensity of the world's desire that these ambitions not be satisfied'. Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>7</sup> Ella Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of a Modern Woman*, ed. by Steve Farmer (London: Broadview Press, 2004), p. 147.

<sup>8</sup> Alison Booth, 'Introduction: The Sense of Few Endings', in *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure*, ed. by Alison Booth (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), pp. 1-32 (p. 2).

and romance could not coexist and be integrated for the heroine at the resolution'.<sup>9</sup> She maintains that novels from this period had 'one main mode of resolution: an ending in which one part of that contradiction, usually quest or *Bildung*, is set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or by death'.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, DuPlessis argues that

it is the project of twentieth-century women writers to solve the contradiction between love and quest and to replace the alternative endings in marriage and death that are their cultural legacy from nineteenth-century life and letters by offering a different set of choices. They invent a complex of narrative acts with psychosexual meanings, which will be studied here as 'writing beyond the ending'.<sup>11</sup>

I contend that what DuPlessis terms 'writing beyond the ending' was already visible in Sensation and New Woman fiction in part because, as Joanne Frye notes, while the 'conventions of literary narrative *can* act as an enclosing grid, a set of constraining interpretive paradigms that foreclose women writers' access to new interpretations of experience', they can also 'through the subversive voices of those same women', develop 'new conventions [...] in response to the presence of discordant information in the lives of women'.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on these various critical perspectives, I argue that the endings of Sensation and New Woman fiction (even when they result in marriage or death), including those of *The Woman in White* and *The Story of an African Farm*, are more subversive and offer a more positive reading than has to date been acknowledged.

*The Woman in White* concludes with an image of Marian holding in her arms the new heir of Limmeridge, Walter Hartright and Laura Fairlie's baby. The

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<sup>9</sup> Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 3. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Joanne S. Frye, *Living Stories, Telling Lives: Women and the Novel in Contemporary Experience* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986), p. 32. Emphasis in the original.

narrative refers to her as an ‘angel’ (WIW, 627) invoking associations with the ideology of the Angel of the House. This is the fate of the majority of Sensation heroines including the eponymous heroine in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Aurora Floyd* (1863) who initially defies social conventions and the nineteenth-century sexual code but by the end of the novel is domesticated: ‘we leave Aurora, a little changed, a shade less defiantly bright, perhaps, but unspeakably beautiful and tender, bending over the cradle of her first-born’.<sup>13</sup> As exemplified by Aurora, Sensation heroines typically begin novels by threatening to destroy the respectability of the middle-class home and so must either be punished (as in *Lady Audley’s Secret* [1862] this typically involves the heroine’s death) or domesticated in order for the novel to end ‘happily’. However, Collins subverts reader expectations. Despite Marian’s apparent domestication and Tamar Heller’s claim that Marian’s voice is ‘coloniz[ed]’ by Walter and Count Fosco’s narratives in the second half of the novel, Lillian Craton maintains that Marian’s ‘female masculinity offer[s] another way to circumvent [...] retrenchment’.<sup>14</sup> She argues that Marian’s depiction as a masculine woman makes a ‘compelling case for an expansion of the allowable roles and desirable traits available to women within Victorian ideology’.<sup>15</sup> Thus, rather than being marginalised, Marian’s central role within Walter and Laura’s lives (as demonstrated by the first epigraph it is Marian who will give the children their perspective on life) enables her to demonstrate that there is a place for unconventional femininity within the middle-class bourgeois home.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, ed. by P. D. Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 459.

<sup>14</sup> Tamar Heller, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 134; Lillian Craton, *Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Difference in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction* (New York: Cambria Press, 2009), p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136.

Interestingly, given the advances of the New Woman genre in other aspects, the endings across the two genres are surprisingly similar. Alexandra Warwick notes that as in the Sensation novel, in New Woman fiction a ‘familiar end for the transgressive woman [...is] madness and death’.<sup>16</sup> It is the latter of these which is the fate of Schreiner’s New Woman heroine. After the loss of her illegitimate child, Lyndall suffers a slow and painful death isolated from her family and friends with only Gregory Rose, disguised as a woman, to nurse her. Lyndall dies without achieving her feminist ambitions of gaining a proper education or personal and sexual liberation and thus it appears that Schreiner ends her novel without providing an optimistic resolution for the New Woman.

Yet death in the New Woman novel does not always serve as a punishment for the transgressive heroine but, as DuPlessis notes, can represent a ‘symbolic protest against the production of a respectable female and the connivances of a respectable community’.<sup>17</sup> This is the case in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899) where death provides welcome release for its heroine.<sup>18</sup> As Edna Pontellier becomes conscious of an identity outside of her role as wife and mother, she determines that she is ‘not going to be forced into doing things’ any longer.<sup>19</sup> The novella ends with her swimming out to sea in an act of sensuous suicide: ‘the water of the Gulf

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<sup>16</sup> Alexandra Warwick, ‘Introduction’, in *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899: Mona Caird, The Wing of Azrael (1889)*, ed. by Alexandra Warwick, part I, vols 1-3 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), vol. 3, pp. vii-xxii (p. xix).

<sup>17</sup> DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Other examples include Eliza Lynn Linton’s *The Rebel of the Family* (1880) where Perdita Winstanley feels herself drawn to the waters depths: ‘the longing for rest was growing in her heart; the strange fascination of those calm waters was increasing. To make one step only, and to be borne away to eternity and peace!—to hold out her arms and fling herself on to that quiet breast and there to fall asleep as a tired child, never to wake up to sorrow, to despair, to passion or wrong-doing! All that was about her faded from her sight—she knew only the quiet waters flowing there, whispering to her to come with them to her home, to find in their depths her own eternal rest’. Eliza Lynn Linton, *The Rebel of the Family*, ed. by Deborah T. Meem (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 134-5.

<sup>19</sup> Kate Chopin, ‘The Awakening’, in *The Awakening and Selected Stories*, ed. by Sandra M. Gilbert (London: Penguin Group, 2003), pp. 43-176 (p. 171).

stretched out before her, gleaming with the million lights of the sun. The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude'.<sup>20</sup> Drawn towards the sea, Edna's death, much like the portrayal in Eliza Lynn Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* (1880) and Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), is surprisingly affirmative and associated with maternal and sensual imagery—'the touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace'—that implies death, depicted as a metaphorical rebirth, will be the start of her freedom rather than the end of it.<sup>21</sup>

Lyndall's death can likewise be read as a positive act as it serves to free her from succumbing to patriarchal rules.<sup>22</sup> The final image of Lyndall's soul gazing forth, as quoted in the second epigraph, looks forward to a future in which her dreams will become attainable. This final image of hope (and coming womanhood) is also present in Schreiner's allegorical short story 'Three Dreams in a Desert' (1890) which depicts three different phases of female liberation through the dreams of the nameless female protagonist. Ann Heilmann argues that the protagonist's 'potential to [...] act as a catalyst for wider social change, is directly contingent on her willingness to embrace personal defeat and even annihilation'.<sup>23</sup> Lyndall undergoes a similar realisation as in her final moments she comes to comprehend that although 'there was no future' (*SAF*, 252) for her, the 'vision of a poor weak

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 175.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> Andrzej Diniejko similarly contends that Lyndall's 'death can be interpreted almost as an act of deliberate self-annihilation in order not to be overcome by the oppressive patriarchal white community. Lyndall's experiment with new womanhood has failed because her ideas of marriage and gender relations were too advanced for the time and place she lived in'. Andrzej Diniejko, 'Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* as an Early New Woman Novel', *Victorian Web*, <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/schreiner/diniejko.html>> [accessed 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018].

