

Serializing Sensation: The Dynamics of Genre in Victorian Popular Fiction

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Julie Bizzotto, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: 6 January 2012

Abstract

‘Serializing Sensation’ examines the correlation between two major trends of the mid-nineteenth century: sensation fiction and periodical serialization. The project studies five popular novels published during the 1860s and early 1870s within the original periodicals in which they were first published, evaluating how periodical location influenced contemporary readings and interpretations of the texts. Specifically, the study examines how the distinctive structure and identity of a periodical – its range of articles, the type of fiction it published, its readership – heightened, augmented, subverted, or enhanced the sensational attributes of the serialized novels. By doing so, the study endeavours to reconsider standard interpretations of the sensation genre and develop new methodological approaches to studying and evaluating the sensation novel. Overall, in reading the novels intertextually with the periodicals, the project aims to gain a more developed understanding of how the sensation genre engaged with some of the major cultural discourses of the period.

By incorporating a mix of well-known novels and lesser-known texts, as well as a range of journals spanning from the popular to the political, the cross-sectional, comparative approach of the study allows the project to extend beyond authors, novels, and periodicals characteristically associated with the sensation genre. The variety of novels also provides a concentrated scrutiny of the sensational narrative techniques popularized in the 1860s, as well as the scope to examine how sensational methodology was rewritten and revised as the sensational sixties gave way to the 1870s.

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Introduction

Sensation Fiction: From Scandalous to Scholarly

In 1862 Margaret Oliphant commenced her review of the ‘new school in fiction’, the sensation novel, by comparing the 1862 International Exhibition to the Great Exhibition of 1851, remarking, ‘We repeat the celebration with very different thoughts. It is a changed world in which we are now standing’.¹ Oliphant’s comparison registered the shift from the hopeful idealism of the 1850s, embodied in the Great Exhibition, to the febrile environment, one obsessed with ‘excitement too high pitched for comfort’, that marked the early 1860s (565). With the onset of such events as the Crimean War (1853-1856) and American Civil War (1861-1865), the British public, in Oliphant’s estimation, became inured to the ‘distant sound of guns’ that formed a ‘thrilling accompaniment’ to daily life (565). Oliphant subsequently notes that ‘it is only natural that art and literature, should, in an age which has turned to be one of events, attempt a kindred depth of effect and shock of incident’ (565). Oliphant’s assessment links the emergence of the sensation novel with the restless mood of the early 1860s, averring, ‘In the little reflected worlds of the novel and drama the stimulant has acted strongly’ (565). To Oliphant, the excitement, instability, and anxiety of the period are reflected and captured in the sensation novel, marking it as a sign of the times. Oliphant, one of the first of many critics in the nineteenth century to analyse and dissect the literary phenomenon of the sensation novel, deftly articulates the literary and social temperament of the 1860s, a decade in which ‘sensational’ became the modifier of the age.

¹ Margaret Oliphant, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 91 (May 1862), 564-84 (p. 564-65).

The nineteenth-century critical reaction to sensation fiction is relatively well-trodden territory, with Henry L. Mansel's 1863 review in the *Quarterly Review* and a mass of other articles all condemning the genre in no uncertain terms, and all citing similar criticisms: plot development over that of character; mass-market appeal and lower-class origins; use of mystery and shocking incidents, which in turn created corporeal rather than cerebral responses in readers; the depiction of transgressive women; and the genre's general moral ambiguity.² The derogatory judgment passed on sensation novels by many contemporary critics generally centred on the genre's subversive qualities, such as the proliferation of violence and deviance, its plots of bigamy, murder, and crime, and its frequent destabilizing of traditional representations of marriage and femininity. And though such issues continue to garner the attention and focus of many modern studies of the sensation novel, the genre itself seems to have been liberated from its scandalous origins to become a respectable field of scholarly study.

Since the publication of Winifred Hughes's *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (1980), the first full-length study of the sensation novel since Walter C. Phillips's *Dickens, Reade, Collins: Sensation Novelists* (1919), and the vast amount of scholarly research that has followed, sensation fiction has indeed become a vibrant academic field.³ The early studies' theoretical and thematic considerations have continued to influence sensation fiction research during the last thirty years. Indeed, the early studies have provided the major paradigms through which the genre has been analysed, including, for instance, the debate between the

² Henry L. Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', *Quarterly Review*, 113 (April 1863), 481-514. For a comprehensive overview of contemporary and modern critical responses to sensation fiction see Andrew Radford, *Victorian Sensation Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2009).

³ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Walter C. Phillips, *Dickens, Reade, Collins: Sensation Novelists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919).

subversive and/or conservative qualities of the genre; its fusion of disparate genres; its relationship to the periodical press and contemporary cultural, social, and medical discourses; its middle-class settings and lower-class origins; and its mass popularity. Hughes's seminal study, still a valuable benchmark in the field, evaluates sensation fiction in relation to mid-nineteenth century critical and literary debates, declaring, 'What distinguishes the true sensation genre, as it appeared in its prime during the 1860s, is the violent yoking of romance and realism, traditionally the two contradictory modes of literary perception.'⁴ Hughes positions the sensation novel as purely subversive, claiming it to have been an antidote to the stiltedness of mid-Victorian gentility. However, Thomas Boyle, in *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead: Beneath the Surface of Victorian Sensationalism* (1989), assesses sensation fiction as an extension of existent discourses found in contemporary newspapers, observing that sensation novels are 'riddled with detail which recall widely reported criminal occurrences at the time'.⁵ Pamela Gilbert's study, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (1997), which looks at metaphors of disease surrounding popular fiction, particularly the sensation genre, counters Hughes's and Boyle's delineations of the sensation novel. Responding to Hughes's contention of sensation fiction's subversiveness, Gilbert declares that, 'Far from bringing the terrifying into the midst of the middle-class neighbourhood, as Hughes asserts, the sensation novel's purpose was to remove it and frame it, so that it might be perused safely and at some distance.'⁶ Gilbert also observes how the novel, unlike the newspaper, binds the 'uncanny within the conventional strictures and structures of plot development and denouement, in which conventional values are, at

⁴ Hughes, p. 16.

⁵ Thomas Boyle, *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead: Beneath the Surface of Victorian Sensationalism* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 146.

⁶ Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 69.

least nominally, upheld' (69). A novel, then, as Gilbert reasons, 'about a bigamist or a child-murder in a fictional middle-class neighbourhood is far less immediate than a newspaper which places such events a block and a day away' (69). Gilbert's point is that sensation novels give 'shape and provide coherence for that barrage of information' that Boyle describes as having originated in the nineteenth-century press (69).

In contrast, Patrick Brantlinger's 1982 documentation and analysis of the sensational content and structural components of sensation novels contends that sensation narratives 'do not connect with anything outside of themselves'.⁷ Brantlinger's depiction of sensation fiction as isolated from contemporary discourses situates it as a 'minor subgenre' as compared to 'serious fiction' (2). Brantlinger's construction of sensation fiction in oppositional terms to serious fiction, or realism, a comparison first forwarded by nineteenth-century critics, has since become the critical custom. In 1994, Susan David Bernstein stated that 'sensation novels are measured and defined as realism's antithesis, in other words, as antirealism'.⁸ Recently though, Janice M. Allan, editor of the spring 2011 *Critical Survey* issue 'Other Sensations', noted the current rethinking of sensation fiction's relationship to realism, asserting that the range of articles in the issue 'suggests that while current research on sensation fiction continues to bear the imprint of what Lyn Pykett has called "the conservative/radical dilemma", we are much more aware of the ideological complexities and contradictions that characterize the genre'.⁹ Though, at times, sensation fiction is still positioned in antithetical terms to realism in the present study, 'Serializing Sensation' recognizes the 'ideological complexities' of sensation fiction.

⁷ Patrick Brantlinger, 'What is "Sensational" about the "Sensation Novel"?', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 37 (1982), 1-28 (p. 5).

⁸ Susan David Bernstein, 'Dirty Reading: Sensation Fiction, Women and Primitivism', *Criticism*, 36:2 (Spring 1994), 213-41 (p. 221).

⁹ Janice M. Allan, 'Introduction: "Other Sensations"', *Critical Survey*, 23:1 (Spring 2011), 1-7 (p. 2).

The study, aiming to offer varied readings of the relationship between the sensation genre and realism, probes the interplay between the genres when the sensation novel first emerged in the early 1860s and also when sensational motifs, as we will see, began to be incorporated within domestic realism as the 1860s progressed and 1870s began.

The early work of Hughes was followed by further critical rehabilitations of the sensation genre. Jenny Bourne Taylor's *In the Theatre of Home* (1988) discusses the novels of Wilkie Collins alongside Victorian discourses of psychology, while Tamar Heller analyses the work of Collins in relation to the female Gothic in *Dead Secrets* (1992).¹⁰ Ann Cvetkovich's *Mixed Feelings* (1992) employs feminist and Marxist strategies to uncover the 'politics of affect' in sensation fiction, while Lyn Pykett's *The 'Improper' Feminine* (1992) draws attention to gendered interrelationships between sensation fiction and the New Woman literature of the fin-de-siècle.¹¹ Many of the studies from this period, like Hughes's, mark and interrogate the transgressive attributes of the sensation novel and rely heavily upon the triumvirate of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, three of the first and most popular Victorian novels to be branded with the sensation label by nineteenth-century critics.¹²

More recently, though, as the study of sensation fiction progresses beyond its first epoch of academic interest, new approaches to the genre and its relation to nineteenth-century discourses have emerged. Mark Knight, in his 2009 article

¹⁰ Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Tamar Heller, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹¹ Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: the Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹² Gilbert's *Disease* offers an exception to this, studying the work of Rhoda Broughton and Ouida in addition to Braddon.

‘Figuring out the Fascination: Recent Trends in Criticism on Victorian Sensation and Crime Fiction’, asserts,

Ideas that were once considered new or controversial are now seen as common knowledge: we know that sensation fiction involves more than the influential novels written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins; we are familiar with the frequent blurring between sensation fiction and other genres; [...] we are well schooled in interdisciplinary approaches that read sensation fiction alongside science, psychology, and law; and we are used to competing claims for sensation fiction as a subversive or conservative genre.¹³

Knight outlines a number of new methodologies adopted by scholars in the last few years that have contributed to the sustained and expanded interest in the sensation genre. One such advance has been a move away from a reliance on canonical sensation novels like *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *East Lynne* to the recovery of forgotten texts and authors. While Collins's, Braddon's, and Wood's most popular novels continue to attract attention, (indeed, this study examines Wood's *East Lynne*), interest in other, lesser-known works by these authors, particularly those of Braddon and Collins, has gained momentum.¹⁴ Many other sensation writers and sensation novels have also garnered attention in the last few years: the six-volume *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890* (2004), edited by Andrew Maunder, includes texts by little-known authors such as Felicia Skene and Mary Cecil Hay; Richard Fantina's *Victorian Sensational Fiction: The Daring Work of Charles Reade* (2010) analyses much of Reade's mostly-forgotten oeuvre; the *Critical Survey* issue 'Other Sensations' comprises articles on Margaret Oliphant, Rhoda Broughton, Florence Marryat, and Reade; and an forthcoming

¹³ Mark Knight, 'Figuring out the Fascination: Recent Trends in Criticism on Victorian Sensation and Crime Fiction', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37 (2009), 323-33 (p. 323).

¹⁴ See for instance *Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. by Andrew Mangham (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); Natalie Schroeder and Ronald Schroeder, *From Sensation to Society: Representations of Marriage in the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 1862-1866* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006); *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*, ed. by Marlene Tromp, Pamela Gilbert, and Aeron Haynie (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

special issue of *Women's Writing*, entitled 'Beyond Braddon: Forgotten Female Sensationalists', recently sought contributions on authors such as Ouida, Annie Edwards, Amelia B. Edwards, and other 'forgotten' woman writers.¹⁵ Additionally, Blackwell's 2011 *Companion to Sensation Fiction*, edited by Pamela Gilbert, includes entries not only on a variety of texts by Braddon, Collins, and Wood, but also pieces dedicated to more obscure authors such as Dora Russell, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Edmund Yates.¹⁶ Andrew Radford also alludes to the reissue of a wide breadth of sensation novels during the last fifteen years by the Oxford World's Classics and Broadview series, articulating how such publications have acted as 'useful barometers' in gauging the re-evaluation of an ever-increasing selection of sensation novels.¹⁷ Allan acknowledges how the recent shift in sensation fiction research to under-studied texts has 'served to broaden substantially the field of study and alert us to the breadth and diversity of the genre as a whole'.¹⁸ Also, by centring on unfamiliar texts, the articles in 'Other Sensations', as Allan relates, 'problematise the sensation genre in a number of ways: by suggesting new modes or means of producing and registering "sensation"; by challenging taxonomic boundaries (especially those between sensational and so-called "legitimate" fiction); and by interrogating existing critical assumptions and constructions' (2).

As Allan's description of the *Critical Survey* articles indicates, beyond an interest in more obscure texts and authors, the new wave of sensation fiction studies has expanded thematically and theoretically as well, with current research focusing on new methods and innovative approaches of anatomizing the genre within its socio-

¹⁵ *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890*, ed. by Andrew Maunder, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004; Richard Fantina, *Victorian Sensational Fiction: The Daring Work of Charles Reade* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); 'Other Sensations', ed. by Janice M. Allan, *Critical Survey*, 23:1 (Spring 2011). The *Women's Writing* special issue is due to appear in 2012.

¹⁶ *Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011).

¹⁷ Radford, p. 4.

¹⁸ Allan, p. 1.

historical context. The *Critical Survey* articles accentuate this budding trend, with several contributions, for example, suggesting that the critical preoccupation with femininity and female characters is beginning to give way to an exploration of the genre's portrayal of masculinity and the figure of the man; an issue discussed in this study as well. The continued development and opening out of the field provides avenues for reconsidering canonical sensation novels, discovering fresh angles with which to consider and continue to recover 'lost' texts, and new methods of approaching the subversive attributes of the genre. The sustained and, indeed, enlarged academic interest in sensation fiction has certainly proven it to be anything but the 'irretrievably minor' genre Hughes depicted it as in 1980, and the critical appeal of the genre and popular fiction generally shows no signs of abating.¹⁹ Indeed, the formation of the Victorian Popular Fiction Association (VPFA) in 2008 and its successful and lively annual conferences are evidence of an ever-increasing interest in popular fiction.²⁰

'Serializing Sensation', though touching upon some of the issues Knight references as 'common knowledge', is nevertheless firmly situated in the evolving landscape of sensation fiction research. The current study, through its diversity of novels, authors, and methodologies, aims to challenge what are now formulaic premises of the sensation genre and further develop the ways and means in which the sensation novel is read and evaluated. Like much of the latest work on sensation fiction, 'Serializing Sensation' builds on the pioneering studies of sensation literature of the last thirty years while endeavouring to re-invigorate and re-evaluate traditional approaches to studying the sensation novel. By recontextualizing several novels within their original periodical locations, the study focuses on the correlations

¹⁹ Hughes, p. 168.

²⁰ For more information on the VPFA see <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/victorian/>

between sensation fiction, serialization, and periodical location. Eschewing the volume editions of the texts, the serialized versions of the novels are analysed and intertextualized within the periodical and cultural matrix in which they were first published, providing modified and/or new ways of reading not only the novels but also the sensation genre more generally. The journals thus provide a panoptic vision of Victorian society that is read in conjunction with the novels, opening the texts to interpretations hitherto overlooked in examinations of their book versions. The project is, however, primarily a study of sensation fiction, though the periodical settings of the novels act as the cultural doorways from which to ‘enter’ the texts and from which to situate the sensation genre within the expansive cultural context of the mid-nineteenth century. This position is in no way meant to underestimate the role of the journals; indeed, the study seeks to emphasize the important and often overlooked value of periodical studies in literary criticism. The periodical readings of the serials, though, are channelled into a broader theory of the sensation genre and its dialogue with the social and cultural discourses of the 1860s, simultaneously advocating the fundamental role of the periodicals in cultivating and nurturing the conversation.

‘Serializing Sensation’ is indebted to earlier studies such as Mark W. Turner’s *Trollope and the Magazines*, which examines several novels published by Anthony Trollope in Victorian periodicals as case studies to ground ‘a theoretical consideration of the periodical as a cultural form within the broadly defined fields of literary and cultural criticism’.²¹ Turner’s insightful analysis of the interweaving of serial fiction and periodical discourses has provided a valuable paradigm in thinking about literature in its periodical context. More specifically, Deborah Wynne’s *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* offers an analysis of a number of sensation

²¹ Mark W. Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.

novels within their periodical locations.²² However, while ‘Serializing Sensation’ is certainly analogous to Wynne’s study, the present study looks to expand on the conclusions and methodologies formulated by Wynne. ‘Serializing Sensation’ strives to accomplish this in part by re-evaluating orthodox theoretical considerations within new paradigms and moving beyond canonical sensation novels and sensation-carrying periodicals. For example, while the range of authors Wynne examines are limited to classic sensation writers, ‘Serializing Sensation’ examines texts by archetypal sensation writers – Ellen Wood and Mary Elizabeth Braddon – as well as novels by authors not habitually aligned with the sensation genre – Margaret Oliphant and Anthony Trollope. The majority of the novels Wynne chooses to examine are also from within the traditional band of sensation novels, the exception being her evaluation of Braddon’s *Eleanor’s Victory*, which is still an understudied text. The core group of novels examined in ‘Serializing Sensation’ presents a broader spectrum of texts, ranging from the representative sensation novels *East Lynne* and *Aurora Floyd*, to a little-known novel by a lesser-read author, Oliphant’s *Salem Chapel*, to a forgotten text by a well-known sensation writer, Wood’s *Oswald Cray*, to a novel written by an author typically denoted as a realist, Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds*. The array of novels consequently allows the range of periodicals to extend beyond magazines typically associated with sensation fiction, such as *All the Year Round*, *Once a Week*, and shilling monthlies such as *Belgravia*. These considerations provide insight into how sensation fiction ‘fit’ in a more diverse range of magazines, such as expensive, older magazines like the *New Monthly Magazine*, which published *East Lynne*, and *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which initially published *Salem Chapel*; niche magazines like the 6d religious monthly *Good Words*, the host magazine of *Oswald*

²² Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001).