<sup>23</sup> Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, and Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 126.

soul striving after good [...] was not cut short; [...] it learnt, through tears and much pain [...] that] happiness is a great love and much serving' (*SAF*, 249).

To pull the different strands of the thesis together, this chapter will consider the endings of Sensation and New Woman fiction in order to explore whether the ostensibly punitive outcomes can be read as acts of feminist subversion or merely as an inadvertent return to the patriarchal framework. Attention will first be turned to Sensation fiction and the authors' rewriting of women's fates before the focus moves to New Woman novels which subvert expectations by providing the New Woman figure with a happy ending. The final section will bring together the thesis argument to reach a conclusion regarding the extent to which Sensation and New Woman literature blur, or cross, temporal and conceptual boundaries.

### **Rewriting the Sensation Heroine's Fate**

While the majority of Sensation novels end with 'virtue rewarded and vice apparently punished', Florence Marryat's *The Prey of the Gods* (1871) destabilises these expectations.<sup>24</sup> A retelling of Ellen's Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), *The Prey of the Gods* centres on the loveless marriage of Lyster and Gwendoline Gwynne and her subsequent love affair with the reckless poet, Auberon Slade. Although the novel initially follows the model of *East Lynne* with Gwendoline and Auberon making plans to elope together, the narrative diverges when Gwendoline's daughter, Daisy, is injured in a fall and Gwendoline resolves not to abandon her maternal duty. In response to Gwendoline's decision not to run away with him, Auberon hastily marries; however, on the day of his wedding, Lyster dies leaving Gwendoline a free

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<sup>24</sup> Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson*, p. 145.

woman. She subsequently removes herself to the countryside to live with her daughter and flourishes in her newfound independence. Conversely, in a gendered role reversal, Auberon is punished with an unfulfilling marriage to a dull and unintellectual woman. The novel concludes with Gwendoline and Auberon meeting again in France after a gap of ten years. Auberon's wife has died in childbirth leaving him with two sickly children and Daisy is fully recovered from her earlier injuries. It is only now when Auberon has proved himself worthy of Gwendoline's love (and she no longer has to care for her daughter) that she agrees to marry him.

Catherine Pope argues that 'Marryat subverts the traditional plot trajectory [...by having] the wicked (or morally questionable) prosper, whereas the virtuous (but dull) meet with an untimely end'.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Isabel Carlyle in *East Lynne* who is punished first by disfigurement and then death for her transgressions, Gwendoline is not chastised for her adulterous desire. Instead, as Pope notes, the novel 'rewards Lady Gwendoline with the death of her rebarbative husband and by a fulfilling relationship with her daughter'.<sup>26</sup> In comparison to New Woman fiction where the narrative point of view is sympathetic and understanding of female transgression, in Sensation literature this sentiment is characteristically absent at least until the very end of the novel when its impact is lessened. However, by allowing her protagonist to enjoy many happy years freed from the burden of her marriage, Marryat challenges the middle-class morality and sexual politics that Wood appears to have been so keen to uphold in her ending.

The conclusion of *East Lynne* ostensibly follows the conventions of the genre by punishing its heroine for her sins. After a disfiguring train accident which kills

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<sup>25</sup> Catherine Pope, 'The Regulation of Female Identity in the Novels of Florence Marryat' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2014), p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71.

her illegitimate child, Isabel returns to her former marital home disguised as a governess and nurses her son during his final illness before she herself dies. Yet the ending of *East Lynne* is itself not as simplistic as might first be imagined. While critics including Gail Walker have read the ending to represent a ‘sacrificial offering to the Victorian mythos of love, motherhood, and male sexuality’, Emma Liggins and Andrew Maunder argue that the punishment of the transgressive female figure ‘smacks of rebellion against the constraints of the respectable plot’.<sup>27</sup> They maintain that although the ‘adulterous Isabel Vane’s penitent decline is offered as an object lesson to other women’, the ‘apparently sympathetic but powerful lesson in the necessity of suppressing passion, and sexual desire’ also serve to emphasise nineteenth-century gender contradictions.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in its focus on Isabel’s suffering and repentance, narrative sympathy is created for the adulterous woman.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that there is one major difference between *East Lynne* and *The Prey of the Gods* which enables Marryat to construct a ‘happy’ ending for her protagonist.<sup>30</sup> This is that Gwendoline’s husband is a tyrant who cares little for Gwendoline or their child.<sup>31</sup> Although Marryat is quick to stress that their

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<sup>27</sup> Gail Walker, ‘The “Sin” of Isabel Vane: *East Lynne* and Victorian Sexuality’, in *Heroines of Popular Culture*, ed. by Pat Browne (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), pp. 23-31 (p. 29); Emma Liggins and Andrew Maunder, ‘Introduction: Ellen Wood, Writer’, *Women’s Writing*, 15.2 (2008), 149-56 (p. 151).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152. While Isabel is severely punished for leaving her husband and children, Francis Levison, the man with whom she elopes after he wrongly makes her jealous of her husband’s friendship with Barbara Hare, does not face the same treatment (he is, however, incarcerated for killing a man several years previously). Moreover, Isabel’s first husband is never criticised for his failure to trust his wife with the reason for his frequent meetings with Barbara.

<sup>29</sup> Sally Mitchell argues that *East Lynne* was a radical work for its time due to its sympathetic portrait of the adulterous wife and emphasis on her repentance and subsequent suffering. Sally Mitchell, ‘Introduction’, in Ellen Wood, *East Lynne* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. vii-xviii. Other critics who have explored the subversive characteristics of Wood’s ending include Andrew Mangham who maintains that the ending emphasises the ‘short-falls inherent to bourgeois masculinity’. Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 136.

<sup>30</sup> Gwendoline can also be rewarded with a ‘happy’ ending because, unlike Isabel, she does not actually commit adultery.