Cray; and political miscellanies like the *Fortnightly Review*, which serialized *The Eustace Diamonds*. The range of periodicals also allows for a more complete picture of the mid-Victorian periodical market, portraying the variety and diversity of journals that proliferated during the period. Further, rather than exclusively exploring the intertextual connections between the instalments of the novels and the periodicals, as Wynne does, the present study progresses, for instance, from reading the serials intertextually with their periodical environment, to comparing an author's work in two different periodicals, to, in the final chapter, looking at the influence of *The Eustace Diamonds*'s serial's structure on the narrative dynamics of the novel.

Wynne's study offers significant insights into the sensation novel and of serial publication generally. Yet, while 'Serializing Sensation' looks to complement Wynne's work, it aims to broaden Wynne's objective of demonstrating 'how sensation fiction was shaped and defined through its periodical publishing space'.²³ 'Serializing Sensation' invokes innovative approaches and fresh discourses from which to view and appraise the genre and the journals, exploring how sensation fiction engaged with popular discourses of masculinity as well as femininity; how it participated in the debate surrounding forms of evidence and depictions of truth; how it reflected and commented on evolving perceptions of space and demographic change as well as reforms to religious dissemination; and how the genre modulated literary conventions in the 1860s and beyond. Ultimately, in the evolving landscape of both periodical and sensation fiction studies, 'Serializing Sensation' aspires to emphasize the importance of material and print culture in understanding and contextualizing the sensation novel and to combine literary and periodical criticism in an effort to uncover the interconnections of nineteenth-century literary genres and print media.

²³ Wynne, p. 168.

Serializing Sensation in the 1860s

In the early 1860s the periodical market underwent significant alterations, largely due to numerous advancements in printing technologies and economic determinants that occurred during the period, particularly the repeal of the ‘taxes of knowledge’, such as the Newspaper Tax, which was abolished in 1855, and the Paper Tax, which was eliminated in 1861, both of which significantly lowered the production costs of publishing periodicals and newspapers.²⁴ Combined with the increasingly literate population, such developments, as Richard D. Altick notes, ‘threw the publishing and printing trades into a happy uproar’.²⁵ One of the outcomes of this happy uproar was the premier of the shilling monthly magazine, initiated by *Macmillan’s Magazine* in November 1859 and *Cornhill Magazine* in January 1860, whose first issue reportedly sold 100,000 copies. The shilling price of such magazines was considerably less expensive than the quarterlies reviews or older monthly magazines like *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which was priced at 2s 6d. The innovation of an affordable middle-class magazine, one that typically included a miscellany of non-fiction, poetry, fiction, and, in the case of some journals, illustrations, filled a sizeable gap in the periodical market that had yet to be tapped beyond Charles Dickens’s two penny weekly *Household Words* and its successor *All the Year Round*. The advent of the new breed of magazines, and the continuous deluge of imitations that flooded the market in the 1860s, revised the layout and content of popular middle-class journals. The non-fiction within many of the new periodicals was redesigned to appeal to a family readership. The articles aimed to entertain and educate and, following the lead of

²⁴ For more information see Norman N. Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), especially chapters 12-15; Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History Of The English Novel 1875-1914* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1989).

²⁵ Altick, *The English Common Reader*, p. 352.

Cornhill, often avoided controversial or political issues. The foremost variation, though, was the prominence placed on the inclusion of full-length, serialized fiction.

Serialization had been intermittently used to publish fiction before the nineteenth century, but Dickens's success with the part-issue publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, and his continued use of part-issue and periodical serialization throughout the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, popularized serial publication as an affordable and fashionable way of publishing full-length fiction in the mid-nineteenth century. With the immense popularity of fiction-carrying magazines in the early 1860s, periodical serialization became the norm, causing *Fraser's Magazine* to note in 1863 that 'nearly every novel is first brought out in the pages of some periodical or magazine'.²⁶ Moreover, though fiction had been a consistent element of many middle-class journals throughout the nineteenth century, notably in *Blackwood's* and *Bentley's Miscellany*, many of the new journals that sprung up in the 1860s situated fiction as the focal point of the magazines. John Sutherland notes that *All the Year Round* 'was designed around a running serial', while magazines like *Cornhill*, *Temple Bar*, and many others consistently published an instalment of a novel in the lead position.²⁷ *Cornhill* and *Temple Bar* went as far as to publish two serial novels per month. Many of the newborn magazines also selected writers or novels that would suit the distinct complexion and character of the journal, creating fluidity in content and tone. When looking for an author to write the magazine's initial serial, *Cornhill*, for example, asked Anthony Trollope, the chronicler of the clerical tales of Barseshire, to contribute a story. Trollope's inoffensive style and rural settings harmonized with *Cornhill's* wholesome complexion, a complementary pairing that bolstered both Trollope's and the *Cornhill's* reputation and popularity.

²⁶ 'The Popular Novels of the Year', *Fraser's Magazine*, 68:404 (August 1863), 253-69 (p. 262).

²⁷ John Sutherland, *Victorian Novelist and Publishers* (London: Athlone Press, 1976), p. 171.

For modern critics, as Wynne observes, ‘Serialization has been widely discussed [...] as a crucial factor in understanding the way Victorian literary culture worked’.²⁸ Norman N. Feltes’s *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* describes the socio-economic environment that fostered ‘the moment of Pickwick’, providing an insightful analysis of the literary and economic conditions that helped popularize serial fiction during the burgeoning of capitalist forces in the nineteenth century.²⁹ Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund’s study *The Victorian Serial* approaches the study of serial literature by showing how it personified a view of life ‘intrinsic to Victorian culture’.³⁰ The sheer amount of fiction that first appeared in instalments in the nineteenth century substantiates Hughes and Lund’s premise, aligning the height of the format’s popularity to a specific historical moment in the nineteenth century.³¹ Serial fiction has since been discussed in terms of part issue and periodical publication, in connection with specific periodicals and specific authors, and through the publication format’s effect on the literary patterns and developments of the Victorian novel. Mary Hamer’s *Writing by Numbers: Trollope’s Serial Fiction* (1987) is an early example of a scholarly text examining the effect of serial publication on an authors work, discussing the form’s influence on the imaginative scope of Trollope’s work and looking closely at how Trollope’s writing methods helped shape the complexion of his texts.³² Carol A. Martin’s 1994 monograph, *George Eliot’s Serial Fiction*, exposed the challenges Eliot faced in writing in parts and traced the development of Eliot as a serial writer.³³ As we’ve seen, Turner’s *Trollope and the*

²⁸ Wynne, p. 11.

²⁹ Feltes, p. 12.

³⁰ Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), p. 1.

³¹ See J. Don Vann, *Victorian Novels in Serial* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1985) for a substantial list of part-issue titles.

³² Mary Hamer, *Writing by Numbers: Trollope’s Serial Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

³³ Carol A. Martin, *George Eliot’s Serial Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994).

Magazines examines Trollope's novels in the context of their initial periodical locations, demonstrating 'the ways cultural debates in and around the magazines enliven and enlighten our reading of [Trollope's] fiction'.³⁴ And Graham Law's insightful study, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (2000), explores the often overlooked publication of novels in newspapers, persuasively arguing for the significant role of newspaper syndication in the development of the literary market in the nineteenth century.³⁵

In the nineteenth century, sensation fiction was particularly linked with the periodical press, and not just because many sensation novels first appeared in periodicals, but also because of the genre's affiliation with the lower-class penny press. Indeed, much of the nineteenth-century critical derision of sensation fiction was caused by its origins in cheap, lower-class fiction and periodicals, such as the penny dreadfuls churned out by Edward Lloyd and G.W.M. Reynolds, and its connection with the newspaper. Mansel, in his indictment of the sensation novel, referred to the genre as the 'criminal variety of the Newspaper Novel' and *Punch* parodied the correlation between the newspaper and the sensation novel with a mock advert for 'The Sensation Times: A Chronicle of Excitement'.³⁶ The link between newspaper stories and sensation novels was amplified by sensation writers such as Reade and Collins, who affirmed and defended the relationship by making frequent references in their work to actual criminal cases. Reade is especially well-known for his habit of clipping and categorizing newspaper headlines and stories from which he culled ideas for his novels, blurring the line between fact and fiction, news and novels. Even when it was removed from its lower-class roots and transferred into the pages of middle-

³⁴ Turner, p. 3.

³⁵ Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000).

³⁶ Mansel, p. 501; 'The Sensation Times: A Chronicle of Excitement', *Punch*, 9 (9 May 1863), 193 (p. 193).

class magazines, sensation fiction's serialization in popular journals continued to signal its lowbrow demeanour, degrading the genre in the eyes of reviewers. Oliphant posited that the 'violent stimulant of serial publication', particularly weekly publication, assisted in developing 'the germ' of sensation fiction and brought 'it to fuller and darker bearing'.³⁷

Modern critics, however, have examined the relationship between sensation fiction and the press in a more productive light. Studies such as Boyle's *Black Swine* and Altick's *Deadly Encounters* (1986) critically assess the relationship between newspapers and sensation fiction in a more constructive manner, exploring the ways sensational newspaper reporting acted as a literary prototype for sensation fiction.³⁸ Wynne's study of the 'dramatic convergence of sensation novels and middle-class family magazines during the 1860s', argues that, 'The sensation novel became legitimate reading for the middle classes largely *because* of its magazine context, where readers were addressed as educated and domestic family members, rather than sensation-seekers after cheap thrills.'³⁹ In her recent monograph, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies*, Beth Palmer argues that, 'The relationship between sensation's success as a popular fiction genre and its serialisation in the periodical press was not just reciprocal but also self-conscious and performative.'⁴⁰ Research like Turner's, Altick's, Wynne's, and Palmer's, amongst others, reveals the multiple interconnections between popular fiction and the periodical press. Such research, in turn, presents a clearer picture of the periodical and literary landscape of the Victorian period than that offered by nineteenth-century

³⁷ Oliphant, p. 568.

³⁸ Richard D. Altick, *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1986).

³⁹ Wynne, p. 1. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁰ Beth Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3.

critics, illustrating how literary and cultural discourses interacted within the pages of press in the nineteenth century.

Victorian periodical studies, like sensation fiction research, also made significant strides during the late twentieth century: from Walter E. Houghton's mammoth and invaluable undertaking in *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, to books and articles focused on specific periodicals, individual publishing houses, and individual editors and contributors.⁴¹ Periodical studies also made advances beyond archival and empirical studies. Beginning with the *Victorian Periodicals Review's* critical theory issue in 1989, which looked at nineteenth-century periodicals through a variety of theoretical frameworks, Victorian journals have since been analysed in conjunction with, amongst others, the theories of Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Jacques Derrida, as well as from the perspectives of feminist, Marxist, and reception theorists.⁴²

Intertextuality, Julia Kristeva's term for the shaping of a text's meaning by other texts, has also been widely applied in periodical studies, becoming a useful means of situating serial fiction in relation to its periodical environment.⁴³ Indeed, Altick declares,

It is axiomatic (or should be, now that so-called intertextuality is among the leading concerns of critics) that to appreciate the full flavour and contemporary meaning of any novel serialized in a magazine one must read the surrounding contents, in order to duplicate, so far as possible at the

⁴¹ Walter E. Houghton, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, 5 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966-1979). See for example Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997); Andrew King, *The London Journal* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); P. D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

⁴² See for example, Julia Chavez, 'Wandering Readers and the Pedagogical Potential of *Temple Bar*', *Victorian Periodical Review*, 40:2 (Summer 2007), 126-50; Cynthia Bandish, 'Bakhtin's Dialogism and the Bohemian Meta-Narrative of *Belgravia*: A Case Study for Analysing Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 34:3 (Fall 2001), 239-62; Linda K. Hughes, 'Turbulence in the "Golden Stream": Chaos Theory and the Study of Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22:3 (Fall 1989), 117-25.

⁴³ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

distance of more than a century, the way in which the physically proximate content of nonfiction affected the first readers' response to the fiction.⁴⁴

According to Michael Worton and Judith Still, intertextuality

insists that a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system; the text is available only through some process of reading; what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material.⁴⁵

In describing the process of intertextuality at work within periodicals, Laurel Brake stresses how 'each piece [in a journal] is instantly and always contextualized, embedded in a matrix of other pieces which make up the issue in which it appears, and extends to the issue before and after'.⁴⁶ Like many studies of serialized fiction, 'Serializing Sensation' applies the concept of intertextuality as a means of uncovering the ideological intersections between the magazines and the serials under review, as well as between the magazines, serials, and contemporary cultural issues. The current study also incorporates the theoretical paradigm forwarded by Cynthia L. Bandish in her analysis of *Belgravia*. Bandish maps Bakhtin's theory of dialogism onto *Belgravia*, identifying the magazine's meta-narrative as well as its heteroglossia, noting that 'the genre of periodicals can be defined by its explicit dialogism, so the illumination of both the meta-narrative and the heteroglossia are necessary components to our understanding of a magazine'.⁴⁷ Bandish posits that neglecting one or the other of these narratives equates to either an 'over-simplification' or 'misses the shared patterns of information and technique to which readers are subjected' (242). Bandish's concept is most obviously seen in Chapter 2's analysis of *Temple Bar*, though her premise provides an undercurrent to all of the readings of the journals

⁴⁴ Richard D. Altick, *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), p. 22.

⁴⁵ Michael Worton and Judith Still, 'Introduction', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. by Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 1-44 (p. 1).

⁴⁶ Laurel Brake, 'Writing, Cultural Production, and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century', in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 54-65 (p. 54).

⁴⁷ Bandish, p. 251.

studied in ‘Serializing Sensation’. By analysing the serials intertextually, and remaining cognizant of the dialogical nature of periodicals and novels, ‘Serializing Sensation’ exposes the ways sensation fiction interacted with and responded to various cultural discourses during the 1860s.

The Sensational Sixties and Beyond

‘Serializing Sensation’ spans from Ellen Wood’s serialization of *East Lynne* in 1860 to the final instalment of Anthony Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds* in 1873. However, the first four chapters look at novels published between 1860 and 1864, the period that witnessed the burgeoning and popularization of the sensation novel and the rise of the popular middle-class, fiction-carrying periodical. In relocating to the early 1870s in the final chapter, the study considers the sensation genre from a prospective removed from the sensational sixties and the initial fascination with sensation fiction. The shift also affords a glimpse at the evolution of the periodical market during the 1860s and into the 1870s. Moreover, Trollope’s relatively stable position as a realist novelist during the 1860s offers a useful point from which to view the mutation of sensation fiction as a genre as it began to be incorporated by a diverse range of authors and within a diverse range of genres as the 1860s progressed.

Chapter 1 begins by looking at the serialization of Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* (January 1860-September 1861) in the *New Monthly Magazine*. In 1860 the *New Monthly* was of a distinctly antiquated and old-fashioned style, retaining its political and nationalist complexion from its inception in 1814 and holding fast to its expensive 3s 6d price tag. Owned and edited by William Harrison Ainsworth, the author of such Newgate novels as *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839), the *New Monthly*, whose success in its early years had been bolstered by the nationalistic fervour that

had swept England following the Napoleonic wars, was seemingly unresponsive to the emerging zeitgeist of the evolving periodical market. Ainsworth only grudgingly allowed Wood, who had been writing short fiction for the magazine throughout the 1850s, to publish *East Lynne* after her first novel, *Dansbury House*, proved a minor success.

At first glance, *East Lynne*'s narrative of adultery and maternal despair would seem to be an ill-fit in the magazine's ostensibly masculine, political setting. However, Chapter 1 reveals how Wood's novel in fact corresponded to and complemented the journal's overriding nationalistic ethos. In linking the nineteenth-century domestic ideology of separate spheres, particularly the vital role of wife and mother, to the overall strength and security of the nation, the chapter identifies the prevailing nationalist sentiment of the journal reverberating within the serial. Lady Isabel's crime against her husband and family in *East Lynne* is thus situated as a sin against the interests of the nation as well as the family and the feminine ideal. The analysis draws attention to the novel's engagement with mid-nineteenth century depictions of not only the figure of the woman within the home, but also the figure of the middle-class man. In transferring some of the spotlight from the fallen, sensational woman onto the shifting form of the middle-class man, the chapter looks to move beyond readings of the novel as purely maternal melodrama, or sensation fiction as solely concerned with mid-Victorian femininity, and introduces masculinity into the conversation as well. The reading consequently provides an opportunity to revise modern critical interpretations of the text's engagement with traditional nineteenth-century domestic ideology, arguing that the text's application of separate spheres in fact revises and modernizes the ideology, updating the roles of both middle-class women and men to corresponded to the middle class's consolidation of moral, social,

and economic power in the mid-nineteenth century. This interpretation of *East Lynne*'s valuation of middle-class women, men, marriage, and the home also allows for broader reconsideration of the sensation genre's complicated relationship with the domestic space and women's and men's evolving positions within it during the 1860s. Additionally, in establishing *East Lynne* as a derivative of its publication within, and Wood's longstanding association with the *New Monthly*, the chapter delineates the conspicuous role of critics and reviewers in defining, demarcating, and sequestering sensation fiction as a distinct genre, initiating the project's larger engagement with the critical literary environment of the 1860s.

Chapter 2 turns to *Temple Bar*, the original home of Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (January 1862-February 1863). Owned by John Maxwell and edited by George Augustus Sala, *Temple Bar*, commenced in December 1860, was one of many new shilling monthlies to appear after the success of *Cornhill*. The magazine, boasting a lavish purple cover and a considerable 144 pages, announced in its prospectus that it would include fiction, travel articles, book reviews, biography, and articles of general interest, but would not include politics.⁴⁸ The prospectus portrayed *Temple Bar* in a similar character to that of *Cornhill*, with contributions catering to a middle-class readership, but particularly excluding politics. *Temple Bar*, however, ultimately took on a different tone and style than that endorsed in *Cornhill*. *Temple Bar*, rather than expediting exclusively bourgeois principles, also incorporated alternative, Bohemian philosophies. The combination of traditional and progressive ideologies constructed a house style that catered to conventional middle-class expectations and standards as well as challenged established value systems and ideals.

⁴⁸*The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, ed. by Walter E. Houghton, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966-1979), p. 386.

By both upholding and questioning the legitimacy of embedded social and cultural institutions, the magazine endeavoured to create autonomous readers able to think critically and analytically and to be wary of seemingly axiomatic perceptions. Indicative of this discourse was the magazine's probing of the validity of personal and character-based testimony as compared to the reliability of circumstantial evidence in criminal trials. In its three-part series debating the dependability of circumstantial evidence, *Temple Bar* highlights the uncertainty of anecdotal information and questions the legitimacy of the maxim 'circumstances can't lie'.

By assembling a fictional profile of sensational narratives concerned with mystery and transgression, which sought to look behind the pretence of appearance and respectability to expose society's more contentious aspects, the magazine sustained and extended this exposition into the social realm. Most particularly, Braddon's 1862 serial *Aurora Floyd* constructs a narrative that pits circumstantial evidence concerning the two central mysteries of the novel – Aurora's marriage to her groom James Conyers and Conyers's murder – against the character of Aurora in a bid to interrogate the different forms of evidence. The chapter also looks at a few significant changes Braddon made to the volume edition of the novel. The changes reveal how, in the serial version, Braddon allowed Aurora to remain a suspect in Conyers's murder until the penultimate instalment, whereas, in the volume edition, she exonerates her heroine of any wrongdoing before the crime is committed. The comparison between the serial and volume edition demonstrates how the book version eliminates the murder mystery that dominates the last half of the serial edition, essentially removing much of the novel's engagement with the debate surrounding forms of evidence.

In examining *Aurora Floyd* within the pages of *Temple Bar*, then, the chapter endeavours to examine how the serial exposes the ambiguous nature of forms of evidence, principally that of circumstantial evidence, in a bid to educate readers on the unreliability of outward appearances and the necessity of questioning conjectural information. More broadly, the evaluation of the *Aurora Floyd*'s serial version situates sensation fiction's fascination with secrets, crime, and identity within a larger cultural context of uncertainty and suspicion that emerges in the 1860s.

Chapter 3 shifts back to an older periodical, *Blackwood's Magazine*, commenced in 1817 as a Tory riposte to the *Edinburgh Review*, to evaluate Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* (February 1862-January 1863). Analysing *Salem Chapel* through geographical delineations of place and mobility, the chapter considers how Oliphant uses the spatial layout of the town of Carlingford to collapse generic boundaries between literary sensation and realism. *Salem Chapel*, the fourth instalment and first full-length novel in the *Chronicles of Carlingford* series, all of which were previously published in *Blackwood's*, distorts Carlingford's pre-established ambiance, particularly through the actions of the idealist clergyman Arthur Vincent and the mysterious interloper Rachel Hilyard. Carlingford had been limned and mapped in the earlier stories of the series and thus readers of *Blackwood's* commence *Salem Chapel* with a positive recognition of the (re)appearance of the generally mundane town of Carlingford and its inhabitants. However, the arrival of Vincent and Rachel in the town disrupts Carlingford's previously established social and spatial precepts, which, in turn, stimulates the narrative to shift from the series' characteristic domestic realism into the realm of sensation.

By looking closely at Oliphant's May 1862 *Blackwood's* article 'Sensation Novels', *Salem Chapel*'s synthesis of genres is linked to Oliphant's fascination with

Collins's *The Woman in White* and her admiration of Collins's use of the trivial as the impetus of the sensational. In *Salem Chapel*, Oliphant attempts to imitate Collins's literary model, infusing sensational elements into a realist frame in a bid to authenticate reality as a site of both the sensational and the mundane.

Chapter 4 continues to probe literary combinations, examining Wood's *Oswald Cray* (January-December 1864) in the religious miscellany *Good Words*. The chapter explores the early 1860s as a period of immense religious doubt and spiritual instability. In examining how, as the theological debate over the truth of the Bible intensified, the question of how to reach, preach, and convert the urbanized and empowered working and middle classes also emerged, the chapter begins by analysing the celebrity of the Evangelical preacher Charles Spurgeon. The popularity of Spurgeon, who employed an emotional, sensationalized form of address, highlights the public's thirst for an accessible, affecting mode of sermonizing. Shifting to print culture, the chapter argues that the commencement and high circulation numbers of *Good Words*, with its unique fusion of spiritual and secular material, contributed by authors from an array of denominations, demonstrates a concurrent re-evaluation within the religious press of disseminating religious discourse. The 1864 serialization of *Oswald Cray* in *Good Words* emphasizes the magazine's interest in combining religious and popular material as a means of revitalizing religious sentiment. Indeed, though Wood's publication of *East Lynne* in 1860 had been definitively categorized as one of the first sensation novels of the decade, *Oswald Cray* sits snugly among the sermons, parables, and social mission essays that fill the pages of *Good Words*.

The chapter also examines what Wood's placement in a journal such as *Good Words* tells us about the dynamic elements of sensation as a genre, and how Wood's unique blend of the sensational and the religious unite to create a form of sensational

sermonizing that participates in the cultural re-evaluation of the most effective and appropriate method of preaching. However, the chapter also reveals, particularly through a comparison with *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*, a serial Wood was simultaneously publishing in the secular miscellany *Once A Week*, how such a fusion of religious and sensational rhetoric leaves *Oswald Cray* in a sort of literary nowhere land, resulting in a rather lacklustre narrative that received almost universally negative reviews. Yet, in examining the serialization of *Oswald Cray*, the chapter endeavours to delineate how two seemingly opposing discourses – sensational and religious rhetoric – in fact influenced and emulated one another in the 1860s, creating a congruent model of feeling for their audiences that aimed to recapture the public's faith and devotion.

In turning to *The Eustace Diamonds* (July 1871-February 1873), the fifth and final chapter examines how Trollope re-articulates sensational motifs, rewriting the sensation novel and re-presenting sensational narrative techniques through the novel's substitution of gossip for evidence and nattering socialites for the professional detective. In *The Eustace Diamonds* the secret of the diamonds that captivates the fictional public is known to the reader from the outset. Instead of uncovering clues to reveal the mystery of the missing diamonds, then, the narrative tracks the various truths and lies that circulate around the mystery, revealing how truth in *The Eustace Diamonds* tends to be determined not by empirical fact or verifiable evidence but by the prevailing truth accepted by society, which is most often determined by gossip and rumour. The text's re-casting of fact in the blurry form of hearsay allows Trollope to rework sensation fiction's fixation with discovery and revelation. *The Eustace Diamonds's* use of gossip and rumour is ultimately shown to both invoke the

spectacle of exposure so dominant in sensation fiction and reshape the teleology of novels with a secret by subverting their linear, reconstructionalist itineraries.

More than looking at a detailed intertextuality between *The Eustace Diamonds* and the *Fortnightly Review*, this chapter deconstructs the structure of the serial's instalments in order to highlight the text's privileging of gossip over fact, revealing how the narrative pattern of the instalments promotes the valuation of rumour over fact by mimicking the repetitive pattern of gossip. In doing so, the chapter emphasizes the influence of the serial form on the thematic designs of the novel.

Overall, *The Eustace Diamonds*'s cynical depiction of truth is read as destabilizing the foundation from which nineteenth-century critics categorized sensation fiction and realism, arguing for a more truthful form of the novel but questioning the very nature of literary truth. Through its narrative methodology, Trollope's novel consequently invokes the tenor of the sensational sixties and marks the epithet as obsolete, revising the rules and conventions of both realism and sensation fiction.

Looking Beyond the Bound Volume

Though seeking to cover a broad range of authors, novels, periodicals, and discourses, the present study is not without its gaps and lacunas. On the sensation fiction front, the study neglects authors like Dickens and Collins and seminal texts like *Lady Audley Secret*; not because they are not relevant, but because such authors and texts have already received their fair share of critical attention. In terms of periodical studies, 'Serializing Sensation' omits to consider textual elements such as advertisements and illustrations and remains almost completely confined to monthly periodicals and monthly serialization, largely omitting weekly publications or

newspaper syndication. The study, though, is meant to provide a small group of instructive case studies, examples that may help to further understand the intricate and entwined relationship between sensation novels and the periodicals in which they first appeared. More broadly, the study hopes to continue to push sensation fiction research forward into new avenues, particularly by looking outside of the tightly bound volume editions modern critics have relied so heavily upon in the past.

Chapter 1

Class, Gender, and the Nation: Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* in the
New Monthly Magazine

In January 1860, *East Lynne*, critically designated as one of the first sensation novels of the 1860s, made its serial début in the nationalist miscellany the *New Monthly Magazine*. The first instalment of Ellen Wood's domestic melodrama was placed between an article promoting Britain's political endeavours to overpower a hostile Moroccan government and a historical biography of former Prime Minister Lord North. Subsequent instalments of the serial continued to be surrounded by articles focused on international politics, military manoeuvres, and influential political leaders. In contrast to the reference articles, the fiction in the magazine, like *East Lynne*, engaged with mainly domestic tropes, depicting stories of courtship, cautionary tales of cross-class marriages, and portraits of scandalous family sagas. This construction has prompted Deborah Wynne to claim,

The *New Monthly's* contents were characterized by a distinct gender divide: the non-fiction, usually based on the lives of great men, military campaigns, and detailed reports of national and international affairs, was designed to appeal to men, while the fiction, depicting pure and virginal heroines suffering the pangs of unrequited love, or young wives neglected by thoughtless husbands, was designed for the female readers.¹

However, I would argue that the gender identity of the magazine is more complex and multifaceted than Wynne allows. Though the *New Monthly's* reference articles were certainly directed at a middle-class male audience, which constituted the majority of the magazine's readers, and the domestic fiction toward a female readership, the nationalist ideology of the magazine permeates both elements of the journal, creating a thematic link between the two sections of the journal. The magazine's patriotic

¹ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), p. 35.

doctrine, unequivocally put forth in the reference articles, was endorsed in the fictional contributions through the very dogma that would seem to divide the magazine: the domestic ideology of separate spheres.

The nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres positioned middle-class women firmly in the realm of the home, removing them from the taint of the public, male world and charging them with the moral guardianship of the home and family. However, the middle-class home was also seen as an index to the health and moral safety of the nation in the nineteenth-century. In 1859 Samuel Smiles declared, ‘The Home is the crystal of society – the very nucleus of national character; and from that source, be it pure or tainted, issue the habits, principles and maxims, which govern public as well as private life.’² Modern critic Lynda Nead has expanded on this notion, noting that, coupled with the concept of separate spheres, was the idea that ‘Regulation, control and peace in the home ensured national security and prosperity’.³ The stability of the middle-class home in the nineteenth century was seen as the nucleus of the strength of the nation as a whole, and thus women, as custodians of the home, were, like men, empowered with a patriotic duty, albeit one that was limited to the home. Read with this dichotomy as its driving force, the *New Monthly*’s publication of domestic fiction like *East Lynne* can be seen as a means of edifying readers of the political and moral value of the family and the larger implications of the stability and moral strength of the home on the state of the nation.

The following analysis will evaluate *East Lynne* within this context, assessing the serial through its nationalist sentiments and its promotion of a modernized version of the separate spheres principle, one that registered women’s active and influential role within the home. Specifically, by looking at a few examples of the novel’s most

² Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray, 1958 [1859]), p. 210.

³ Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 33.

conspicuous instances of Francophobia, Lady Isabel, as an adulterer and fallen woman, is depicted, like France and other foreign threats, in the *New Monthly* as Other; in the sense that she is an entity that is perceived as dangerous and menacing to the English middle class. Further, her ineptitude as a middle-class wife and her disruption to the middle-class home is compared to the middle-class Barbara Hare's competency as a wife and mother. Barbara Hare not only succeeds where the upper-class Lady Isabel fails, but she also replaces the excessively submissive model of womanhood represented by her mother Mrs. Hare. Barbara is delineated as advancing a progressive version of femininity that outstrips the upper-class incompetence represented by Isabel and the outdated version presented by her mother, but one that continues to preserve the patriarchal hierarchy of Victorian society. The chapter also traces Archibald Carlyle's progression into the ideal middle-class man and husband, highlighting how the novel champions the tenets of separate spheres and yet revises them to complement the evolving class and gender dynamics of not only women but men as well during the early 1860s.

The domestic ideology forwarded in *East Lynne* is comparable to that which John Ruskin would later propose in 'Of Queen's Gardens' (1865). Ruskin's lecture is concerned with aligning women's duties with their role in the state, depicting women as a vital cohesive element in the competitive and divisive world of the mid-nineteenth century. Ruskin delineates the errors men have made in portraying women's power, averring that the most foolish wrong 'is the idea that woman is only the shadow and attendant image of her lord, owing him a thoughtless and servile obedience'.⁴ Instead, Ruskin sees women as the helpmates of men, exclaiming, 'As if he could be helped effectively by a shadow, or worthily by a slave!' (87). In thinking

⁴ John Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', in *Sesame and Lilies*, ed. by Robert K. Root (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010 [1865]), pp. 67-110 (p. 87).

of *East Lynne*, the image of a shadow calls up the figure of Isabel, who lingers by her husband's side when he is home and does nothing all day but wait for his return, while that of the slave brings to mind Mrs. Hare, who is in a paralyzed state of fear under the rule of her husband. Like Wood, Ruskin rejects such ineffective versions of womanhood. Instead, Ruskin envisions an active role for a wife, one in which she would create and maintain a productive and stable home. In order to do so, a wife 'must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise – wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side' (91). If successful, a wife would therefore be able 'to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state' (87).

Elizabeth Langland, responding to feminist critiques of Ruskin's paradoxical depiction of women's dual role as compliant peacekeepers of the home and powerful advocates of the state, suggests that, on the one hand, Ruskin argues less for women's social activism and more for the fact that their social effectiveness is just a symptom of innate womanly charm.⁵ On the other hand, Langland posits that 'Ruskin has made familiar – naturalized – the association of women with notions of power and social regulation, however mystified, and so participated in the construction of a new woman' (79).

The tension between an efficacious yet acquiescent wife is also present in Wood's version of domestic ideology. To mediate this discrepancy, Wood presents a modified form of masculinity in the figure of Archibald Carlyle. Carlyle's progression from an oblivious husband to an ideal middle-class man, one that is attuned to the goings-on within the home, complements the modernized, practical woman

⁵ Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1995).

represented by his second wife Barbara Hare. Wood's version of domesticity ideology aims to foster more stability within the home, protecting the middle class from sensational familial melodrama like that induced by Lady Isabel. Wood's novel thus recognizes the progressing gender relations of the mid-Victorian period, even if her ideology, like Ruskin's, remains tied to a popular dogma that continued to locate woman's power solely within the realm of the home. In the context of the *New Monthly*, *East Lynne's* sensational portrayal of adultery and murder highlights the text's larger ideological ambition: more than a sentimental tear-jerker, the novel advocates a progressive stance on the duties of wives and husbands within the home and, consequently, in relation to the state of the nation.

Building a Nation of Patriots

When Henry Colburn, the *New Monthly's* first proprietor and editor, began the magazine in 1814, he aspired to create a journal that reflected the political turmoil of the early nineteenth century and yet countermanded the social instability of the Napoleonic era. The *New Monthly* was thus constructed around serious political articles that discussed weighty national and international issues, many of which tended to radiate a strong patriotism and a xenophobic distaste for France. Between the magazine's inception and 1860 the nonfiction remained remarkably consistent, continually evaluating military and political issues in light of their advantages or disadvantages to Britain's imperialistic endeavours. By instilling the articles with a sense of immediacy and exigency, the reference material emphasized the necessity of a hearty devotion to the interests of Britain and the promotion of British interests over those of other countries, particularly France. Moreover, the journal never hesitated to put forward its own proposals on how best to handle, counter, or engage with current

political situations, presenting its audience with tangible, pragmatic propositions. As a result, the journal was able to construct a nationalist ideology that both instilled its political convictions in its audience and allowed readers to feel a sense of patriotic empowerment through their support of the magazine's straightforward doctrines.

Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities, and the promulgation of such communities through print culture, provides a platform from which to understand how such techniques helped the *New Monthly* form a community of nationalist readers. Anderson, in discussing the mass ceremony of newspaper reading in the creation of imagined communities, notes that 'each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the notion'.⁶ A similar case may be made for the periodical, whose ephemeral quality provides a window of time – weekly, monthly, quarterly – in which most of its readers will concurrently peruse its content, constructing a community of like-minded readers. The *New Monthly's* nationalist views provided a set of beliefs around which its audience could gather, knowing they were embracing a doctrine that was shared by a community of other readers, furthering encouraging their approval of and support for such policies.

The *New Monthly's* nationalism, though, is not just generated through the principle of inclusivity but also through that of exclusivity. Cannon Schmitt's *Alien Nation* demonstrates the 'usefulness of exclusivity and antagonism to defining Englishness, from the conflicted period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, through to the various imperial engagements of the mid-nineteenth century'.⁷

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 35.

⁷ Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1997), p. 108.

Similarly, Linda Colley argues that British nationalism was invented by war, stating, ‘Time and time again, war with France brought Britons [...] into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it.’⁸ Colley continues, ‘In other words, men and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not. Once confronted with an obviously alien “Them”, an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely desperate “Us” ’ (6). The *New Monthly*, while invoking a sense of inclusivity through its imagined community, simultaneously advances a conscious feeling of exclusivity through its incessant Francophobia and rendering of an antagonist Other, which, though typically figured as France, was depicted as any country or entity that represented a threat to Britain’s safety. Consequently, readers of the *New Monthly* are provided with a negative opposite from which to construct their own Englishness, which, in turn, solidifies their place within a community that opposes the Other.

‘The Policy of Annexation’, which appeared in May 1860 alongside the fifth part of *East Lynne*, is emblematic of the type of non-fiction articles the *New Monthly* published. ‘The Policy of Annexation’ depicts the struggle between Belgium and France over the extent of their borders. The article situates the repercussions of the conflict on Britain, noting,

We have devoted considerable space to this subject, but, on reflection, our readers will recognize its importance to England. When the continental war breaks out – and it must do so sooner or later if Napoleon remains on the throne of France – England must have a place to land its troops.⁹

The article not only contextualizes the conflict in terms of its effect on England, but it also provides an example of the frequent Francophobic sentiment that was propagated in the magazine.

⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 5.

⁹ ‘The Policy of Annexation’, *New Monthly Magazine*, 119 (May 1860), 111-23 (p. 121).