<sup>31</sup> In *East Lynne* this is reversed: Archibald Carlyle, Isabel’s first husband, deeply loves her, whereas Francis quickly abandons her after she becomes pregnant.

relationship is a ‘case of no hard blows or rough ill-treatment, not even of hard words or petty tyranny’, she also makes it clear that theirs is a marriage of convenience: ‘yet the great unfilled void, the aching sense of solitude which must make itself felt by every mind that yearns for sympathy, is eating into the core of, at least one of, the hearts thus unnaturally linked together’ (*PG*, 1.19). In comparison, although Auberon begins the novel as arrogant and presumptive of a woman’s love, his attraction for Gwendoline is based on a yearning to find another self who ‘cares for me, into whose bosom I may pour all my troubles without reserve; who will not get tired of me when I am in the vein for talking, nor interpret my silence as a lack of interest’ (*PG*, 1.162). It is interesting that in order to provide a satisfactory ending for her female protagonist, Marryat alters her hero’s characterisation to anticipate the emergence of the New Woman’s New Man. As explored in Chapter Three, this implies that happiness for the heroine is tied to this new masculinity.

Prefiguring depictions of relations between the New Woman and New Man, Gwendoline and Auberon’s love is based on an intellectual connection and their mutual love of literature: ‘she reads his manuscripts, suggests ideas to him; even attempts, beneath his supervision to string ideas together for herself’ (*PG*, 1.195). By making the lover the more desirable choice of partner, Marryat provides a rationale for her protagonist’s actions and shows that, in this case, the desire for adultery ultimately does lead to happiness. Of course, *The Prey of the Gods*’ ‘happy’ ending is somewhat contradictory as Gwendoline gives up the freedom she holds so sacred in favour of marrying Auberon. While marriage can be read as one of the ways in which authors discipline their heroines, DuPlessis notes that as a

gendered subject in the nineteenth century, [...the heroine] has barely any realistic options in work or vocation, so the heroism lies in self-

mastery, defining herself as a free agent, freely choosing the romance that nonetheless, in one form or another, is her fate. The female hero turns herself into a heroine; this is her last act as an individual agent.<sup>32</sup>

In making the conscious decision to marry Auberon only once he has come to atone for his previous arrogance regarding women, Gwendoline retains her agency. This is reiterated in Auberon's proposal which illustrates his need for her:

without you I have been nothing,—with you I feel I can do all things! If you will take me to your heart once more,—believe in me, and trust me as of old,—I shall rise upon the wings of my recovered faith till I reach the heights we dreamed of in our happy youth!' (PG, 3.309)

Moreover, as addressed previously, their marriage is based on intellectual compatibility not sexual connection, suggesting that, unlike her previous marriage, their relationship will be mentally fulfilling for Gwendoline. Gwendoline's rejection and then acceptance of Auberon is reminiscent of the endings of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) in which the women must first liberate themselves by rejecting their lovers. As in *The Prey of the Gods*, it is only once the men have been humbled (through either being maimed or bankrupted) that the heroines can finally accept them.

Another Sensation writer to challenge the conventional ending was Rhoda Broughton. After receiving the reader's report for Broughton's novel *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (1867), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Broughton's uncle by marriage, wrote to the publisher, Richard Bentley, stating his intention to 'write to you today advising your sending back to the author the last scene—for remodelling and careful

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<sup>32</sup> DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending*, p. 14.

revision—as on reading it I am satisfied it wd [sic] not do'.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the ending of *Not Wisely, but Too Well* was completely rewritten from the serial to the triple-decker version to alter the novel's outcome. The serial version of *Not Wisely, but Too Well* concludes at a party with Kate Chester and Dare Stamer re-encountering each other after she has failed to keep her promise to run away with him. After a long conversation in which Kate's fear of Dare is palpable, they go into the garden where Dare first shoots Kate and then himself. In contrast, the triple-decker version ends with Kate hearing that there has been a carriage accident and Dare has been mortally injured. Whilst nursing him during his final moments, Kate forgives him for his sins and prays for his happiness in the afterlife. She then proceeds to enter a religious sisterhood where she dies several years later.

Compared to the triple-decker which ends with Kate and Dare's reconciliation, the serial has Kate remonstrate with Dare not to ask her to marry him because 'I cannot do that, even for you; oh, ask me anything else, I cannot ruin my soul, even for you!'.<sup>34</sup> Sally Mitchell believes that this provides the clue for Broughton's alterations. She states that the 'book seems to imply that only fear of God keeps women chaste; that without religion Kate would listen to the animal promptings of her body'.<sup>35</sup> The continuous hints Broughton provides of Kate's awakened and active sexuality in the serial version suggests that she plays an equal

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<sup>33</sup> 'Appendix A: Correspondence from the Bentley Archives Relating to *Not Wisely, but Too Well*', in Rhoda Broughton, *Not Wisely, but Too Well*, ed. by Tamar Heller (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013), pp. 376-84 (p. 379). Broughton also made other changes to the novel which included a commitment to 'omit all the slang and coarseness of expression' and 'soften the violence of the situations'. *Ibid.*, p. 381. Broughton also extended the novel to three volumes by adding in several different passages to extend the novel to the length favoured by lending libraries.

<sup>34</sup> Rhoda Broughton, '*Not Wisely, but Too Well*', *Dublin University Magazine*, 68 (1866), 58-75 (p. 73).

<sup>35</sup> Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835-1880* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1981), p. 83.

part in her and Dare's unconventional relationship. In the following passage removed from the novel, the insinuations of a passionate encounter are unmistakable:

he *must* do it. The future be hanged! so he threw honour to one wind, prudence to a second, [...] and stretched out rash arms to take her to himself, to possess her utterly [...] that she should be his, and no other man's [...] How willing she was to sink away into his arms, and lie on his great, broad breast, [...] and be his for life and death [...] It was on the point of fulfilment now. His arms were closing round her, tighter, tighter.<sup>36</sup>

Kate's sexuality is plainly present in the serial; however, as Mitchell notes, the removal of incidents such as this one and the addition of a moralising commentary in the triple-decker version alter the original focus and largely remove Kate's bodily desire for Dare, leaving an imbalance in the remaining sexual scenes as only Dare is presented as being actively desiring. Nevertheless, Kate's declaration early in the novel that 'O, Dare, I'd do anything wicked, anything insane for you' (*NWTW*, 89) signals her sexual longing and desire to step outside the bounds of society to explore her sexuality. Thus, even in the reworked version, Kate's aversion to being with Dare is out of place with the rest of the text because prior to this, she has perceived there to be little justification not to run away with him (except when she initially discovers he is married). It is only through the effort of others that her elopement with Dare has been prevented.

In addition to altering Kate's characterisation, Broughton, like Marryat, also reworked her hero. In the original ending Dare is characterised as powerful and domineering, whereas in the novel, he is submissive. In the serial, Dare's 'sinister calm' is present throughout the final scene as he makes continual references to

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<sup>36</sup> Rhoda Broughton, 'Not Wisely, but Too Well', *Dublin University Magazine*, 66 (1865), 258-76 (p. 274). Emphasis in the original.

Kate's morality and pressures her into entering the fated garden.<sup>37</sup> However, in the reworked version he repeatedly questions Kate to ensure she is 'not afraid of me now [...] I shall never be able to harm you anymore' (*NWTW*, 368). Despite his prostrate body and impending death, Dare takes up a caring role to emphasise the purity of his love for Kate, thus removing the portrayal of love that was considered so 'dangerous' in the serial version. However, Dare's death also stops Kate transgressing and becoming his free lover. In authoring two endings for *Not Wisely, but Too Well*, Broughton demonstrates the struggle faced by Sensation writers when ending their novels, specifically the question of whether they should reinstate social conventions or celebrate their heroine's earlier transgressions. Ultimately, neither the ending of the serial nor the novel offers Kate happiness and although it may be argued that her punishment is lessened in the novel, she still suffers a metaphorical death as she is removed from society by her withdrawal to a convent. In contrast, Marryat's rewriting of the ending of *East Lynne* defies genre conventions by refusing to punish her transgressive heroine.

In offering a different ending for the socially rebellious heroine, *The Prey of the Gods* unsurprisingly faced a critical backlash, with the *Athenaeum* shocked that Marryat could 'justify [...] a story the whole of which hinges upon the hardship of adherence to the marriage vow'.<sup>38</sup> Like Marryat, Louisa May Alcott also subverts genre conventions in the ending to 'Behind a Mask' (1866); however, unlike Marryat, she does not opt for romantic denouement (in fact the protagonist explicitly resists the romance plot by rejecting multiple romantic advances). Instead, using her skills of physical and emotional manipulation, Jean Muir succeeds in her plans to marry the wealthy John Coventry and become Lady Coventry. Yet as has been

<sup>37</sup> Broughton, 'Not Wisely, but Too Well' (1866), p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> 'Novels of the Week', *Athenaeum*, (23<sup>rd</sup> September 1871), 397-8 (p. 398).

shown, even those novels which appear to obey genre conventions, such as *East Lynne*, contain ambiguity in their endings. Thus, these novels challenge modern critical assumptions regarding the conclusions of Sensation fiction and demonstrate that the genre is more subversive than it tends to be given credit for.

Like those of Sensation fiction, the endings of New Woman novels are surprisingly (to modern readers at least) unsatisfactory. Despite the novels' feminist premise, the denouements of New Woman novels rarely live up to this promise and typically involve the protagonist failing in her aspirations (whether these be literary, artistic, musical, political or professional) as the pressure of nineteenth-century gender ideology becomes too much before concluding with either her resignation to marital and domestic duties or her death. Grant Allen's anti-New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* (1895) parodies this failure by having Herminia Barton refuse to marry the man she loves because she considers marriage an 'assertion of man's supremacy over women. It ties her to him for life; it ignores her individuality'.<sup>39</sup> However, when her daughter discovers her illegitimacy, she rejects her mother and her ambitions for a society in which marriage is redundant, and drives Herminia to commit suicide knowing she has failed. Sally Ledger claims that the 'inability to think beyond heterosexual marriage as the only available route to happiness and fulfilment for women [...] explains the pessimism of most New Woman novels which reach an impasse on the marriage question'.<sup>40</sup> Yet there are several New Woman novels which offer a more positive outcome for the heroine and promote the New Woman's social ambitions.

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<sup>39</sup> Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (London: Grant Richards, 1908), p. 37. Regardless of her conviction, Herminia is obligated to assume the married prefix to avoid social repercussions.

<sup>40</sup> Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 22.

### **Happily Ever After: Looking to a Brighter Future**

George Egerton's *The Wheel of God* (1898) revolves around the life of Mary Desmond (later Marriott) from her childhood in Ireland, to her working life in New York and finally her married life in London. Despite Mary's earlier conviction that she 'would not marry when she grew up; she would paint, and stay with the mother' (WG, 29), she unwittingly comes to marry the 'feckless, selfish, laughter-loving' (WG, 360) drunkard doctor, Cecil Marriott. A similar premise is set up in George Paston's (pseudonym of Emily Morse Symonds) *A Writer of Books* (1898). Published the same year as *The Wheel of God*, Paston's novel has its author heroine, Cosima Chudleigh, marry the intellectually unsuited Tom Kingston with whom she determines to 'live happily ever after' (WB, 160) despite having no romantic feelings towards him. Both these novels centre around women trapped in unhappy marriages; however, their endings, somewhat surprisingly for New Woman novels, free the heroines from the claustrophobic confines of the marital home: Mary joins a community of writing women while Cosima pursues a literary career.

Married to a man she does not love, Cosima, like many other New Woman heroines, comes to believe that 'suffering was the common lot of women, [...] suffering was said to be the most stimulating of all experiences; perhaps it was really necessary that she should suffer in order that her imagination should ripen, her intellect develop' (WB, 180-1). Cosima marries Tom purely in the hope of gaining experience 'practically indispensable to the novelist' (WB, 147); however, she soon comes to repent this decision and her willingness to sacrifice herself and her ambitions once she discovers their lack of intellectual compatibility. According to Kelly Hulander, to 'make the heroic New Woman palatable to a reading public trained to associate womanhood with domesticity and self-sacrifice, these portrayals

of the female protagonist must blend the warrior archetype with that of the martyr'.<sup>41</sup> Cosima's willingness to sacrifice herself and her principles for the sake of others (and her art) serves to illustrate the need for women to break free from the social constraints of femininity in order to achieve happiness through independence. As well as emphasising the need for marriage to be founded on love, Paston's commentary on the detrimental impact of women's self-sacrifice extends to woman's professional ambitions as Cosima initially surrenders her ambition to write a novel that depicts life as it is.

Upon the completion of her first novel, Cosima visits a publisher only to be told, like Mary Erle in *The Story of a Modern Woman*, that before they can accept the novel she must 'make it end happily [...]. You must marry that young couple, instead of killing the girl' (*WB*, 106). Despite Cosima's protests that 'it's so much truer and more artistic for her to die' (*WB*, 106), she is forced to transform 'tragedy and tears into the conventional white satin, wedding-bells and prospective happiness' (*WB*, 109). While Cosima makes the changes her publisher suggests to her first novel leading to a lukewarm critical response, in her second novel at the encouragement of Quentin Mallory, a 'man of brain and culture [...with] whom it was possible to talk freely [...] with the assurance of the fullest comprehension and sympathy' (*WB*, 166), she refuses to make similar concessions.