Articles like ‘The Policy of Annexation’ crowd the pages of the *New Monthly*, boldly asserting their topics with titles such as ‘The French Army’, ‘Our Golden Empire’, ‘The Chances of Invasion’, and ‘Our National Defences’. Though such articles are generally positive in their support of Britain, the magazine did not hesitate to call attention to Britain’s occasional blunders in the international arena. In the July 1860 article ‘Eastern Africa: French Intrigues’, the author, describing the value of obtaining a stronghold in East Africa, laments a lost ‘opportunity [in Eastern Africa] by the incompetency of a British envoy, [...] of which the French have not been slow to take advantage’.¹⁰ Such criticism, although not prevalent, arguably promotes another technique the magazine exploited to demonstrate the crucial role of patriotism: it reminds readers of the fallibility of Britain, reiterating to readers the need to be informed, committed participants in the international affairs of the nation. The political reference articles in the *New Monthly* thus work effectively to enhance readers’ notion of the necessity of a strong nationalist community while depicting and isolating any threat to Britain as perilous to the supremacy of the country.

Gender Divided, Nation United

Peppered between political reference articles like ‘The Policy of Annexation’ and ‘Eastern Africa: French Intrigues’, the *New Monthly* typically published two or three short stories per issue. The narratives, in contrast to the reference material, focused on the domestic, telling melodramatic stories of virtuous middle-class heroines overcoming various difficulties to marry righteous heroes, transgressive women wreaking havoc on the tranquillity of the domestic circle, or young, middle-class men reaping the consequences of imprudent marriages. The stories’ moral parables

¹⁰ ‘Eastern Africa: French Intrigues’, *New Monthly Magazine*, 119 (July 1860), 344-53 (p. 347).

ultimately promote the importance of middle-class men and women marrying prudently and the ruinous repercussions of marital indiscretions. The narratives typically include sensational plot devices – adultery, bigamy, false identities, murder, and crime – in order to heighten the emotional drama and amplify the poignant moral messages of the stories. The stories, though, usually conclude with some form of spiritual or moral catharsis, in which good defeats evil, evil is appropriately punished, and the upright characters find solace through their trials and sorrows. The fiction, situated within the *New Monthly*, highlighted the subsequent implications caused by the breakdown of the home on the state of nation: if the family unit was destroyed, the foundation of the nation's moral strength would collapse, leaving the country void of healthy, strong men to defend it from foreign invasion.

This type of fiction had been a consistent element in the *New Monthly* since its inception, though in 1837 the journal began to periodically serialize full-length fiction. The magazine, however, failed to publish any novel-length fiction in the 1850s. Yet, with the popularity and success of *East Lynne*, the *New Monthly* began to publish serial fiction on a regular basis; a tradition the magazine continued until 1878, just a few years before its demise in the early 1880s.

East Lynne's narrative of domestic sensation and maternal melodrama is analogous to the magazine's short stories, presenting a woeful tale of wifely indiscretion that ultimately aims, like most of the *New Monthly's* fiction, to draw attention to the vital role of the wife and mother in the middle-class home. *East Lynne* depicts the story of Lady Isabel, left poor after the death of her spendthrift father Lord Mount Severn and thrown on the mercy of a cruel aunt. She marries the middle-class lawyer Archibald Carlyle as a means of escape from her unhappy position. Isabel, though, falls prey to the manipulations and seduction of Francis Levison, absconding

with him in a fury of jealousy over her erroneous presumption of Carlyle's infidelity. Carlyle divorces Isabel, yet Levison refuses to marry her and abandons her and their illegitimate child. The child is killed in a train accident which leaves Isabel disfigured and lame. Isabel then disguises herself as Madame Vine and returns to East Lynne, Carlyle's home, as governess to her children. The last third of the novel focuses on Isabel's repentance and the trials she suffers at being unable to reveal her true identity to her children and being a daily witness to the love between Carlyle and his new wife, Barbara Hare. Isabel's identity is only discovered when she is upon her death bed and she begs Carlyle for forgiveness. There is a significant subplot within the novel concerning a mysterious murder of which Barbara Hare's brother has been accused. Eventually, it is discovered that Levison committed the murder and, though originally sentenced to death, he is eventually given penal servitude for life. Taken as a whole, the narrative contains adultery, the use of false identities, a murder mystery, two courtroom scenes, and incorporates themes of gender and class, the fallen woman, maternal responsibility, and the ideology of self-help.

Wood had been contributing short stories to the *New Monthly* since the early 1850s, publishing over 100 pieces in the magazine from 1851 until the serialization of *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (October 1861-November 1863), her last contribution to the magazine.¹¹ Wood was thus cognizant of the style of fiction the magazine typically published, and *East Lynne*, like her many of previous contributions to the magazine, follows a similar melodramatic formula embraced by the other stories in the magazine. In fact, Wood's brand of domestic sensation can, in large part, be traced to her apprenticeship in the *New Monthly*, which acted as a hotbed for her fiction, a place where she was able to cultivate her distinct style of sentimental sensation.

¹¹ Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, ed. by Elisabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1861]), p. xviii.

Indeed, many of Wood's subsequent full-length novels from the 1860s and beyond were developed from stories she contributed to the *New Monthly* during the 1850s: *The Foggy Night at Offord* (1863); *Mildred Arkell* (1865); *St. Martin's Eve* (1866); *Elster's Folly* (1866); *Adam Grainger* (1876); *Parkwater* (1876); and *Pomeroy Abbey* (1878) are all based on short stories originally published in the *New Monthly*.

East Lynne's periodical placement, then, may have been part of the reason why the serial did not receive much critical attention until it was published in volume form: within the pages of the *New Monthly* the serial corresponded to the kind of fiction readers were accustomed to, and, although it obviously indulges in the scandalous adultery of Lady Isabel and the quasi-redemption of a fallen women, it embodied many of the themes, story lines, and elements that compromised many of the other fictional tales in the journal. The few reviews of the serial published during its serialization were complementary, with the *John Bull* stating in September 1860:

We have learned to look for the story of 'East Lynne' as one of the attractions of the month. It is not a pleasant story and it does not promise a pleasant development; and yet it always attracts us by the interest attaching to the characters and the involved circumstances of the plot.¹²

It was not until a positive review of the book appeared in *The Times* in January 1862 that the novel gained widespread notoriety.¹³ Wood noted the increased popularity of the book edition after the review in letter to Richard Bentley, claiming that *East Lynne* 'has been a very successful book from the first, but since the review in "The Times", its demand has increased four-fold'.¹⁴ With the increase in popularity and exposure, *East Lynne* began to be reviewed alongside the works of Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, with many critics situating the text firmly within the newly christened sensation genre. Jonathan Loesberg has argued

¹² Quoted in Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, ed. by Andrew Maunder (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000 [1861]), p. 707.

¹³ Samuel Lucas, 'Rev. of *East Lynne*', *The Times*, 25 January 1862, p. 6.

¹⁴ Quoted in Maunder, *East Lynne*, p. 696.

persuasively that the sensation genre, ‘at least at first, was as much a creation of the literary journals who grouped the novels together as it was of the novels themselves’.¹⁵ When extracted from its periodical location, *East Lynne*’s fusion of domestic drama and female rebellion, in conjunction with its mass popularity, rather than presenting a homily on preserving the female ideal and the middle-class home, is seen by critics to be comparable to the novels of Collins and Braddon. The text consequently becomes firmly embedded in the sensation fiction genre. By 1863 articles such as ‘Our Female Sensation Novelists’, in which the *Christian Remembrancer* designated *East Lynne* as the ‘first in time’ in the sensation genre, had become ubiquitous.¹⁶

Part of what made *East Lynne*, according to Margaret Oliphant, a ‘dangerous and foolish work’, was the interest Isabel evokes once she becomes a fallen woman, which, according to Oliphant, glamorized female transgression.¹⁷ Oliphant declares,

From first to last it is [Isabel] alone in whom the reader feels any interest. The Magdalen herself, who is only moderately interesting while she is good, becomes, as soon as she is a Magdalen, doubly a heroine. It is evident that nohow [*sic*], except by her wickedness and sufferings, could she have gained so strong a hold upon our sympathies. (567)

East Lynne, though, warns readers in the first instalment of Isabel’s ominous future, remarking, ‘[A]dmire and love her whilst you may, she is worthy of it now, in her innocent girlhood: the time will come when such praise would be misplaced.’¹⁸ The contradictory sentiments – to love Isabel yet prepare to despise her – express the duality of Isabel’s role in the novel as both heroine and fallen woman and conveys the

¹⁵ Jonathan Loesberg, ‘The Ideology of Narrative Form in Sensation Fiction’, *Representations*, 13 (Winter 1986), 115-35 (p. 115).

¹⁶ ‘Our Female Sensation Novelists’, *Christian Remembrancer*, 46 (July 1863), 209-36 (p. 215).

¹⁷ Margaret Oliphant, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 91 (May 1862), 564-84 (p. 567).

¹⁸ Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, *New Monthly Magazine*, 118 (January 1860), p. 34. Further references to *East Lynne* will refer to the serial version of the novel and will denote month of publication and page number.

conflicting emotional responses she aroused in readers; something Oliphant registered and derided in her review of the novel.

The creation of likeable, winsome malefactors was a common trope in sensation fiction. Take, for instance, Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*, which was being serialized in *All the Year Round* at the same time of *East Lynne*'s serialization. However, in *East Lynne*, the underlying moral parable of the narrative – for wives to remain loyal and dedicated to their husbands and families – necessitated that readers feel sympathy for Isabel in order that they could take what Sonia Solicari calls an 'emotional souvenir' away with them after reading the novel.¹⁹ Solicari describes this form of memento as 'material proof of feeling that could be easily digested, displayed and revisited' (1). Female readers, when wavering in their devotion or duties to their husbands, could recall the emotional souvenir of Isabel's sorrow and repentance and persevere in their responsibilities to their families; Isabel's unhappy fate reminding them of the ruinous effects of the alternative.

This is particularly true as the novel, though undoubtedly creating a certain amount of sympathy for Isabel, also accentuates the forlorn position of Isabel after she deserts her family. In one especially poignant scene, Wood replicates yet inverts a scene that had occurred between Carlyle and Isabel when they were married. In the June 1860 instalment, Barbara, who is in love with Carlyle, watches the recently married Isabel and Carlyle flirting and embracing and is undone by the pain of witnessing the love scene. In the March 1861 instalment, almost the identical scene is repeated, but in this instance the positions of Isabel and Barbara are reversed, making Isabel the voyeur rather than the wife. Isabel, witnessing what had once been hers, feels 'terribly' the extent of her actions:

¹⁹ Sonia Solicari, 'Selling Sentiment: The Commodification of Emotion in Victorian Visual Culture', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4 (2007), 1-21 (p. 1).

Barbara was now the honoured and cherished wife, East Lynne's mistress. And what was she? Not even a welcomed guest of an hour: [...] but an interloper; a criminal woman who had thrust herself into the house; [...] her position a most false one.²⁰

Not only has Isabel's vacated position in the home and in Carlyle's heart been filled, but in abandoning her family Isabel has essentially effaced herself, becoming nothing but a trespasser with a false identity. Andrew Maunder points out that, Isabel, through her experience as Madame Vine, learns to value the role of middle-class wife: 'It is not sufficient to show Isabel (or indeed Barbara Hare) acquiescing to the middle-class woman's prescribed role; she must come to want to honour this role as passionately as she once disgraced it.'²¹ By being exposed to the love between Carlyle and Barbara, the extent of Isabel's transgression is brought home to her. Readers, through Isabel's lesson, would likely also realize the full value of the role of wife and mother.

Moreover, though readers may have contracted an emotional connection with Isabel, the narrator's well-known appeal to women to endure the hardships of married life proclaims the adverse repercussions of Isabel's actions in no uncertain terms:

Lady – wife – mother! [...] Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, *resolve* to bear them; [...] for be assured that the alternative, if you rush on to it, will be found far worse than death.²²

'The urgency of Mrs. Wood's message', Elaine Showalter remarks of the passage, 'suggests that she felt herself to be speaking to a large and desperate audience.'²³ And this certainly seems to have been the case, as just three months previous to the instalment in which *East Lynne's* narrator's beseeches female readers to remain

²⁰ (March 1861), p. 298.

²¹ Andrew Maunder, "'Stepchild of Nature': *East Lynne* and the Spectre of Female Degeneracy, 1860-1861', in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 59-71 (p. 68).

²² (November 1860), p. 266. Emphasis in original.

²³ Elaine, Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (London: Virago Press, 1977), p. 173.

dedicated to their husbands and homes, the *New Monthly* published an article propounding the necessity of wives respecting and reverencing their husbands.

‘Domestic Hero-Worship’ appeared in August 1860, juxtaposed alongside the instalment of *East Lynne* that depicts Isabel’s rising infatuation for Levison. The article persistently argues for the necessity of a wife’s domestic hero-worship of her husband, warning,

never presume to entrench upon the esoteric admiration and reverence due to that household divinity [...] to whose worship every truly good woman of a house consecrates an inner shrine, and devotes herself in the very act of holding out her finger for the wedding-ring.²⁴

When domestic hero-worship is abandoned, the author sees divorce as the only alternative:

If you could push the object of domestic hero-worship from his throne, it would be by such a revolution in family relations as would render Sir Cresswell Cresswell’s ‘miserabile remedium’ – his divorcing decree – the crowning, the only mercy left for those desecrated hearths on which the household divinity lay shivered and broken by your reckless and inhuman achievement. (476)

The sentiment stands no matter the quality of the man, for regardless of his nature, whether he is ‘hideous both mentally and corporeally’ or ‘embodied meannesses’, he is the ‘household divinity’ (478). And though one may question if ‘such home idolatry as this is to be encouraged and endured’, the author emphatically replies, ‘To such a question we deliberately say yes! – a thousand times yes! – such cavils of the clear-eyed are not to disturb the sanctity of domestic hero-worship’ (478). In the instalment of *East Lynne* that appeared alongside ‘Domestic Hero-Worship’, the novel’s narrator spouts a similar message, warning women to remain loyal to their husbands regardless of their husbands’ actions: ‘The time will arrive when his manner must settle down into a calmness, which to you [...] may look like indifference, or coldness; but you

²⁴ ‘Domestic Hero-Worship’, *New Monthly Magazine*, 119 (August 1860), 475-85 (p. 475).

will do well to put up with it.’²⁵ Whatever the faults of their husbands, the article and *East Lynne* insist that it is a woman’s role to bear it as best as possible.

What is more, the article comments on how domestic hero-worship was a particularly important element in English homes as compared to foreign cultures:

Of the home of other countries we pretend not to know the mysteries; on that boarding house, ‘un*hearthly*’ life, which they tell us dollar-making families in the New World endure, we look with the wonder and abhorrence in which we eschew *socialism*; but this we do know, that it would be a black day for our own England if the charm of this happy illusion could ever be broken. (477 Emphasis in original)

Significantly, in alluding to the illusion of domestic hero-worship being broken, the writer invokes the metaphor of foreign invasion: ‘But, as Lord Ashburton has said of invasion, “the thing must never be” – it can never happen: it is impossible so long as the gude [*sic*] wives of the nation remain in the land’ (477). Here is not only an unequivocal defence of the domestic ideology, but also a direct correlation within the magazine between the stability of the home and the security of the nation, connected through the honesty and reverence of women. The forthright depiction of the value of domestic order and harmony, and the serious repercussions of its breakdown, could not fail to magnify the gravity of Isabel’s conduct. In the *New Monthly*, then, though readers would certainly feel sympathy for Isabel, that sympathy was meant to act as a deterrent to female readers from imitating Isabel rather than a sensational spur for women to emulate such actions.

‘Domestic Hero-Worship’ also synthesizes factual elements – Sir Cresswell Cresswell was in fact the judge appointed to the newly created divorce court – with illustrations taken from fiction. In addition to mentioning Charles Dickens’s Sophie Traddles, Thomas Chopper’s family from William Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* is held up as

²⁵ (August 1860), p. 406.

a thorough a specimen as could be selected of the magic with which domestic hero-worship can invest the coarsest, clumsiest idol in a halo of home reverence and awe, while the said Chopper's admiring wife and peeping children in the background give just as life-like an embodiment of that contented faith in imagined excellence which constitutes the household bliss of many a home in England. (477)

The literal amalgamation of fact and fiction acknowledges that moral lessons could be taught and learnt from fictional outlets as well as factual sources, a sentiment supported by the *New Monthly's* utilization of its fiction as moral allegories, which strove to express to readers the necessity of domestic hero-worship and the importance of men marrying respectable women and women remaining loyal to their husbands and home. A message Wood attempted to articulate to readers of *East Lynne*.

Creating a Middle-Class Ideal

Before analysing the novel's reconsideration of the domestic ideology, the next section looks first at a few instances of Francophobia within *East Lynne* in order to contextualize the serial within the *New Monthly's* principle of exclusivity and to expose how Isabel's sensational crime positions her as Other. *East Lynne's* sensational depiction of Lady Isabel's social crime is depicted as a disintegration of family values, which, in turn, is equated to a decline in morality and consequently a weakening of the nation state. From there, Wood's reworked, somewhat problematic rendering of the domestic ideology is dissected. Overall, the serial is shown to be intuitive of the transitional period of the mid-nineteenth century, reflecting the evolving gender dynamics of the period and the still-developing position of the middle class in the socio-economic and political complexion of Britain during the period.

The first instalment of *East Lynne* describes Carlyle as ‘becoming national’ when he is discussing a Parisian shawl his sister asked him to buy. Carlyle says, ‘For my part, I don’t see why foreign goods should bear the palm over British. [...] If I wore shawls, I would discard the best French one ever made, for a good honest one from our own manufactories, Norwich or Paisley.’²⁶ Carlyle’s support of British products immediately aligns him with the *New Monthly*’s readers, all of whom would likely be zealous in their patronage of British wares and their resistance to French imports. The retort also immediately establishes the division between Britain and France, something the novel continues to do in its portrayal of French cities.

When it is advised that Lady Isabel visit Boulogne-sur-Mer, a city in northern France, for her health, she responds, ‘Boulogne-sur-Mer, of all places in the world! [...] It is spoken of as being crowded and vulgar.’²⁷ She is, however, sent to Boulogne for its restorative qualities, but Carlyle, who cannot stay in the town with her, urges her not to make acquaintances ‘indiscriminately’.²⁸ Carlyle notes that many people visit the town from disreputable motives, describing how English men and women flock to towns such as Boulogne to avoid ‘Kites, and bills, and ghosts of renewed acceptance’.²⁹ Carlyle’s description of the city portrays it as a haven for English men and women who are forced to leave Britain because of the threat of debtor’s prison or other criminal repercussions; the precise reason for Levison’s appearance in Boulogne. Isabel, unprotected and alone, is able to reignite her attraction for Levison when she meets him in the town. It is to France as well, ‘that refuge for such fugitives’, that Isabel flees to once she abandons her family.³⁰ Isabel settles in the French city of Grenoble, pretending to be Levison’s wife. The narrator describes her

²⁶ (January 1860), p. 45.