*A Writer of Books* concludes with Cosima learning that Tom has been unfaithful to her. She consequently determines to leave him, stating that, 'if the law doesn't allow me to dissolve my marriage, why then I'll be a law unto myself. No

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<sup>41</sup> Kelly Hulander, 'The Physical Price of Freedom: Exhausted Protagonists and Urban Fellowship', in *New Woman Writers, Authority and the Body*, ed. by Melissa Purdue and Stacey Floyd (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 119-37 (p. 125).

woman has ever had a voice in making the laws, and therefore no woman is bound to obey them' (*WB*, 323). Tom's disloyalty teaches her that although

love may once have been a woman's whole existence, [...] that was when a skein of embroidery silk was the only other string to her bow. In the life of the modern woman, blessed with an almost inexhaustible supply of strings, love is no less episodic than in the life of a man. (*WB*, 341)

Paston suggests that Cosima's recognition that love is not the "lord of all" (*WB*, 341) gives her the strength and determination to focus on the novel she has always desired to write. It is as a result of this realisation that Cosima refuses to sacrifice herself or her art any longer. Maria Carla Martino reasons that 'novelists of the "New Realism" particularly disliked the happy endings demanded by the reading public and linked to conservative ideologies of sex, life, and gender', thus it is 'frequent to find these novels ending with the heroine's defeat, desolate loneliness, or death'.<sup>42</sup> Yet although it appears at first that the novel will end with the romantic union of Cosima and Quentin, Paston rejects literary expectations and instead has Cosima determine to devote herself to writing. The novel closes by looking forward to Cosima's professional success as she begins the novel that will be her masterpiece. Art, not love, is this New Woman's destiny.

Although, as stated previously, *The Wheel of God* is based on the similar premise of a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, in comparison to Paston, Egerton offers a different ending for her heroine. After the death of her husband in a carriage accident, Mary, now an independent woman, moves away from the city to join a community of three other women writers on the border of Buckinghamshire

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<sup>42</sup> Maria Carla Martino, 'Woman as Writer/Writer as Woman: George Paston's *A Writer of Books*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32.1 (2004), 223-38 (p. 233).

and Hertfordshire, the place where she first met Cecil: ‘in those three cottages “John Morton,” the journalist, and two other women were awaiting her coming’ (WG, 362). Compared to Mary’s married life which is marked by struggle and strife, the final chapter of *The Wheel of God* reinstates an atmosphere of calm and the ‘promise of life to come’ (WG, 362). Looking out over the setting of her new life, Mary imagines the valley to ‘stretch out to an illimitable plain, filled with myriads of women’ (WG, 363) and her

heart streamed out with a rush of infinite tenderness, of love and sorrow, to all these asking souls; and the tears that filled her eyes washed out every rest of bitterness, every trace of self-seeking, and a great peace gathered in her soul, and the question of her childhood, and maidenhood, and womanhood, seemed to be answered, and she stepped into the inheritance of her self. (WG, 363-4)

It is in this moment that Mary realises the purpose of her life’s sacrifices and discovers her independent self. The final vision of all womanhood spread out before Mary which implies that she has a salvific function is reminiscent of Schreiner’s short story ‘Three Dreams in a Desert’ in which the protagonist dreams of a land where ‘brave women and brave men [walk] hand in hand’ and the ‘women also hold each other’s hands’.<sup>43</sup> However, rather than unite men and women, Egerton, much as Sarah Grand does at the end of *Ideala* (1888), celebrates female union and emphasises the need for women to join together.

In her discussion of the novel’s ending, Donna Decker states that the ‘rich tableau Egerton offers as conclusion to Mary Desmond’s story supports th[e] belief

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<sup>43</sup> Olive Schreiner, *Dreams* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), p. 84.

[...that] female community is the next best thing to companionate marriage'.<sup>44</sup> As her life experiences 'seemed in some strange way to dovetail into a realisation of herself, that came to her there as she stood, enabling her to grasp, as it were for the first time, the very kernel of her being in the palm of her hand' (WG, 362-3), Mary finds purpose in her life. Paul March-Russell contends that by resisting the traditional ending of the Bildungsroman and the romantic or apocalyptic conclusion, Egerton's 'recourse is to myth'.<sup>45</sup> The utopian ending of *The Wheel of God* promotes a vision of self-discovery and freedom for the New Woman.

It is noteworthy that the moon figures in both these novels' concluding pages. In *The Wheel of God* a 'slender, crescent moon' (WG, 364) overlooks Mary on her journey to the women's community, while in *A Writer of Books* the moon, as Cosima gazes out of the window before beginning her next novel, 'shin[es] down on the chimney-pots with the broad indulgent smile of the mellowed philosopher, who knows that all the tragi-comedies of life have precisely the same ending' (WB, 344). Given the feminine symbolism of the moon, both these final images create the sense of a feminised space in which the heroine's future will be lived and this perhaps points to a burgeoning change in social gender hierarchy.

While *A Writer of Books* and *The Wheel of God* conclude with the heroines freeing themselves from the control of men by asserting their individuality, Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897) ends, surprisingly for a New Woman novel, with its

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<sup>44</sup> Donna Decker, 'Reading Books and Body: New Woman and Authority', in *New Woman Writers, Authority and the Body*, ed. by Melissa Purdue and Stacey Floyd (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 89-118 (p. 109).

<sup>45</sup> Paul March-Russell, 'Introduction', in *New Woman Fiction, 1881-1899: George Egerton, The Wheel of God (1898)*, ed. by Paul March-Russell, part III, vols 7-9 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), vol. 8, pp. vii-xix (p. xvii).

heroine finding love.<sup>46</sup> The first half of Grand's novel follows Elizabeth Caldwell, known as Beth, as she grows up, while the second half focuses on her marriage to Dr Daniel Maclure, a doctor in the local Lock hospital and a practising vivisectionist who is psychologically abusive to Beth. Like Mary and Cosima, Beth's marriage fails to live up to her expectations as she recognises that her husband views her only as an object he has purchased. Consequently, she declares that 'our marriage can never be a true marriage, the spiritual, intellectual, physical union of a man and a woman for the purpose of perfect companionship' (*BB*, 455). Interestingly, it is not the institution of marriage which Beth criticises, but Dan himself. Beth's views of marriage mirror those of Grand who considered marriage the 'most sacred institution in the world'.<sup>47</sup> However, Grand believed that only a 'true' marriage with a 'right-minded man' would allow a woman to prosper; a perspective that is clear throughout her fiction.<sup>48</sup> Thus, as Dan reveals himself 'trait by trait' (*BB*, 382), Beth recognises that it is he, rather than marriage itself, that is hampering her intellectual ambitions.

By the end of the novel Beth, like Cosima, has left Dan after discovering his infidelity and rents a small attic room in London, foreshadowing Virginia Woolf's vision in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), in order to pursue a literary career.<sup>49</sup> Beth continues with her literary pursuits largely in isolation until she discovers that the occupant of the adjacent room, Arthur Milbank Brock, an archetypal New Man, has

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<sup>46</sup> Ardis claims that alongside *The Beth Book*, Edith Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart* (1894) is the only other New Woman novel to end with an 'optimistic account of a New Woman artist's success'. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels*, p. 199. Dealing with themes of child sexual abuse and same sex desire, Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart* follows the lives of Gasparine O'Neill and Lotus Grace. Gasparine is rescued from poverty by Lotus, a teacher at the local Ladies' College who, after being sexually abused as a child, eventually finds love with a female student.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah A. Tooley, "'The Woman's Question: An Interview with Madame Sarah Grand'", *Humanitarian*, 1896, vol. 8, pp. 161-9', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 220-9 (p. 229).

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Grand, "'Does Marriage Hinder A Woman's Self-development?'", *Lady's Realm*, 1898-9, vol. 5, pp. 567-7', repr. in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, ed. by Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 119-20 (p. 120).

<sup>49</sup> Woolf famously argued that a 'woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Vintage, 2016), p. 4.

fallen dangerously ill. She then proceeds to nurse him to health using her own funds and never revealing what it costs her both financially and mentally. It is only after Arthur has left that Beth breaks down under the strain of the previous couple of months. While Arthur's illness turns him into a 'poor boy' (*BB*, 522) and thus removes any sexual threat he might pose (as discussed in Chapter Three, Grand employs a similar tactic with Diavolo in *The Heavenly Twins*), Beth 'derives an intangible moral authority from her quasi-maternal domestic role'.<sup>50</sup> By establishing Beth's dominance, Grand illustrates that their relationship challenges conventional gender roles; an important point in permitting the final union of Beth and Arthur.

During her convalescence, Beth joins a community of feminist activists where she finds success as a public speaker for the women's movement. Reminiscent of the ending of *Ideala* in which the protagonist determines that the 'only way to gain their [the women's movement's] end is by working for everybody else, with intent to make the whole world better', Beth finds that as she 'grew older, to live for others became more and more her ideal of life;—not to live in the world, however, or to be of it, but to work for it' (*BB*, 534).<sup>51</sup> However, despite this newfound purpose she finds 'something was wanting' (*BB*, 541). It is during the final scene of the novel that Beth discovers what this is:

a horseman came out from the farm, and rode toward her across the long field, deliberately. She watched him, absently at first, but as he approached he reminded her of the Knight of her daily vision, her saviour, who had come to rescue her in the dark days of her deep distress at Slane [...]. [S]uddenly Beth's heart throbbed and fluttered and stood still. [...] It seemed as if she ought to have known it from the first, known that he would come like that at last, that he had been coming,

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<sup>50</sup> Charlotte Boyce, "'Come buy, come buy...I have no copper in my purse": Hunger, Indulgence, Desire and Adulteration (1830-1898)', in *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*, ed. by Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 201-47 (p. 237).

<sup>51</sup> Sarah Grand, *Ideala*, ed. by Molly Youngkin (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008), p. 184.

coming, coming through all the years. [...] He was not the Knight of her dark days, however, this son of the morning, but the Knight of her long winter vigil—Arthur Brock. (*BB*, 541-2)

Evocative of medieval romances and their focus on chivalry (not least with Arthur's name), the ending of *The Beth Book* seemingly reinscribes the gender dynamics of medieval texts (the active man and the passive woman who waits to be rescued). Terri Doughty states that while the majority of the novel 'vividly and daringly portrays the protagonist's rebellion against the traditional female marriage plot, [...] its romantic ending fails to sustain resistance'.<sup>52</sup> However, this view does not consider the subversive undertones of Beth and Arthur's reunion.

Like Gwendoline and Auberon in *The Prey of the Gods*, Beth and Arthur's relationship is founded on an intellectual connection and therefore this indicates that their relationship will be mentally stimulating for Beth. Unlike the ending of *The Wheel of God* that fails to end with romance because the 'men we women of to-day need, or who need us, are not of our time' (*WG*, 363), Grand imagines a new masculinity. Despite the seemingly conventional romantic ending, Beth and Arthur's admiration for one another means that unlike the majority of New Woman heroines who are trapped in marriage, Beth is freed by her love for a New Man who will assist her in her ambitions. Although the outcome of Beth and Arthur's reunion is left somewhat vague, this is in itself significant. Carolyn Heilbrun maintains that 'for women, the only sane way to live through a romance is to live through it without closure. Marriage to a lover is fatal; lovers are not husbands'.<sup>53</sup> Thus, Grand's decision to end her novel with her protagonists meeting rather than their marriage

<sup>52</sup> Terri Doughty, 'Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*: The New Woman and the Ideology of the Romance Ending', in *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, ed. by Carol J. Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Albany: State of New York Press, 1993), pp. 185-96 (p. 185).

<sup>53</sup> Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (London: Women's Press, 1988), p. 87.

signals that Beth retains her individual agency. However, this open-ended resolution was also based on the fact that Grand could not conclude her novel with Beth and Arthur's marriage because Beth has not, and indeed cannot, divorce Dan. If Beth and Arthur were to get together, then Beth would be an adulteress and so the novel concludes with the implicit possibility of a free love relationship.

Unlike the majority of New Woman novels, all three novels discussed in this section end with the heroines having, through differing methods, overcome social and genre expectations to find happiness and purpose in their lives. In offering an alternative ending for the socially transgressive heroine, Grand, Egerton and Paston anticipate a brighter future for women and show, as Hulander notes, that the 'state of martyr-heroism is not a permanent one for the New Woman, but a phase through which she must pass before successfully completing her journey'.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, all three novelists break with genre tradition by ending with a final hopeful image that looks forward to a future in which the New Woman's aims will be achieved.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

As exemplified by my discussion of the endings of *Sensation* and *New Woman* fiction, this thesis has revealed the extent to which both genres blur and cross temporal and conceptual boundaries. By exploring five different aspects of comparison—socio-political engagement, femininity, masculinity, Gothic adaptations and endings—between the two genres in novels which, for the most part, have failed to attract critical attention, I have sought to expand upon previous critical

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<sup>54</sup> Hulander, 'The Physical Price of Freedom', p. 135.

assessments by demonstrating the wide-ranging impact these two popular yet controversial genres of the mid to late Victorian period had on one another.

At the start of this thesis I posed the questions ‘what is Sensation fiction?’ and ‘what is New Woman fiction?’ and then proceeded to propose the definition a novel-revealing-a-secret for Sensation literature and a novel-with-a-purpose for New Woman fiction. These definitions were designed to illustrate the overlap between the genres whilst at the same time pointing to their central difference. However, the texts used during the course of this thesis have frequently unmasked the slipperiness of genre boundaries and thus questioned my initial definitions: New Woman literature’s exploration of subjects including venereal disease and marital abuse *reveals* secrets hidden at the heart of Victorian society, while Sensation fiction’s engagement with contemporary discourse through its use of scandalous news stories as plot inspiration suggests a hidden *purpose* behind the genre’s disclosure of socio-political and gender inequalities.