²⁷ (August 1860), p. 405.

²⁸ (August 1860), p. 414.

²⁹ (August 1860), p. 414.

³⁰ (October 1860), p. 150.

cold and ineffectually designed French house, and, seeming to pass judgment on the quality of the town, notes that after Lord Mount Severn visited Isabel in her exile he returned to ‘the pleasure and bustle of civilised life’.³¹ It is in France as well that Isabel is able to change her identity and reinvent herself as Madame Vine, making her way, without references, into an English home as a governess. These representations of France position the country as a refuge for England’s banished outcasts, giving sanctuary to criminals, adulterers, and other undesirable characters. Rejected from civilized society, the cast-offs find homes in the morally dubious cities in France. These disreputable factions of English society, Isabel included, join the ranks of the Other: excluded from England and good society, allied to a foreign land, and deemed dangerous to English virtues and morality.

In addition to representing France as a hideaway for disreputable persons, the novel also draws attention to the internal threat of the French, the most blatant example being presented by Justice Hare, Barbara’s father. Assuming Madame Vine is French, Justice Hare is relieved to find out she is not:

‘Beg pardon’, said the justice. ‘But I heard there was a French madam coming here: and I’m sure you look French’, he added, staring at her blue spectacles and her disfiguring dress. ‘I shouldn’t have taken you for English, if you had not told me; but I’m glad to hear it. No good ever comes of a French governess in one’s house. Keep ‘em at arm’s length, say I.’³²

Justice Hare relates how Barbara and her sister had a French governess against his wishes, fearing she would ‘turn [them] all papists [...] and require frogs to be served up for her dinner’.³³ The governess has an affair with Mr. Hare’s brother, which, according to Justice Hare, gave ‘Mrs. Hare a sickener for French jesuits of governesses’.³⁴ Elisabeth Jay notes how in this story Justice Hare combines popular

³¹ (November 1860), p. 275.

³² (March 1861), p. 280.

³³ (March 1861), p. 281.

³⁴ (March 1861), p. 281.

prejudices against the French and the Jesuits, stating that the Jesuits' dual mission to combat Protestantism and remain obedient to the Pope 'converted them into the bogymen of patriotic Englishmen, who represented them as prepared to employ any deceit to gain their purposes'.³⁵ Justice Hare continues his rant against the French, telling Lucy Carlyle that she would 'have been changed into a frog, or something worse, if they had turned [her] over to a French mademoiselle'.³⁶ Though Justice Hare's speech is suffused with comic rhetoric, and the Justice himself a droll, uncouth character, his attitude reveals a common fear of the harmful influence of the French on the English, and not just from the external danger posed by Napoleon, but also internally, in the form of French governesses, who are in a position to pollute the minds and morals of England's young girls.

The Justice's fear of such contamination is evident in his claim that if Lady Isabel 'hadn't had a French mademoiselle of a governess in the first years of her life, she'd never have [...] done as she did'.³⁷ Isabel's motherless state is alluded to in the text as a cause of her iniquitous actions, leaving her with no womanly role model to emulate. Justice Hare's statement expands on this theme, suggesting that the motherless void in Isabel's life is filled by a French, therefore malicious, influence in the form of her governess. The innate iniquity and immorality of the French is transferred to and instilled in Isabel by her governess, causing Isabel, thus infected, to abandon her husband and family. The idea that Isabel's transgression could stem from her association with a French governess may seem improbable to a modern audience, yet situated in the context of the Francophobic *New Monthly*, contemporary readers would have attached a legitimate level of significance to Justice Hare's statement. This is true for many of the nationalistic and anti-foreign sentiments within the text:

³⁵ Jay, ed., *East Lynne*, p. 637.

³⁶ (March 1861), p. 282.

³⁷ (March 1861), p. 282.

they may be slighted or ignored by a modern volume reader but within the pages of the *New Monthly* such allusions would have been readily observed and given a valid degree of importance.

Remodelling the Middle Class

Justice Hare's slur regarding Isabel's upbringing is just another of many indications that Isabel was unfit to be Carlyle's wife, the most prominent being her aristocratic heritage. For although Carlyle remarks that 'Country solicitors have married peers' daughters before now', Isabel's class immediately positions her as ill-equipped to fill the role of middle-class wife.³⁸ As the daughter of an earl, Isabel has no experience with the practical occupations of a middle-class wife. Her upper-class rearing hinders her adaption to a middle-class lifestyle, bestowing upon her no serviceable skills but rather the refinements of a lady, which seem to hinder not help her in the role of Carlyle's wife. Even Isabel's angelic, ethereal appearance distances her from the pragmatic dimensions of the middle class, elevating her above the practical responsibilities of a middle-class wife and mother. Upon first seeing Isabel, looking 'as one from a fairer world than this', Carlyle was 'not quite sure whether it was a human being; he almost thought it more like an angel'.³⁹ In the third instalment Carlyle even likens Isabel to the other unnecessary objects at the her father's opulent table: 'the unnecessary profusion of splendour! thought Mr. Carlyle, as he sat down to the Lord Mount Severn's dinner-table. The display of shining silver, of glittering glass, of costly china; [...] the many servants in handsome livery; [...] and its refined

³⁸ (May 1860), p. 110.

³⁹ (January 1860), p. 32.

young mistress!’⁴⁰ Though the narrator warns Carlyle to ‘Take care of [his] senses’ as he surveys this splendour, Carlyle purchases the bulk of it, Isabel included.⁴¹

The narrator again interjects when Carlyle is about to propose to Isabel, lamenting that ‘His better genius was surely not watching over him, or those words had never been spoken [*sic*]’.⁴² Carlyle himself recognizes the unfitness of his marriage to Isabel, purposely hiding the engagement from his friends and family until he is already married. As for Isabel, she is depicted as a child as she contemplates Carlyle’s proposal rather than a sensible woman: ‘as a child she reasoned, looking neither far nor deep: the shallow, palpable aspect of affairs presenting itself to her view’.⁴³ In considering her position as Carlyle’s wife she

forgot that her position at East Lynne [...] would not be what it had been as Lord Mount Severn’s daughter; she forgot that she would be tied to a quiet home, shut out from the great world, from the pomps and vanities to which she was born.⁴⁴

Isabel’s inability to envision the life she would live as Carlyle’s wife signals her ineptitude for such a post, a fact that is exposed immediately upon her arrival at East Lynne as its mistress. Upon being asked for the daily meat order, she is clueless, being ‘Totally ignorant [as] she was of the requirements of a household’.⁴⁵ Isabel is also ignorant of the duties of a middle-class lawyer like Carlyle, asking him to ‘go round the grounds’ when he needs to leave for work.⁴⁶ Unable to perform the household duties of a wife, Isabel is supplanted by Cornelia, Carlyle’s sister, leaving Isabel, who ‘with her refined manners and her timid and sensitive temperament, had no chance against the strong-minded woman’, as ‘little more than an automaton’ in

⁴⁰ (March 1860), p. 279.

⁴¹ (March 1860), p. 279.

⁴² (May 1860), p. 94.

⁴³ (May 1860), p. 95.

⁴⁴ (May 1860), p. 95.

⁴⁵ (June 1860), p. 204.

⁴⁶ (June 1860), p. 205.

her own home.⁴⁷ In contrast, the narrator states that if Cornelia had remained at East Lynne once Barbara became its mistress, ‘There would [have been] drawn battles between her and Mrs. Carlyle.’⁴⁸ The statement highlights Barbara’s more active dedication to running her household, and, more importantly, her accession to the powerful matriarchal position within the home, the position a wife should obtain and value, and the one Isabel is unable to gain or appreciate until she abandons it.

Helena Michie argues that Isabel’s inability to fully accede to the role of Carlyle’s wife is due to her failure to transform into his true mate upon marriage. In discussing the transformative process of marriage, Michie contends that,

marriage itself, as it was configured in Victorian culture, assumed a fundamental change of self on the part of woman, most overtly marked by the change in name and status conferred upon her by the act of marrying. The change described by marriage was of course deeper than a nominal one; in a culture that equated singleness with virginity and virginity with innocence, marriage could only produce a radical realignment of subjectivity, a completely changed relation to body, to culture, and to notions of self-identity.⁴⁹

Michie believes that Isabel fails to undergo this process, positing that, ‘The transformation of Isabel Vane into Isabel Carlyle is incomplete, insufficiently double, because she has already created, for herself and by herself, a sexual self unsanctioned and uncontained by marriage’ through her feelings for Levison (61). Isabel’s frequently shifting appellations confirm her inability to carve out a definitive identity for herself. She begins as Isabel Vane; then becomes Isabel Carlyle; after leaving Carlyle she pretends to be Levison’s wife; and when she is unable to legitimately transform herself into Lady Levison, she assumes the false identity of Madame Vine. After her death, she reverts back to Isabel Vane, her gravestone inscribed with the

⁴⁷ (July 1860), p. 269.

⁴⁸ (February 1861), p. 192.

⁴⁹ Helena Michie, *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 61.

only true identity she has possessed: I.M.V: Isabel Mary Vane, her maiden name.⁵⁰ Incapable of adequately conforming to the role of middle-class wife and mother, Isabel remains Isabel Vane, eventually being buried next to her father, like a child, rather than her husband, as a wife typically would be.

In contrast, the middle-class Barbara Hare provides Carlyle with a devoted wife, healthy children, monetary means to help forward his political career, and a reverence equal to domestic hero-worship. Though loving Carlyle when he did not return her love, and berating him with her love after he was married to Isabel, the narrator observes Barbara's maturation through the intervening years:

Barbara had grown more gentle and tender of late years, the bitterness of her pain had passed away leaving all that had been good in her love to mellow and fertilize her nature. Her character had been greatly improved by sorrow.⁵¹

Just as Isabel must learn to appreciate the role of wife, so too must Barbara learn the full value of the role before she can accede to it and succeed in it. Her suffering in the wake of Carlyle's marriage to Isabel and her continued devotion to him through the years after his divorce consequently make her more grateful to become his wife and more eager to prove herself as a capable and suitable partner for him. Indeed, Barbara settles into the role of middle-class wife with ease and aptitude, running an efficient household and pursuing a strict method of raising the children. E. Ann Kaplan, in a psychoanalytic study of the novel's melodramatic tactics, argues that Isabel's over devotion to her children serves as a warning to female readers against the excess of maternal feeling.⁵² In contrast, Barbara's child rearing system, which the text describes in detail, is, as Andrew Mangham describes it, 'one of controlled and moderate affection; and one, moreover, that seems to assure her success as surely as

⁵⁰ (September 1861), p. 48.

⁵¹ (September 1860), p. 23.

⁵² E. Ann Kaplan, 'The Political Unconscious in the Maternal Melodrama: Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*', in *Gender, Genre and Narrative Pleasure*, ed. by Derek Longhurst (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 31-50.

Isabel's abandon guaranteed hers'.⁵³ Barbara's ability and Isabel's inability to create a stable, well-run home solidifies Barbara's superiority and that of the middle class more generally. And though, as Oliphant noted, readers may not have been as fond of Barbara or have connected as emotionally with her as they did with Isabel, it is Barbara's position as a happy wife, not Isabel's miserable fate, they certainly would have endeavoured to attain.

Barbara's success as Carlyle's wife is one of many instances that proclaim the novel's championing of the middle class and its recent and ongoing hegemony. *East Lynne*, like much of Wood's fiction, continually contrasts the moral quality of the middle class to the iniquity of the aristocracy, registering the failure of the upper class financially, morally, and politically while emphasizing the ascendancy of the middle class. While Barbara represents the middle-class feminine ideal, Carlyle figures as the masculine ideal, quietly ascending, as Wynne states, 'the social ladder without appearing ambitious for power'.⁵⁴ Carlyle is portrayed as honest, forthright, and honourable, while most of the aristocrats are depicted as disreputable, conniving, and despicable. Mount Severn, Lady Isabel's father, is represented as the embodiment of aristocratic disgrace, squandering his fortune and his health. He leaves his daughter penniless and homeless and has so many unpaid debts that East Lynne is inundated with debt collectors upon his death; indeed, even his corpse is arrested for payment of a bill. Francis Levison, the heir of a baronet, is an even worse man than Mount Severn. Levison, like Mount Severn, is a spendthrift, but he is also a deceitful man, lying to Isabel about Carlyle's meetings with Barbara and then abandoning Isabel and his child. Levison's worst crime, though, is the fact that he is a murderer. Levison, during

⁵³ Andrew Mangham, *Violent Woman and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine, and Popular Culture* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 133.

⁵⁴ Wynne, p. 66.

his affair with the lower-class Afy Halijohn, accidentally shoots her father and runs away, pinning the murder on Barbara's brother Richard.

Carlyle is depicted as replacing these disgraceful factions of the aristocracy. Carlyle acquires the Earl of Mount Severn's property and he bests Levison in a parliamentary election. Like the comparison between Barbara and Isabel, the head-to-head competition of the election, in which the candidate's political parties are not even mentioned, demonstrates the superiority of Carlyle and the middle class over Levison and the aristocracy in general. The election also serves as added punishment for Isabel, who must watch Levison and his agents skulk 'around the town like dogs' while Carlyle is praised for his noble demeanour.⁵⁵

Wynne argues that Wood's negative depiction of the aristocracy in *East Lynne* is owing to Wood's middle-class characters, as well as Wood and her readers, 'secretly resent[ing] those who enjoyed the benefits of wealth and status without having to work for them'.⁵⁶ Wynne asserts that readers would therefore 'gloat' over the downfall of aristocrats like Lady Isabel (67). Wynne's interpretation of Wood's use of class conflict, though, is difficult to justify. Isabel's uncle, the subsequent Earl of Mount Severn, is portrayed as a stringent yet caring man, visiting Lady Isabel after she leaves Carlyle and providing her with pecuniary support. The narrator says of him that, 'stern and uncompromising as he was, he had yet a large share of kindness and conscientiousness.'⁵⁷ And though his wife is of lesser quality, his son is shown to be a respectable and worthy man, who, it is hinted at, will marry Isabel and Carlyle's daughter, ultimately merging a virtuous segment of the aristocracy with the moral and economic power of the middle class. Though Wynne believes Wood to be inciting a 'quiet revolution' between her middle-class and upper-class characters, it seems clear

⁵⁵ (April 1860), p. 423.

⁵⁶ Wynne, p. 67.

⁵⁷ (November 1860), p. 270.

that Wood, although certainly constructing a model of middle-class ascendancy, promotes the principles of self-help rather than a form of usurpation.⁵⁸

Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) sold over 20,000 copies in its first year of publication and was extremely influential in advocating the Victorian notion of middle-class social mobility and the image of the self-made man.⁵⁹ *East Lynne*'s critical portrayal of a lack of employment or dedication to a distinct pursuit, a prevailing disposition in many of the novel's upper-class characters, is reminiscent of Smiles's doctrine, exposing such inactivity as detrimental to a person's attitude and frame of mind. The opening scene of the novel, which describes Mount Severn's financial demise, cautions readers of the harmful repercussions of an idle life. Having been an active and respected lawyer, Mount Severn falls into dissipation upon inheriting the title, causing the narrator remark that the earl would have been better off 'had he lived and died plain William Vane'.⁶⁰ Isabel as well is idle, scorning to fold napkins with Cornelia and whiling her days away waiting for her husband to come home. Her lack of employment creates ennui that leaves her vulnerable to gossip about Barbara and her husband; gossip that plants the first seeds of her distrust toward her husband, which, augmented with the lies Levison tells her, culminates in her elopement with Levison. In comparison, Carlyle is industrious and hard-working, spending long hours at his office and investing his money safely and conscientiously. His assiduous nature positions Carlyle as a middle-class hero, one that the middle-class readers of the *New Monthly* could respect and emulate. For although the *New Monthly*'s fiction ostensibly caters to a female readership, Wood certainly would have

⁵⁸ Wynne, p. 68.

⁵⁹ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (London: John Murray, 1958). For more on the influence of Smiles's book see R. J. Morris, 'Samuel Smiles and the Genesis of Self-Help: The Retreat to a Petit Bourgeois Utopia', *The Historical Journal*, 24:1 (March 1981), 89-109.

⁶⁰ (January 1860), p. 28.

expected a large number of male readers for the original serial given that men provided the bulk of the *New Monthly*'s audience.

Janice M. Allan has recently argued that Wood's novella *Parkwater*, which was published in the *New Monthly* in 1857, 'was self-consciously appealing to the magazine's male readers'.⁶¹ Allan, in her comparison of the novella version of *Parkwater* to that of the book-length version that was published in *The Argosy* in 1875, argues persuasively that Wood consciously wrote the novella to suit the mainly male audience of the *New Monthly*, later refashioning the text to correspond to the readership of *The Argosy*. A similar case can be made for *East Lynne*, particularly as Wynne has detected a direct address to male readers in the serial version that was later removed from the volume edition of the novel.⁶² The extracted sentence, which originally appeared in the February 1860 instalment of the serial, is an aside from the narrator defending Carlyle's noble and just business conduct: 'No, rest you assured, sir, that when business is conducted upon honest and sincere principles, it must and does prosper.'⁶³ The sentence denotes Wood's awareness of her male readers while the guarantee encourages men to act honestly and openly in their public duties and thus imitate the successful of Carlyle. Indeed, Kaplan notes that through Carlyle's

solid, respectable manliness, his rationality, his calmness in the face of turmoil, his control in the face of loss and crisis, in his dedication to work and his service to the community, Mr. Carlyle stands as the epitome of middle-class values of the time – the very bedrock on which the nation could stand.⁶⁴

Carlyle, though, is not faultless. His rash, emotionally driven marriage to Isabel serves as a caution to middle-class men, warning them against the growing practice amongst middle-class men of marrying upper-class women. Like Barbara,

⁶¹ Janice M. Allan, 'A "base and spurious thing": Reading and Deceptive Femininity in Ellen Wood's *Parkwater* (1857)', *Critical Survey* 23:1 (Spring 2011), 8-24 (p.13).

⁶² Wynne, p. 61.

⁶³ (February 1860), p. 152.