Existing critical comparisons of Sensation and New Woman literature rarely stray from discussing the two genres’ depiction of problematic femininity. Thus, the crossover is understood to be based on the genres’ destabilisation of ‘dominant definitions of “woman” and her prescribed social and familial roles’ rather than Sensation and New Woman fiction’s shared challenge to a wide range of nineteenth-century ideologies.<sup>55</sup> During the course of this thesis, I have extended existing scholarship by illustrating that the comparison is more extensive than previously considered. I argue that it is in challenging Victorian ideologies that Sensation and New Woman literature blur and, to a certain extent, redefine genre paradigms. By

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<sup>55</sup> Lyn Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

demonstrating that some of the founding ideas of the New Woman campaign were already evident in Sensation literature, the importance of the earlier genre and the need to continue (re)investigating it have been established. Somewhat surprisingly given its huge contemporary popularity, Sensation fiction slipped from public consciousness until the feminist-led critical revival of the late twentieth century. In the study which gave birth to the initial idea behind this thesis, Lyn Pykett theorises that the disappearance of Sensation (and New Woman) fiction from critical discussion up until the end of the twentieth century was due to the ‘function of [...its] topicality’ that implicated it in the ‘immediate social and political issues of [...its] day’.<sup>56</sup> Yet this in itself makes Sensation literature an important point of study in relation to the nineteenth century and Victorian literature. Sensation fiction’s commentary on legal, social and gendered discriminations which prevailed long into the twentieth century reinforces its status as a genre sowing the seeds of discontent which were later harvested in New Woman fiction. Just as Sensation fiction anticipated some of the later feminist aspects of New Woman fiction, New Woman literature in turn looked back to the earlier genre for inspiration. Many New Woman writers including Ouida (*Held in Bondage* [1863]), Thomas Hardy (*Desperate Remedies* [1871]) and Sarah Grand (*Singularly Deluded* [1892]) began their literary careers by penning Sensation novels and so understood the importance of entertaining their readership alongside dealing with taboo and provocative subjects. Indeed, the topics New Woman literature deals with including marital abuse, effeminate masculinity and female sexuality are inherently sensational.

As well as probing the relationship between Sensation and New Woman fiction, a central aim of this thesis has been to uncover and give consideration to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 198; Ibid, pp. 198-9.

previously little-known writers and novels. By (re)discovering authors such as Florence Wilford who wrote the Sensation novel *Nigel Bartram's Ideal* (1868) as well as giving much deserved attention to neglected works by Felicia Skene, George Alfred Lawrence, Charlotte Riddell, Albert Eubule Evans, Annie Holdsworth, Edith Nesbit and George Paston amongst many others, the boundaries, and hence understanding, of the genres have been expanded. There is of course a lot more work to be done in this area and there are many authors and texts which have unfortunately been confined to this thesis' margins but bibliographies by Andrew Maunder and Maia McAleavey provide useful starting points for this area of academic interest.<sup>57</sup>

The chapters in this thesis have sought to illustrate the extent to which Sensation literature is a forerunner to the early development of the New Woman novel and in turn the impact Sensation fiction had on the New Woman genre. As detailed by critics Andrew Mangham and Ann Heilmann, Sensation and New Woman fiction are inherently hybrid genres whose vague boundaries invite questions as to their limits.<sup>58</sup> However, few critics have placed them alongside one another to investigate the extent to which their margins intersect. After all, Sensation and New Woman fiction were not viewed separately by contemporary audiences: Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ellen Wood, mainstays of the Sensation genre, continued to be read widely until the end of the century, and New Woman novelists such as Hardy and George Moore were first introduced to the reading public during the height of Sensation literature's popularity. As the (re)discovery of Sensation and New Woman

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Maunder, 'Bibliography of Sensation Fiction', in *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890*, ed. by Andrew Maunder, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 279-392; Maia McAleavey, *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 172-82.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Mangham, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1-6; Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

fiction continues I maintain that it will become increasingly important to understand the relationship between these two important genres of Victorian literature.

## Appendix

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**Florence Wilford, 'Albert Durer's Little Daughter',** *The Barnacle: Gosling Magazine*, 10 (1865), no page no., Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 823.99 318

'When winter had arrived, and the birds came thronging to the windows hungry and covered with snow, Albert Durer persuaded his child who was now nearly three years old that they came to greet her from old Father Winter, and remained soon to be hers, and that they were glad when she was neat and prettily dressed. Then the father could write for she sat at the window for hours, nicely dressed in her mother's golden hood, in order that the sparrows might rejoice over her. [Illegible] when he described to her the distress of the poor birds, and how cold they were she then sewed a little warm coat for the snow-king, which indeed was never finished, for the child had no heart, and always came through!' An Artist's married Life.

'Greet thee well, thou little maidens,  
Greet thee blithely through the snow,  
Though its white wreaths which much eddy,  
Though the cold winds round us blow,

Still we flutter at the casement,  
Where thy small fair face is seen,  
Flaxen-haired, and golden hooded,  
Blue-eyed, smiling, and serene.'

'Greet ye well, my bonnie birdies,  
From old Father Winter sent,  
Do you see how still I'm sitting?  
Do you mark my face content?

And the gold hood of the mother  
Soft of feel, and bright of hue  
Which she wears on festal Sundays,  
Seems it beautiful to you?

Hush your flutterings little birdies,  
For the father must be still;  
Tis a picture of the Christ Child  
Which he paintette with such skill.

Do ye see the growing glory  
Round the Infant Head Divine?  
Not the gold hood of my mother  
Does so brightly softly shine.

Be content my bonnie birdies,  
Ye shall have warm robes soon,  
See the gay coat I am sewing

For the snow-king to float on!

Will ye tell him that ye found me  
Neat and smiling, good and bright?  
For my father say the snow-king  
Trys to hear of such a sight.'

So the little maiden sitteth  
Sewing with a [illegible] thread  
Still and pure, and sweet and gentle,  
With the bright hood on her head:

And the little flaxen ringlets  
[Illegible] and flow in simple grace,  
Shading over the infant forehead  
Waving round the dimpled face.

Winds are whistling at the window,  
[Illegible] harshly through the snow,  
But the bright fire in the chamber  
Warms the maiden with its glow,

Throws a radiance round her temples,  
Lights the fair hair into gold,  
Makes her like marble [illegible] figures  
In illumined books of old.

In the gloom the father sitteth,  
The ray on the canvass thrown  
Shows the form of [illegible] beauty  
[Illegible] those practiced fingers grown.

See ye not the reverence lowly  
In the noble painter's brow.  
As the blessed Babe of Mary  
Looks from out the canvass now?

Thus he turns him, fond and eager,  
To his little damsel bright,  
Sees the radiance falling on her,  
Flickering over her robes of white,

And in heart says 'Son of Mary,  
If so pure this child of mine,  
Who can trace the wondrous pureness  
Burning from thy brows Divine?

If so sweet her simple graces,  
What must then those smiles have been  
In the [illegible] cottage

On the lips of Jesus seen!'

So still purer grows and purer  
All the painter's manly heart,  
So to higher aspirations  
Chiefly his wonder-working art.