⁶⁴ E. Ann Kaplan, p. 44.

Carlyle's suffering facilitates his development. The narrator notes that after Isabel abandons him, Carlyle becomes more stoic. Not only does his hair silver, a sign of his maturation, but 'his manner, too, would never again be careless and lights as it once had been'.⁶⁵ Further, Carlyle chooses his second wife more pragmatically than his impulsive engagement to Isabel. When about to ask Isabel to marry him, the narrator, perceiving Carlyle's heightened emotion, wonders, 'What emotion was it that agitated his countenance, impeded his breath, and dyed his face blood-red?'⁶⁶ Conversely, Carlyle's proposal to Barbara was 'spoken in the quietest, most matter-of-fact tone, just as if he had said, Shall I give you a chair, Barbara'.⁶⁷ Moreover, before his second marriage, rather than hide his engagement, he is confident in his choice of bride. In defending his decision to his sister, who snidely remarks that Barbara 'may go and disgrace you, as the last one did!', Carlyle replies that he is 'not afraid of that, in the one [he has] now chosen'.⁶⁸

In his second marriage, Carlyle is also more attentive to the needs of his wife. Having failed to realize the extent of Isabel's unhappiness and Cornelia's interference in his first marriage, he rids the house of Cornelia after his marriage to Barbara, finally comprehending the importance of his wife, not his sister, running his home. Lyn Pykett notes Carlyle's inability to grasp the import of such issues during his first marriage, stating,

Initially dominated by his competent, combative and masculinised half-sister, Cornelia, he is consistently blind to the tensions in his own home. This is partly because he is, as a man, presumed to be inherently incapable of fathoming the mysteries of the domestic sphere, and partly because he is frequently absent from it and habitually preoccupied with the concerns of the masculine world of work.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ (December 1860), p. 394.

⁶⁶ (May 1860), p. 94.

⁶⁷ (January 1861), p. 88.

⁶⁸ (February 1861), p. 176.

⁶⁹ Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 120.

However, with his marriage to Barbara, Pykett argues that Carlyle ultimately moves beyond the problematic family dynamic of Cornelia and Isabel to a ‘modernised version – presided over by a capable wife with modern ideas of domestic management and motherhood, who actively supports her husband’s new career as Member of Parliament’ (121). Carlyle certainly seems more aware of the requirements of a husband in his marriage to Barbara. For instance, after the failure of communication between him and Isabel caused so much havoc in their marriage, Carlyle is more communicative in his relationship with Barbara. Whereas with Isabel he never discussed his meetings with Barbara, or, indeed, any of his business proceedings, he and Barbara are seen discussing many important issues with one another, including Carlyle’s acceptance of West Lynne’s nomination for parliament. He also decides to inform Barbara of the true identity of Madame Vine after her death:

Should he, or should he not, tell his wife? He would have preferred not to tell her. [...] But it was known to three others [...] [and] it was impossible for Mr. Carlyle to make sure that not one of them would ever [...] let the secret come to the knowledge of Mrs. Carlyle. That would not do: if she must hear it at all, she must hear it from him, and at once.⁷⁰

Although he is wary of informing her, Carlyle does so knowing it is for the better. And he does so knowing that she can handle the truth. Isabel, always depicted as a child and frequently ill and weak, is too delicate and sheltered, too unaware of everyday matters to cope with pragmatic decisions and discussions. Barbara, though, is portrayed as a true partner to Carlyle, supporting and helping him in his decisions. Barbara too shows her openness by declaring her jealous feelings for Isabel and Isabel’s children, telling Carlyle,

there has been a feeling in my heart against your children, a sort of jealous feeling, [...] because they were hers; because she had once been your wife. I

⁷⁰ (September 1861), p. 49.

knew how wrong it was, and I have tried earnestly to subdue it [...] It will come with time.⁷¹

In comparison, Isabel lacks the fortitude to speak candidly to her husband. She often wished ‘she had had the courage to speak out opening to her husband’ about Cornelia’s treatment of her and falters in warning Carlyle against inviting Levison to East Lynne:

It came into her minds as she lay there, to tell him a portion of the truth, like it had done once before. [...] Why did she not confide herself to him as trusting as a little child? Simply because her courage failed. Once, twice, the opening words were on her lips, but come forth they did not.⁷²

Barbara and Carlyle’s marriage is also cast in a very different light than that of Barbara’s parents, the Hares, a marriage devised on a seemingly antiquated system of excessively dominant husband and completely submissive wife. The exaggerated form of domestic ideology represented by the Hares is depicted as pathetic and ridiculous. Justice Hare is seen as excitable, callous, and domineering, the opposite of the rational, modern man personified by Carlyle. Justice Hare terrorizes his family, his wife in particular, declining, for instance, in a tone of ‘indifference’ when Mrs. Hare begs him to let her have her tea early.⁷³ On her side, Mrs. Hare is submissive to a fault. Her unwillingness to order tea against her husband’s wishes causes the narrator to comment,

It may occur to the reader that a lady in her own house, ‘dying for her tea’, might surely order it brought in [...]. Not so Mrs. Hare. Since her husband had first brought her home [...] she had never dared to express a will in it; scarcely of her own responsibility, to give an order.⁷⁴

It is even remarked that Mrs. Hare would have agreed with her husband ‘had he proposed to set the house on fire and burn her up in it’.⁷⁵ Justice Hare frowns upon

⁷¹ (September 1861), p. 50.

⁷² (July 1860), p. 273; (August 1860), p. 419.

⁷³ (January 1860), p. 41.

⁷⁴ (January 1860), p. 40.

⁷⁵ (December 1860), p. 393.

Carlyle's lenient manner toward Barbara, retorting to Carlyle, 'You'd kill her with indulgence before you'd keep her in order. That's you, Carlyle.'⁷⁶ When Justice Hare suffers a stroke, which leaves him in a state of 'imbecility', his decline allows the always ailing Mrs. Hare to become 'a young and happy woman again' and she and her son set up a 'happy, happy home'.⁷⁷ For, unlike his father, Richard Hare, Barbara's brother, is depicted as a caring and sensitive man, providing a home for his mother in which she can prosper rather than remain a static, useless entity.

The Hare's marriage, with the Justice's authoritative methods and Mrs. Hare's excessive passivity, is portrayed as antithetical to the progressing dynamics of the middle class: she is constantly ill and he is portrayed as unreasonable and irascible, condemning his own son of crime he didn't commit. The decline of Justice Hare and the rise of Carlyle gestures toward a new order of the middle-class man. Likewise, the success of Barbara, often described as 'saucy', denotes the emergence of an obedient yet active wife as guardian and companion of the home. Jay notes the 'generational change' manifest in *East Lynne's* representation of marriageable women, remarking that 'the choice offered between the life of the comic termagant spinster, Miss Corny, and the frightened passivity in which Justice Hare's wife feels constrained to live gives way to the feisty capability of the unmarried Barbara Hare'.⁷⁸ *East Lynne's* depiction of a new generation of women and men articulates the developing roles of middle-class husbands and wives in the mid-nineteenth century, presenting a picture of marriage and the home that accommodated a revised standard of femininity and masculinity, one that fed into the *New Monthly's* conception of patriotism and duty.

Though moving beyond the model of marriage presented by the Hares, the novel nevertheless insists that women continue to respect and honour their husbands.

⁷⁶ (March 1861), p. 292.

⁷⁷ (September 1861), p. 37.

⁷⁸ Jay, ed., *East Lynne*, p. xxvi.

The novel's delineation of the domestic ideology thus remains true in spirit but modern in character to the separate spheres credo. However, like Ruskin, Wood's creed remains equivocal. But the ambiguity of *East Lynne* is part of what marks the novel's contemporaneity. The novel's struggle to update gender and class roles continues to be driven by antiquated discourses, reflecting contemporary society's own endeavours to come to terms with the evolving social, economic, and political landscape of the mid-nineteenth century. Rather than being pigeonholed as a purely sentimental maternal melodrama then, *East Lynne* should be viewed as an early sign of popular fiction exploiting sensational mechanisms of secrets, scandal, and mystery to direct a spotlight on a variety of domestic and cultural systems that were in a state of transition in 1860. *East Lynne*, like all of the novels examined in this study, affirms that sensation fiction was more than a literary spectacle promulgated in popular periodicals, but was in fact a persuasive signifier in the evolving social and literary terrain of the Victorian period.

Chapter 2

Circumstances Can Lie!: Questioning the Evidence in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's
Aurora Floyd

In February 1860, the *Cornhill's* editor, William Thackeray, published 'Nil Nisi Bonum', an article in which he summarizes his notion of the role of the middle-class family magazine. Jennifer Phegley notes of the article,

In the *Cornhill*, William Thackeray compares the cultural role of the family literary magazine to that of a connoisseur who watches over the reader's shoulder, educating the reader 'to admire rightly' because an 'uninstructed person in a museum or at the concert may pass without recognizing a picture or a passage of music, which the connoisseur by his side may show him is a masterpiece of harmony, or a wonder of artistic skill'.¹

Phegley adduces the article to enhance her argument that the content of mid-Victorian family literary magazines such as *Cornhill*, *Belgravia*, and *Temple Bar*

reinforced the middle-class behavior and values of those who belonged to that class and tutored those who were attempting to move into it by speaking authoritatively on middle-class culture with a few nods and winks to those who already knew the ropes. (16)

This chapter, though, will show how Phegley's generalization of middle-class literary magazines does not hold true of *Temple Bar*. Rather than striving to assume the role of connoisseur, *Temple Bar's* editor, George Augustus Sala, forwarded an image of the magazine as a host who would initiate conversation and debate within its pages and prompt its guests – i.e. the readers – when necessary, but would leave it to them to analyse and interpret the information. In constructing this image, Sala formulates a direct link between the journal and its audience, removing himself as editor from the 'conversation':

A host, after making two persons known to one another, generally stands by for a few moments to lead, or at all events to join in, the conversation; but as

¹ Jennifer Phegley, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004), p. 17.

soon as he sees that conversation is in full swing, he glides off to the other guests.²

Temple Bar, although striving to act as an educational and cultural guide for its readership, rejects the role of expert. Instead, the magazine published articles that alternatively supported and contested bourgeois principles and ideals in a bid to create autonomous readers who were able to form their own opinions and judgments. Through its mixed and divergent content, the magazine, rather than leaning over its readers' shoulders in an attempt to corral them to 'admire rightly' as *Cornhill* aimed, attempted to create independent readers who, instead of being told what to think, could think for themselves.

In order to highlight *Temple Bar's* autonomous complexion, the following analysis concentrates on the magazine's three-article series deliberating the reliability of circumstantial evidence in criminal trials. The series offers an illustrative example of the magazine's candid and multidimensional scrutiny of contemporary discourses, while also embodying and expressing the larger ideological manifestations of the magazine. Indeed, *Temple Bar* seems to utilize its dissension from the idea that 'circumstances cannot lie' as a cornerstone for its social interrogations: by revealing the fallibility of circumstantial evidence within the courtroom, *Temple Bar* simultaneously conveys the weaknesses of contrived, inferred social notions. This assessment casts a shadow of doubt over all established social institutions and procedures while also questioning the credibility of external appearances and perceptions, destabilizing the once established 'hard' facts of life.

The journal's consideration of circumstantial evidence and social perceptions is further explored within Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 serial *Aurora Floyd*. *Aurora Floyd's* narrative centres on discovering the eponymous heroine's

² George Augustus Sala, 'Preface', *Temple Bar*, 4 (December 1861–March 1862), p. x.

dishonourable secret: her youthful marriage to her groom James Conyers. Aurora, believing Conyers to be dead, remarries, only to discover soon afterwards that her second husband, John Mellish, has hired Conyers as his new groom. Once Aurora and Conyers' marriage is revealed to the reader, the latter half of the novel focuses on Aurora's attempt to hide her transgression from Mellish and the mystery surrounding Conyers's murder. In mapping the debate surrounding circumstantial evidence onto *Aurora Floyd*, the text is analysed through its continual recovery of circumstantial evidence against Aurora in regards to her marriage to Conyers and subsequent bigamy, and, to an even further extent, in regards her involvement in the murder of Conyers. The narrative pits such evidence against the paradoxical character of Aurora, whose regal appearance and benevolent nature is contrasted with her passionate temperament, which is shown to have a volatile and violent side. The narrative is thus scrutinized through its weighing of the influence of circumstantial evidence against perceptions of Aurora's character, revealing how the text, like *Temple Bar*, contested the legitimacy of circumstantial information.

Though the majority of the novel is dedicated to uncovering Aurora's secret marriage to Conyers, the focus of the chapter will be on how this secret feeds into the mystery of Conyers's murder, particularly as Aurora's bigamy is unintended. Aurora's bigamy is only discovered after Conyers is dead, and since she and Mellish legally remarry without delay, her transgression is almost immediately negated, leaving the bigamy plotline to dissolve into the murder mystery. I do not mean to suggest that Aurora's bigamy is not sensational or scandalous, or, indeed, that Braddon discounts or ignores the ramifications of this act. But in reading the serial as a manifestation of the social scrutiny circumstantial evidence was undergoing in the mid-nineteenth century, the bigamy plotline is just one, though one very important,

piece of evidence in the overriding murder mystery that pervades the last half of the novel. And it is through this mystery that Braddon really uses her narrative to interrogate forms of evidence.

What is more, by contrasting the serial version of the text to the volume version, it becomes clear that Braddon maintains the uncertainty of Aurora's guilt in Conyers's murder more overtly in the serial than in the volume edition. Though it was common for an author to revise a text when transferring it from periodical to volume, it is significant that Braddon deliberately changes a few key sentences in the book edition which almost entirely remove the suspicion against Aurora as Conyers's murderer, while in the serial version Aurora is a valid suspect until the final two instalments. Consequently, reading the serial version of *Aurora Floyd* in conjunction with the nineteenth-century debates of the reliability of circumstantial evidence reveals how the novel personifies the period's anxiety over whom and what to trust and how truth was to be established. Like its periodical host, *Aurora Floyd* deconstructs middle-class notions of truth and fact and yet, in ultimately exonerating Aurora, does not completely discount middle-class models.

Balancing the Bohemian and the Bourgeois

Temple Bar's cover included the very apt, yet utterly spurious motto for the magazine: '“Sir”, said Dr. Johnson, “Let us take a walk down Fleet Street”.' In selecting a fraudulent quote from the well-known, didactic Dr. Johnson, *Temple Bar* immediately displays its mocking disregard for middle-class values and ideals – as projected in the fabrication of a quote assigned to Dr. Johnson – and its perpetuation of bourgeois principles – as projected in the use of Dr. Johnson's image generally. The amalgamation of dissent from and acceptance of a middle-class icon immediately

announces the magazine's intent to recognize the conventional but also to challenge it.

Temple Bar's cover also announced that the journal was 'Conducted by George Augustus Sala', a young journalist known for his witty and satirical style who had gained his reputation as a contributor to Dickens's *Household Words* in the 1850s. Judy McKenzie remarks that, 'Although almost forgotten today, Sala was probably the best-known journalist of his time, famous for his flamboyant prose and equally flamboyant personality, both of which captured the imagination of his readers.'³ Sala was representative of the modern press-man and his editorship expressed a certain avant-gardism within the magazine, particularly when viewed against other editors of the period such as Thackeray, Dickens, and Ainsworth, all of whom were writers and editors of a previous generation. Moreover, Sala was renowned as the 'king of Bohemia'. In 1863, after naming Sala the 'leader for the London school' of Bohemia, the *Westminster Review* described Bohemianism as 'a protest against the subjection of human life to money-making, and of human intellect to conventional rule'.⁴ *Temple Bar's* sub-editor, Edmund Yates, states in his autobiography that Bohemians had a 'thorough contempt [...] for the dress, usages, and manner of ordinary middle-class civilization'.⁵ As editor of *Temple Bar*, Sala surrounded himself with a staff of like-minded writers. Indeed, a large part of the *Temple Bar's* unconventional approach derives from the Bohemian philosophies embraced by the magazine's proprietor, John Maxwell, who lived with Braddon for many years while his wife was still alive in an Ireland asylum, by Sala, and by the journal's staff.

³ *Letters of George Augustus Sala to Edmund Yates*, ed. by Judy McKenzie (Australia: University of Queensland, 1993), p. 2.

⁴ 'The Literature of Bohemia', *Westminster Review*, 23:1 (January 1863), 32-56 (p. 33).

⁵ Richard Schoch, 'Performing Bohemia', *Nineteenth Century Theater and Film* (1 January 2003), 1-13 (p. 2).

Temple Bar, though, was not an exclusively Bohemian magazine; it was published with a middle-class audience as its mainstay. In a July 1854 *Household Word*'s article, 'A Tour of Bohemia', Sala pointedly acknowledged that many Bohemians actually evinced a socially ambivalent attitude, remarking,

far from having the rooted antipathy to decent society and a settled condition of life which the gipsy tribe have, your modern Bohemian is continually haunted by the ambition (seldom fulfilled) to forsake his vagabond ways; to wash, shave, leave off sack, and live cleanly like a gentleman.⁶

Sala's portrayal of Bohemians is congruent to the manner in which *Temple Bar* approaches its topics: occasionally displaying antagonism towards social rituals and expectations, but at times supporting traditionally accepted ideals. In 'A Tour of Bohemia' Sala uses a metaphor in his depiction of society and Bohemia's disregard for its regulations that could also apply to *Temple Bar*:

the severities of sectarianism, the rigidities of money-hunting, the asceticism of business, the preoccupations of statesmanship, the endless cogs and wheels and pendulums, and bolts and bars, with which mankind have fenced about the social clock to regulate and steady it, and cause it to keep exact time, and chime the hour with decent intonations – are all powerless to subdue Bohemia, which is forever playing tricks with the hands of the clock, meddling with its weights, tampering with its springs, causing it to run down and go wrong, but never to stop. (496)

Just like Bohemia, *Temple Bar* consistently meddled with the 'social clock' and the ideologies that made it tick. But, just as Bohemia never caused the social clock to completely stop, neither does *Temple Bar* entirely discount traditional social institutions. Yates as sub-editor would certainly have preserved a balance within the magazine, for as P. D. Edwards posits, Yates had a 'deep aversion' to Bohemia, though he maintained a lifelong friendship with Sala and many other notable Bohemians.⁷ It is this equivocation of ideologies that is the nucleus of *Temple Bar*,

⁶ George Augustus Sala, 'A Tour in Bohemia', *Household Words*, 9 (8 July 1854), 495-500 (p. 496).

⁷ P. D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p. 43.

providing its middle-class readership with material that comforted and supported them in their social role, yet also questioned blind faith in such conventions.

The aim of the magazine, however, was not to create disillusion within its audience. Julia Chavez contends that in *Temple Bar*, ‘The persistent attitude of resistance to institutional order that characterizes the editorial narrative [...] provides a model of skeptical critical and active thinking about Victorian England, which readers are invited to adopt and implement for themselves’.⁸ The journal’s eclectic, at times divergent material prompted readers to be critical in regard to social norms, to be hesitant of blindly accepting social standards, to be independent in forming principles and ideals, and, as the journal’s series on circumstantial evidence demonstrates, to be wary of circumstantial proofs.

Circumstances *Can* Lie!

Temple Bar’s series on circumstantial evidence was a timely perusal of the subject, for as its author, W. S. Austin, a lawyer by profession, notes in the first article, the subject is ‘one of great and growing importance’.⁹ In 1836, the model of the criminal trial was revised with the passage of the Prisoners’ Counsel Act, which provided prisoners the right to full legal defence, allowing, for the first time, a defendant’s representative to address the jury directly.¹⁰ In criminal trials before 1836, the accused’s statement and the testimony of witnesses provided the substance of most rulings. However, with the enactment of the Prisoners’ Act, closer scrutiny was placed on all evidence. Barristers, now present on both sides of the case, subsequently

⁸ Julie Chavez, ‘Wandering Readers and the Pedagogical Potential of *Temple Bar*’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40:2 (Summer 2007), 126-50 (p. 136).

⁹ W. S. Austin, ‘Notes on Circumstantial Evidence’, *Temple Bar*, 1 (December 1860), 91-8 (p. 98).

¹⁰ See Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Testimony Advocacy in Victorian Law, Literature, and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) for an overview of the changes made to criminal trials during the nineteenth century.

became proficient at connecting all aspects of the evidence, whether witness statements, physical clues, or, increasingly, medical testimony and scientific evidence, into a coherent narrative. In this model, circumstantial evidence, a form of indirect evidence that implies the existence of the main fact in question but does not in itself prove it, became a leading form of evidence and was subsequently used by advocates to link the different pieces of evidence together to create an ostensibly sound recreation of events. In *Strong Representations*, Alexander Welsh declares that as a result of such judicial reorganization, ‘“Circumstances cannot lie!” became a rallying cry for enthusiasts of law and wider in an era that [...] needed to set itself apart from revolutionary Europe.’¹¹ However, as the nineteenth century progressed, an increasing realization that seeming facts could lie created scepticism concerning the dependability of circumstantial evidence. In 1863, James Fitzjames Stephen, an influential lawyer, judge, and literary critic, published *General View of the Criminal Law*, in which he stated that circumstantial evidence provided ‘a sham canon of proof’.¹² Jan-Melissa Schramm notes that throughout the treatise Stephen ‘was scathing in his criticisms of the supposed superiority of circumstantial evidence’ and noted various instances of its fallibility.¹³

The first article of *Temple Bar*’s series on the topic of circumstantial evidence, ‘Notes on Circumstantial Evidence’, which appeared in the inaugural issue of the magazine, pre-empted Stephen’s argument, stating that the fact that ‘circumstantial evidence cannot always be strictly relied on is proved by the melancholy fact that innocent men and women have been legally murdered in England’.¹⁴ Austin calls attention to the recent murder trials of William Palmer, who was tried in 1856, and

¹¹Alexander Welsh, *Strong Representations: Narrative and Circumstantial Evidence in England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 17.

¹²Quoted in Schramm, p. 108.

¹³Schramm, p. 108.

¹⁴ Austin, “Notes on Circumstantial Evidence”, p. 91.

Madeleine Smith, tried in 1857, as examples of the precarious nature of circumstantial evidence. Though both of the trials revolved solely around circumstantial evidence, Austin points to the different verdicts produced in the cases, in which Palmer was convicted and Smith absolved by the Scottish verdict of ‘not proven’, to prove that ‘circumstantial evidence is the most difficult kind of evidence to deal with and to value at its real worth’ (94). Austin sums up his argument by contending that ‘A false appreciation of [circumstantial evidence] occasions half the ugly suspicions and petty miseries of life’ (93). Because of this, Austin warns readers ‘against leaping in the dark to conclusions fatal to the character of a man’ (94).

In ‘Some Curious Cases’, the second article in the series, Austin reiterates his previous argument of the imperfection of circumstantial evidence and augments his assertions with illustrations of specific cases. By enhancing his argument with factual examples, Austin relays how easily circumstantial evidence, ‘so likely to mislead the mind of a comparatively uneducated man’, can be misconstrued by juries and the public.¹⁵ Austin also remarks the lack of power character witnesses have in a courtroom against perceptions constructed from circumstantial evidence, bemoaning, ‘Of what avail, against all this, witnesses to character?’ (137). Austin also observes the prejudicial effect the display of a weapon has on the mind of the jury against a prisoner and how such ‘theatrical displays’ (138) overpowers all other evidence, a tactic Braddon will use in *Aurora Floyd*.

In ‘Secret Poisoning’, the final article in the series, Austin, rather than deriding circumstantial evidence, defends it. Indeed, Austin demonstrates how circumstantial evidence accurately convicted Catherine Wilson of murder by poison, though no poison was found in the body of her victim. Austin’s contradictory opinion

¹⁵ W. S. Austin, ‘Some Curious Cases’, *Temple Bar*, 2 (April 1861), 131-40 (p. 133).

toward circumstantial evidence in ‘Secret Poisoning’, as compared to that forwarded in Austin’s previous articles, highlights the complexity of the evidence debate. In the article, Austin continues to adhere to the ideas propagated in the previous articles, yet also exposes circumstantial evidence’s ability to produce a correct verdict. Austin states of Wilson’s case that, ‘The trial is mainly remarkable for the fact that a jury have, by a verdict perfectly logical and sound, but purely on circumstantial evidence, found a woman guilty of murder.’¹⁶ Though the verdict was based entirely on what Austin had previously described as imperfect proof, he believes the evidence produced a ‘chain that lacked no single link’ (579).

To be clear, Austin is not repudiating his previous reservations on circumstantial evidence; rather, he is showing the full spectrum of both its unreliability and its merit. Austin directly addresses what may seem like an inconsistency in his argument, commenting that,

In the earlier Numbers of this publication, I endeavoured to shake the accuracy of the doctrine that ‘circumstances can’t lie’.[...] On the trial of Catherine Wilson no fact came to light which was of a deceptive or doubtful character; which might have misled, and so be said in a certain sense to *lie*. (581 Emphasis in original)

Austin thus qualifies the application of circumstantial evidence, differentiating between that which leaves open the possibility of doubt, and that which invokes none. For Austin, the circumstantial evidence against Wilson provided no reasonable doubt, and thus ‘the circumstances of the case do not “lie” ’ (584).

The debate over the authenticity of circumstantial evidence in the mid-nineteenth century was not limited to the judicial arena, but was articulated within the larger social context through the indeterminacy of establishing truth and determining fact. While cases like those highlighted by Austin denoted the complexity and

¹⁶ W. S. Austin, ‘Secret Poisoning’, *Temple Bar*, 6 (November 1862), 579-84 (p. 579).

obscurity of circumstantial evidence in recovering fact, the contemporary press was also rife with stories exposing cases of fraud and identity theft, mysterious murders, and sensational stories of seemingly genteel men and women committing heinous crimes. Many of these stories exposed the fallacious pretence adopted by the criminals and the easy means by which they deceived their victims. Thomas Boyle notes how such stories created an ‘ominous atmosphere’ in the mid-nineteenth century, seeming to suggest that behind every winsome façade lurked a secret criminal.¹⁷ Exterior appearance, class, and gender, like circumstantial evidence, were thus undermined as forms of evidence and verification, whether relating to someone’s character or their innocence or guilt in regards to a crime.

Temple Bar registered these social trepidations in the August 1861 article ‘A Real German Mystery’. The article outlines the strange appearance of a twenty-two year old woman in a German town who tells the town’s people she was kidnapped as a child and raised in a subterranean cave. She is subsequently taken in by the town and provided with food, shelter, and work. The author of the article is sceptical of the woman’s story, believing that ‘There is this almost infallible indication of falsehood, that while the general outline appears sufficiently coherent and plausible, the particular incidents are continually affording materials for criticism’.¹⁸ The author goes on to refute a number of particulars from the woman’s story, deriding the local authority’s acceptance of the tale because of the woman’s ‘amiability’, which acted ‘as a sufficient guarantee of her truthfulness’ (77). ‘A Real German Mystery’ also notes the similarities between the case and that of the notorious Kasper Hauser, who, in 1828, appeared in a German town claiming to have grown up in a cell. Hauser’s story elevated him into an international celebrity. However, years later, Lord

¹⁷ Thomas Boyle, *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead: Beneath the Surface of Victorian Sensationalism* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 38.

¹⁸ Richard Garnett, ‘A Real German Mystery’, *Temple Bar*, 3 (August 1861), 68-77 (p. 74).

Stanhope, Hauser's guardian, alleged that Hauser's entire story had been a deception, a ploy to garner attention and financial assistance.

The two German stories anticipate the Tichborne case, in which Arthur Orton claimed to be Sir Roger Tichborne, an English baronet who had perished at sea. Orton, though lacking many of Tichborne's physical and educational attributes, was received by the Tichborne family in 1866 only to be proven a fraud in a highly publicized trial in 1871. Cases like those of Hauser and Orton, magnified and popularized by the intense coverage they received in the press, revealed how easily people were able to masquerade as something or someone they were not. *Aurora Floyd*, like many sensation novels of the 1860s, exploits such anxieties, bringing the mid-Victorian atmosphere of apprehension and disquiet into the middle-class home. Indeed, the narrator of *Aurora Floyd* directly addressing the impossibility of truly knowing the private lives of neighbours and friends:

We look at our neighbours' smiling face, and say [...] that A is a lucky fellow, and that B can't be as much in debt as his friends say he is; that C and his pretty wife are the happiest couple we know; and tomorrow B is in the 'Gazette', and C is weeping over a dishonoured home.¹⁹

The statement not only conveys the inability to decode people's lives from their public facades but also suggests the devious underbelly of seemingly genteel society. In addition, when James Conyers is introduced in the June 1862 instalment, his good-looking physical appearance is immediately contrasted with his devious nature:

You give him credit for thought to match with his dark, violet-hued eyes, and the exquisite modelling of his mouth and chin; you give him a mind as aesthetically perfect as his face and figure, and you recoil on discovering what a vulgar, every-day sword may lurk under that beautiful scabbard.²⁰

¹⁹ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, *Temple Bar*, 6 (August 1862), 74-103 (p. 102). Further references to *Aurora Floyd* will refer to the serial version of the novel and will denote month of publication and page number.

²⁰ (June 1862), p. 341.

The description conveys the dissonance between outward appearance and inner character, undercutting the idea that a beautiful facade equates to moral probity. Conyers's deceptive complexion is disarming, itself a warning to readers to look beyond exterior circumstances. *Aurora Floyd*, in capturing and capitalizing on the atmosphere of distrust and deviance that proliferated during the early 1860s, forced serial readers to question the validity of the evidence uncovered against Aurora as well as the perceived character of the heroine. The novel thus complements Austin's scrutiny of circumstantial evidence and, more generally, the magazine's interrogation of seemingly stable truths.

Fiction and the Law

The correlation between Victorian legal discourse and literary narrative has been considered by a number of modern critics, particularly Welsh, Schramm, Kieran Dolin, and Lisa Rodensky, who have argued, in their own distinct ways, how nineteenth-century fiction both imitated and reacted against the legal precedents of the period.²¹ Recent scholarship has specifically noted sensation fiction's connection with the law, particularly the genre's scrutiny of the sexual disparities in the period's divorce laws. Marlene Tromp's study of the connection between marital violence in the sensation novel and the law argues that 'sensation fiction participated in, shaped, and was shaped by the political-legal debates of the era'.²² Wilkie Collins's work in particular is often analysed for its critique of legal precedents and its adoption of judicial structures. For instance, it is well-known that the genesis of *The Woman in White*'s narrative structure presented itself to Collins as he watched a criminal trial in

²¹ Welsh; Schramm; Kieran Dolin, *Fiction and The Law: Legal Discourse in Victorian and Modernist Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Lisa Rodensky, *The Crime in Mind: Criminal Responsibility and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²² Marlene Tromp, *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation Fiction, and the Law in Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 71.

1856.²³ By mimicking the trial model in fiction, Collins believed that ‘one could impart to the reader that acceptance, that sense of belief, which was produced here [in the courtroom] by the succession of testimonies’.²⁴ Through *The Woman in White*’s structure, Collins strove, as Sue Lonoff argues, to provide a ‘form that would permit the gradual disclosure of the “Truth” ’; a truth that was absolute and indisputable.²⁵

Collins made this aim clear at the outset of *The Woman in White* when Walter Hartright, the novel’s protagonist, describing the process of the narrative, states that,

the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness – with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect.²⁶

Collins’s faith in the witness/testimony model to construct truth is repeated in *The Moonstone* (1868), of which Welsh notes, ‘*The Moonstone* is largely a case of Bruff versus Cuff: faith in personal acquaintance rather than chain of evidence.’²⁷ Though Braddon, unlike Collins, does not directly endorse testimony as the most authentic means of substantiation, she presents the same tension in *Aurora Floyd* as Collins later does in *The Moonstone*: she pits the readers’ and the characters’ perceptions of Aurora’s character against the chain of circumstantial evidence that points to her as Conyers’s murderer. Though Aurora is ultimately vindicated, the serial’s demonstration of how easily circumstantial evidence can be misconstrued and character misread cautions readers of the shortcomings of all forms of evidence.

Aurora Floyd was not the only sensation narrative in *Temple Bar* to debate forms of evidence; indeed, there are numerous short stories in the journal that poke

²³ John Sutherland, ‘Wilkie Collins and the Origins of the Sensation Novel’, *Dickens Studies Annual*, 22 (1991), 243-58 (p. 248) argues that the trial Collins attend was that of William Palmer.

²⁴ Quoted in Sutherland, p. 248.

²⁵ Sue Lonoff, ‘Multiple Narratives and Relative Truths: A Study of *The Ring and the Book*, *The Woman in White*, and *The Moonstone*’, *Browning Institute Studies*, 10 (1982), 143-61 (p. 148).

²⁶ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. by Matthew Sweet (London: Penguin, 2003 [1860]), p. 9.

²⁷ Welsh, p. 228.

holes in society's hallowed institutions and question the reliability of circumstantial evidence and perceptions of character. Winifred Hughes argues that sensation fiction functioned as a 'pervasive mode of confronting and processing hidden fears, anxieties, and obsessions behind the dominant Victorian cultural institutions'.²⁸ Like *Temple Bar's* reference material, sensation fiction peeled back society's layers of gentility to observe a more fractured rendering of the world, one that opened seemingly orthodox conventions to comment and analysis. With the burgeoning of sensation fiction as a popular mouthpiece of social dissension in the 1860s, *Temple Bar* seems to have published the genre not only to entertain its readers, but also to supplement the magazine's intention of perpetuating and challenging middle-class conventions.

A month after publishing 'Secret Poisoning', in which Austin suggested that circumstantial evidence could effectively determine a verdict, *Temple Bar* recapitulated circumstantial evidence's fallibility in a fictional tale in which circumstantial evidence would have incorrectly convicted an innocent man. In 'Tried for His Life', the narrator, Harry, relates how his friend Arthur is suspected of poisoning his unfaithful and iniquitous wife Isabel. In describing the evidence against Arthur, Harry notes,

[Arthur's wife] died suddenly, with symptoms of poison. There was an inquest, and the chemist who examined the body discovered arsenic. They proved that Arthur had quarreled with her, and was jealous. [...] Somehow [Arthur] had bought arsenic just before her death. They found some in his desk. When she was first taken ill, he insisted on nursing her. [...] Everything told against him, and he was committed to Newgate, and is to be tried for his life.²⁹

The seemingly dire account of Arthur's case, which, with its short, succinct sentences, reads like a newspaper or court report, forces Harry to act as an amateur detective.

²⁸ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 260.

²⁹ 'Tried for His Life', *Temple Bar*, 7 (December 1862), 131-40 (p. 134). Emphasis in original.

Harry is able to discover Isabel's maid, who testifies that Isabel used a powder for her complexion that contained arsenic. The maid also testifies that Arthur was a loving, albeit frustrated husband. Her character testimonial, though, holds little weight as compared to the circumstantial evidence against Arthur. However, it is finally discovered that Isabel's complexion powder accumulated in her system and caused her death. Arthur is consequently found not guilty even though the evidence at first 'told against him'.

Another story that controverted the dependability of circumstantial evidence appeared in January 1862 alongside the first instalment of *Aurora Floyd*. 'A Heart Struggle' portrays the story of a minister, Mr. Macbraith, who falls in love with the daughter of an old enemy and is consequently rejected as a suitor. An argument occurs between Mr. Macbraith and the father, who strikes the minister, causing Mr. Macbraith to retort that 'nothing now shall save you from my just hate, my just vengeance'.³⁰ The daughter, a witness to this scene, later observes the murder of her father, remarking that, '[I]n the pale glamour I recognised a dress I knew full well, – the hat and cloak of the minister, my lover' (209). The daughter connects Mr. Macbraith's verbal threat and the figure she sees murder her father and infers that Mr. Macbraith is the murderer, publicly accusing him of the crime. However, it is proved that the murderer is in fact Mr. Macbraith's mentally unstable brother, who was dressed in Mr. Macbraith's clothes. Though circumstances seem to indict Mr. Macbraith, he was innocent of the crime. Yet even his lover, who was aware of the presence of his lunatic and violent brother, was unable to see beyond the anecdotal evidence and rushed into a false judgment of the case.

³⁰ Robert W. Buchanan, 'A Heart Struggle, Part II', *Temple Bar*, 4 (January 1862), 195-215, (p. 207).