Ye who see the pure aspirations  
Shining through the shapes of dread  
Which have made the name immortal  
Of this painter, long since time dead:

Think while he aspired and laboured  
Sat his [illegible] guileless by,  
Silent messenger to teach him  
Of the [illegible] them High.

Think that thus could little children  
Ever lead our hearts above,  
If like hers their playful fancies  
Were all [illegible] and love.

Turk's-cap.

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**Florence Wilford, 'The Men and Women of Books',** *The Barnacle: Gosling Magazine*, 17 (1867), no page no., Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 823.99 322

I am told that in the cheap romances which are the delight of hundreds of uneducated people, and in which effete members of the aristocracy are always committing unheard of crimes, and Lord [illegible] is always pushing aside the raven curls which cluster over his high pale brow—the [illegible] instances may be [illegible] of the discrepancy which exists between the men and women of books, and the men and women of such life, but setting these aside, I think we may often discover in the more refined fictions which from our own light reading enough difference between book-people and such people to afford us a good deal of amusement.

It is not so much in appearance that they differ as in other things, but yet something may be said even about that, and certainly after a perusal of a course of [illegible] novels one is left with a [illegible] and totally false impression that all notable people are either strikingly beautiful or pathetically ugly; and that to be decently goodlooking stamps a person at once as an inferior being. Formerly all heroines were obliged to be beautiful, now they are sometimes allowed to be plain, but even when their other features are bad they [illegible] have fine eyes, (novelists seem to despair of interesting one in a heroine with small eyes, and it does not sound attractive, yet I have seen some very pretty people whose eyes were by no means large) and it may be observed that if they begin [illegible] or ugly in the first volume they almost always improve as the story goes on, and often turn out positively handsome or lovely in the third, [illegible] '[illegible] Deane', 'Daisy Burns', and others. Perhaps the most trying of all heroines is the one with 'violet eyes, and hair of burnished gold'. Violet eyes do not seem to be so much de rigueur now as they were once, but golden hair—dead gold, not gold, pale gold, shimmering gold—is in more triumphant abundancy than ever, and the particularly wicked heroines who cheat and murder and commit suicide generally I believe have golden ringlets which they have a trick of 'shaking' in a playful childlike way, which seems [illegible] supposed to be very engaging. The better sort of golden haired people wear their hair in bands, and are usually compared to Raphael's Madonnas, and 'the fiend Mrs Tillotson'—I who believe is really innocent and good though I never finished the story—besides being like a Madonna is always looking 'devout' without any particular [illegible], and at times, when one would have thought a [illegible] expression would have been more appropriate. Some of the damsels with the red-gold locks have a way it appears of looking like panthers and one even gets called 'the panther' occasionally instead of her proper name. She must have been an unmistakably unpleasant person to meet with, and I gratefully [illegible] that I have never yet seen anybody at all like her.

These sort of damsels seldom 'speak' upon great occasions, they generally 'wail', (an [illegible] trick which perhaps the panthers brought over with them!) but wailing is not confined to them, for Mrs Henry Wood's heroines wail, and so do Miss Braddon's, even when they are very gentle ladylike beings, with no

resemblance to panthers at all. Almost everybody's heroines have small hands,—Theodora in 'Heartsease' is a notable exception,—but that is pardonable so long as they are not 'fairy-like', [rest of sentence illegible].<sup>1</sup> When their feet are described at all, they are small too, and they generally wear '[illegible]' which I suppose is a [illegible] rendering of the [illegible] commonplace 'boots'.

It is in their [illegible] however that book people differ most [illegible] from the Mr Browns and the Mrs Smiths of their own circle of acquaintance, they seem in fact to have terms of expression quite peculiar to themselves. Thus in Mrs Henry Wood's stories people are always saying 'Deem not that I shall [illegible] so and so', or, 'Do you deem it well that Alice should [illegible]?' whereas I put it to the Goslings whether any ordinary mortal ever uses the word 'deem' at all, except perhaps upon special occasions when they 'deem it their duty' to do or say something or other, generally something disagreeable. And did any nobleman that ever existed except in Mrs Henry Wood's pages, even [illegible] his own, even upon a special occasion, after this fashion—'Geoffrey Herbert Dane, styled the Honourable'? Or are nobleman usually described except in the passage as 'Harold, seventh Earl of so and so'? In a story now coming out in the Churchman's Family Magazine the only one of our Earl's is spoken of and spoken to sometimes as 'Lord Thalberg', sometimes as 'Lord Charles Thalberg', it seems to be a case of 'whichever you please, my little dears', and I remember reading rather a pretty book for young people in which one of the characters was sometimes called Lady Fairfax (no I don't think that was the name, but nevermind), and sometimes Lady Emily Fairfax, and was [illegible] by her own butler in her own home.<sup>2</sup>

[...]

How few heroines are allowed to have good mothers! And how many are privileged to possess infallible parish-clergymen, who would be very instructive if they were not to tedious, and who now that they haunt actual novels less than formerly reign all the more supremely over 'Stories for the Parochial Library' and bestow elaborately good advice upon impossible [illegible] whose own wisdom is only found to that of their pastor! [...]

The attached old [illegible] of fiction is dying out, but the confidential lady's maid—always a very trying personage—still figures in sensation novels and helps to poison somebody or intrigues with the [illegible] groundkeeper, and generally turn 'things' evidence at the last moment and assumes somebody, most frequently her mistress. Why is it that servants in books are made to speak so ungrammatically? (I am not perfectly guiltless in this matter myself, and am seized with a sudden remembrance of the point about 'glasshouses'). Respectable servants in real life

<sup>1</sup> Heartsease, or The Brother's Wife is a novel by Charlotte Mary Yonge published in 1854.

<sup>2</sup> The *Churchman's Family Magazine* was established and edited by John Hogg in 1863 and ran until 1873. It offered a combination of fiction, poetry and short articles addressing issues connection with the Anglican Church. Alice, not Emily, Fairfax is the kind, elderly housekeeper of Thornfield Hall in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847).

generally [illegible] themselves fairly well, sometimes even remarkably well, and [illegible] ever perpetuate those gross blunders which novelists attribute to them. I suppose it is by way of supplying a mildly comic element that the cooks and butlers of stories are made to say such very odd things: who can tell how much bad and unreal writing is attributable to the misguided idea that one must try to be funny? Novelists are sometimes very funny when they least mean to be so: which of us has not sometimes laughed over a passage which the authors intended to be particularly heartrending? [...] On the whole I think heroes are less odd than heroines, but how it is that when a hero is going to break his leg, or shoot himself through the arm or otherwise come to grief, he can always continue to select for the [illegible] of his incidents the neighbourhood of some house where a lovely girl [illegible] with whom he can presently fall in love, and [illegible] to be too far from his own home to make it safe for him to be conveyed thither? I leave this and other mysteries to be solved by the Goslings, feeling that I shall become tedious if I try any more, even if I have not been so already. Turkscap.

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