In March 1862 the magazine published a story that scrutinized circumstantial evidence as well as external perceptions of character. In the two-part story, 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand', Lady Letitia is described as 'beautiful, rich, accomplished, bold, cold, sharp, mild, wild, good', which are noted as 'a list of contradictory qualifications'.³¹ The narrator is unable to say whether Lady Letitia is a good woman or not, commenting, 'She paid her bills, was liberal to the poor, went to church, [...] read her bible, and was fond of children and dumb animals' (553). The narrator, though, then qualifies these traits by remarking that 'bloody Queen Mary read her Bible; Mr. Squeers was fond of children; and Count Fosco adored white mice' (553). The description of Lady Letitia leaves readers, like the narrator, uncertain of Lady Letitia's genuine nature and intentions. And thus, when at the end of the first instalment a man from Lady Letitia's past appears and proclaims her to be the murderer of her late husband, who died 'mysteriously', readers are left unsure of her innocence or guilt (554).

The second instalment recounts the story of Lady Letitia's marriage, revealing how she was deceived into marrying a bankrupt Lord who she believed to be a wealthy, well-to-do aristocrat; another example of how easily people can deceive others about their true selves. It is revealed that on the verge of his financial ruin, Lady Letitia's husband killed himself and attempted to frame Lady Letitia by leaving a note proclaiming her as his murderer. The note was found by the man, who, led astray by the 'evidence' of the note, declared Lady Letitia a murderer in the first instalment. Once she is able to prove her innocence, the man is persuaded to give the letter to Lady Letitia, who burns the letter, eradicating the false evidence.

³¹Robert W. Buchanan, 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand', *Temple Bar*, 4 (March 1862), 551-79 (p. 552).

The story is interesting because it not only disproves the trustworthiness of circumstantial evidence, but it reveals that, although Lady Letitia is not a killer, she certainly hides a secret past. The ‘Lilliput Hand’ of the title refers to that fact that Lady Letitia, who mysteriously always wore gloves, even inside, hides a false, wooden hand, her real hand having been crushed when she tried to save her husband from asphyxiating himself. By revealing Lady Letitia’s hidden past, the story situates even innocent persons as likely to be concealing startling secrets. Such a portrayal throws a shadow of mystery and doubt on everyone, leaving no one exempt from potentially concealing scandals and secrets.

Fiction like ‘Tried for His Life’, ‘A Heart Struggle’, and ‘Lady Letitia’s Lilliput Hand’, and, indeed, most of the sensational short stories that inundated the pages of *Temple Bar*, support the magazine in creating critical, autonomous readers. The stories forced readers to ferret out the hidden secrets at the heart of the narratives, much like a jury during a trial. Ian Watts has argued for the similarities between a jurist and a novel reader, commenting, ‘[A jury’s] expectations and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways: both want to know “all the particulars” of a given case.’³² Watt’s analogy is especially applicable to readers of serial fiction, for as Jennifer Hayward explains, ‘Serial readers learn to get all the facts before arriving at an interpretation; the genre teaches the impossibility of absolute interpretation before all the voices are heard.’³³ Hayward’s assertion is, in turn, particularly relevant for serialized sensation fiction, the instalments of which often amplified the central mystery of the narrative, frequently left readers with enigmatic or exciting cliff-hangers, and usually withheld the truth of the mystery until the final instalments.

³² Ian Watts, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 31.

³³ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fiction from Dickens to Soap Opera* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), pp. 76-77.

Aurora Floyd's narrative certainly follows this formula. Braddon, in typical sensation fiction style, keeps readers enthralled by steadily revealing hints and clues that increase the tension surrounding Aurora's secret marriage, the disclosure of her bigamy, and, finally, the mystery of Conyers's murder. Readers are invited to engage with and decipher the intricacies of the plot as it progresses. The *Saturday Review* praised this aspect of *Aurora Floyd*, remarking, 'A great deal happens in each chapter, and if we turn back we are surprised to see how far, at the end of a chapter, we have drifted from the position in which we found the characters at the beginning'.³⁴ Such rapidity compels readers to track the clues and facts that accumulate, piecing them together in the hopes of discovering the key to the mystery.

Following the Evidence

In January 1862 *Temple Bar* embarked on its second year with sales holding steady at 30,000 per issue.³⁵ Having been unable to obtain an eminent writer to produce a serial for the magazine's first issue, and thus publishing the anonymous *For Better, For Worse*, the magazine turned to Sala for its next two serials: *The Seven Sons of Mammon* (January 1861-December 1861) and *Captain Dangerous*, which ran alongside *Aurora Floyd* from January 1862 to February 1863, maintaining the lead position in the journal throughout its publication. Though Braddon's personal connection with Maxwell would seem to situate her as an obvious choice to contribute novel-length fiction to *Temple Bar*, in January 1862 Braddon was just beginning to garner critical attention. The initial publication of her first novel, *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), had done little to bring her to public attention. Her most renowned book, *Lady Audley's Secret*, began serialization, or, more accurately, re-serialization,

³⁴ 'Rev. of *Aurora Floyd*', *Saturday Review*, 15 (31 January 1863), 149 (p. 149).

³⁵ *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900*, ed. by John S. North, vol. 11 (Ontario: North Waterloo Academic Press, 2003), p. 63.

in January 1862. In fact, Braddon was publishing *Aurora Floyd* and the final instalments of *Lady Audley's Secret* concomitantly. *Lady Audley's Secret* was originally serialized in *Robin Goodfellow*, one of Maxwell's sixpenny magazines, from 6 July to 28 September 1861, but was cut short when the magazine was discontinued. The serial was subsequently republished from the beginning in Maxwell's *Sixpenny Magazine* starting in January 1862, the same month that the first instalment of *Aurora Floyd* appeared, and finished one month previous to *Aurora Floyd* in December 1862. *Lady Audley's Secret* was immensely popular and once in book form was advertised as running through nine editions in three months.³⁶ However, in the pages of *Temple Bar*, *Aurora Floyd* was not denoted as 'By the Author of *Lady Audley's Secret*', as a number of Braddon's shorter contributions to the magazine were signed. Instead, the serial appeared in the magazine as an anonymous text, disassociating *Aurora* or the novel with the popular blond demon Lady Audley.

It is interesting that Braddon, publishing the two novels simultaneously, uses circumstantial evidence as a narrative device in both *Aurora Floyd* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, amateur detective Robert Audley uncovers and links together a trail of evidence in order to discover the whereabouts of George Talboys, a process he describes to Lady Audley before he is aware of her guilt:

Circumstantial evidence, [...] that wonderful fabric which is built out of straws collected at every point of the compass, and which is yet strong enough to hang a man. Upon what infinitesimal trifles may sometimes hang the whole secret of some wicked mystery, inexplicable heretofore to the wisest upon the earth!³⁷

In Robert's 'Journal of Facts' he amasses all the pieces of evidence he uncovers, which finally lead him to the discovery that his aunt, Lady Audley, is in truth Helen

³⁶ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, ed. by David Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1863]), p. xxiii.

³⁷ Skilton, ed., *Lady Audley's Secret*, p. 119.

Talboys. However, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon exploits circumstantial evidence in a very different manner from that in which she uses it in *Aurora Floyd*: in *Lady Audley's Secret* Robert Audley gathers evidence and connects it in a way that produces a verdict that leaves no doubt of Lady Audley's guilt. Here, then, the circumstantial evidence is collated into a solid, irrefutable indictment against Lady Audley, as it was in the case against Catherine Wilson as described by Austin. In *Aurora Floyd*, Braddon manipulates the chain of evidence and the characters' responses to such evidence in a manner in which circumstantial evidence never completely affirms Aurora's guilt. Unlike *Lady Audley's Secret*, *Aurora Floyd's* narrative problematizes the legitimacy of circumstantial evidence rather than validating it.

Braddon is able to control readers' perception of Aurora's character and the circumstance evidence in *Aurora Floyd* by manipulating the narrative perspective within the novel. By continuously shifting the perspective, the novel forces the reader to view Aurora's actions from different characters' viewpoints. Thus, though *Aurora Floyd's* eponymous heroine is certainly the central figure in the novel, it is through secondary characters such as Talbot Bulstrode, John Mellish, Mrs. Powell, and Captain Prodder that the action of the novel is portrayed. The reader witnesses almost every key event, and the emotional ramifications of these events, through the minds and eyes of these characters rather than through Aurora's. Even the narrator is denied, or refuses to access Aurora's private thoughts and conversations at crucial moments. The narrator's lack of omniscience is revealed in the first instalment of the serial when Aurora is spoken to with 'friendly familiarity' by a dog trainer, but whatever he says to her 'reached no ears but those of Aurora herself'.³⁸ The narrator also fails to

³⁸ (January 1862), p. 256.

follow Aurora to her French exile, skimming over that year in one brief sentence. This one missing year of Aurora's life becomes the central clue to her secret and the narrator likewise keeps it undisclosed from the reader. Readers therefore must depend on a narrator who already knows most of the story, which the narrator purports is a 'true one', but one that is purposely furtive in disclosing too much too soon.³⁹ The lack of access to Aurora's interiority positions the narrator's assessment of Aurora, particularly her continual reaffirming of Aurora's truthful nature, as just another viewpoint, another testimony within the larger narrative, one to be balanced with the other characters' evaluations and the circumstantial and material evidence that accumulates. Not having omniscient access to Aurora, readers must deduce the meaning of her words and actions for themselves, a process which is made increasingly difficult by Aurora's inconsistent behaviour.

The first instalment reveals Aurora's dual nature, describing her as 'a bright impetuous being, affectionate and generous-hearted as her mother, but with some touch of native fire blended in her mould that stamped her as original'.⁴⁰ With a besotted father and lack of a mother figure, Aurora 'said what she pleased; thought, spoke, acted as she pleased; learned what she pleased', becoming a spoiled and reckless child.⁴¹ Her impetuous personality is exhibited in her early regard for horses, racing, and riding, and her black hair and eyes express her exotic, eccentric disposition. Throughout the narrative, though, Aurora is also shown to be kind, generous, and honourable, distributing food, clothing, and other comforts to the poor around her father's home. She is often described as 'truthful' and the narrator notes that 'if there was one thing more hateful than another to Aurora Floyd, it was a lie'.⁴²

³⁹ (January 1862), p. 247.

⁴⁰ (January 1862), p. 250.

⁴¹ (Jan 1862), p. 250.

⁴² (April 1862), p. 73.

The narrator, though, notes that Aurora has in fact told many lies during the course of her life, for ‘there are some acts of folly which carry falsehood and dissimulation at their heels’.⁴³ And yet, ‘her natural disposition is all truth and candour’.⁴⁴ This seemingly honest woman, though, hides a secret that causes a rupture between her and her first fiancé Talbot Bulstrode, forces her to bribe a dog fancier, and mail a diamond bracelet, a gift from her father, to some unknown address, all within the first three instalments. Aurora’s secrets and furtive actions thus contradict the open, honest personality the narrator is at pains to convey.

Jeni Curtis, in her analysis of the text’s oppositional constructions of femininity, avers, ‘According to different perspectives within the text, Aurora is both natural and unnatural, open and readable, and yet secretive and transgressive.’⁴⁵ Lyn Pykett rightly notes that these constant shifts in perspective ‘tend to keep the heroine’s meaning and significance in a state of flux’.⁴⁶ By keeping Aurora’s culpability in a state of instability, Braddon is able to protect Aurora’s secret and intensify the murder mystery element of the plot by destabilizing readers’ estimation of Aurora and their perception of what is true and what is not. The tension is heightened by the narrative’s continual disclosure of pieces of evidence and information that variously condemn and absolve Aurora, encouraging readers to balance and weigh each clue as they try to determine the truth of Aurora’s secret and Conyers’s death. Though readers may never truly believe that Aurora is a murderer, the serial edition of the novel lends enough credence to the possibility to provoke

⁴³ (April 1862), p. 73.

⁴⁴ (April 1862), p. 74.

⁴⁵ Jeni Curtis, ‘The Espaliered Girl: Pruning the Docile Body in *Aurora Floyd*’, in *Beyond Sensation*, ed. by Tromp, Gilbert, and Haynie, pp. 77-92 (p. 82).

⁴⁶ Lyn Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 102.

tension between the damning evidence against her and her kind yet volatile and violent nature.

The extent of Aurora's 'native fire' is revealed in her passionate beating of Steeve Hargraves [*sic*], the Softy. In this much analysed scene, in which Aurora horsewhips the stable hand after he kicks her dog, Aurora is described as a 'beautiful tigress' with 'cheeks white with rage, her eyes flashing fury'.⁴⁷ Readers would remember this display of violent anger and Aurora's inability to control her rage at the height of her fury when reflecting on her culpability in Conyers's murder, increasing the speculation as to whether she had again lost her temper in a fit of brutality. This is particularly true as earlier in the instalment in which Conyers is killed it is noted that the secret Aurora is trying to conceal, 'whatever it might be, was a matter of life and death to Aurora Floyd'.⁴⁸

Because the reader is given such limited access to Aurora's mind, many of the clues concerning Aurora's secret marriage are inferred from her physical responses. For instance, in the May 1862 instalment, Aurora, after hearing that her husband's new groom is James Conyers, faints in a dramatic cliff-hanger. Aurora's physical appearance and intense response indicate her agitation: 'So terrible a transformation had come over her during the reading of that letter, that the shock could not have been great had [Mellish] looked up and seen another person in her place.'⁴⁹ 'Her face flaming up with a wild fury', Aurora grabs the letter recommending Conyers, crying out that the name must be a mistake.⁵⁰ Pykett suggests that such melodramatic scenes position Braddon's sensational heroines as spectacles in which 'the reader is

⁴⁷ (April 1862), p. 89.

⁴⁸ (April 1862), p. 69.

⁴⁹ (May 1862), pp. 243-44.

⁵⁰ (May 1862), p. 244.

repeatedly required to notice [the] central female characters'.⁵¹ In *Aurora Floyd*, such dramatic tableaux amplify the reader's attention and designate certain events – like the reading of Conyers's name – as relevant clues to the secret without forfeiting the secret. The mention of James Conyers would remind attentive readers of the first instalment when Aurora mailed her diamond bracelet to some unknown person with the initials 'J. C'.⁵² Aurora's reaction to Conyers's name and the association with the initials are the first links in the chain that implicate Conyers in Aurora's youthful secret.

Upon his arrival at Aurora and Mellish's home, Mellish Park, Conyers is received by Aurora's companion, Mrs. Powell. Mrs. Powell, who hates Aurora for her youth and beauty, has figured out through her constant spying and eavesdropping that 'there were mysteries and secrets afloat' concerning Aurora and becomes determined to uncover them.⁵³ Mrs. Powell oversees Conyers reading the letters that have arrived for him, one of which, judging by the handwriting, Mrs. Powell knows to be from Aurora. Mrs. Powell, manoeuvring herself into a more advantageous position, is able to decipher the last sentence of the letter, which reads, 'Above all, express no surprise' and is signed with an 'A'.⁵⁴ Later that night Aurora creates a distraction for her husband so that she can secretly slip away to meet with Conyers, an underhanded act that places Aurora in a deceitful light. Mrs. Powell, though, is watching Aurora and follows her in the hopes of discovering more clues to the mystery: 'Always on the watch for some clue to the secret whose existence she had discovered, [Mrs. Powell] had fondly hoped that even this unseasonable ramble might be some link in the

⁵¹ Pykett, p. 99.

⁵² (January 1862), p. 263.

⁵³ (June 1862), p. 339.

⁵⁴ (June 1862), p. 344.

mysterious chain she was so anxious to fit together.’⁵⁵ Mrs. Powell is able to discover that Conyers is involved in Aurora’s secret when, after wondering why Aurora would visit the north lodge in the middle night, she remembers that Conyers has been installed there: ‘Remembering this was nothing, but remembering this in connection with that mysterious letter signed “A” was enough to send a thrill of savage, horrible joy through the dull veins of the dependent.’⁵⁶ Although readers would scarcely sympathize with the malicious Mrs. Powell, they too would put together these facts, connecting them in an effort to discover Aurora’s secret. After listening in on Conyers and Aurora’s conversation, Mrs. Powell and readers are left in no doubt that Conyers is an integral part of Aurora’s hidden past.

When Aurora and Conyers meet again on the night of his murder, it is through Captain Prodder, Aurora’s uncle, that the exchange is witnessed. It is in this scene that Braddon carefully manipulates the narrative to both suggest and negate the likelihood that Aurora kills Conyers, and, in doing so, is later able to cross-examine the indeterminacy of the circumstantial evidence against Aurora. The first words Prodder, who is hiding unseen in the woods, hears Aurora speak to Conyers convey the fury and passion she feels towards him: ‘Yes, hate you! [...] I hate you! hate you! hate you!’⁵⁷ Aurora’s words denote the resentment she feels for Conyers, with the narrative remarking, ‘She repeated the hard phrase, as if there were some pleasure and delight in uttering it, which in her ungovernable anger she could not deny herself.’⁵⁸ Aurora continues in this vein, declaring to Conyers, ‘I look upon you as the primary cause of every sorrow I have ever known, of every tear I have every shed, of every

⁵⁵ (June 1862), pp. 358-9.

⁵⁶ (June 1862), p. 361.

⁵⁷ (August 1862), p. 95.

⁵⁸ (August 1862), p. 95.

humiliation I have ever endured.’⁵⁹ Her fury escalates until it reaches that ‘point in which all consciousness of external things passes away in the complete egoism of anger and hate’ and she begins tearing the border of her shawl in her rage.⁶⁰ In an aside, the narrator remarks,

Have you ever seen this kind of woman in a passion? Impulsive, nervous, sensitive, sanguine; with such a one passion is a madness – brief, thank Heaven! And expending itself in sharply cruel words, and convulsive rending of lace and ribbon, or coroners’ juries might have to sit even oftener than they do.⁶¹

The narrator’s distinction of ‘this kind of woman’, meaning passionate, volatile ones like Aurora, and the association of madness seem to suggest the possibility of Aurora losing control and physically harming Conyers, especially as, in the June 1862 instalment, he had lifted his hair to reveal a scar previously given to him by Aurora, ‘whose claws [had] left a mark’.⁶² However, by quarantining this anger to a ‘brief’ period that wears itself out in the tearing of lace, the narrator suggests the transitory nature of such emotions, creating doubt that Aurora would harm Conyers. The scene, though, continues to suggest the possibility of Aurora lashing out at Conyers when Conyers observes to Aurora that, ‘You’d like to stab me, or shoot me, or strangle me, as I stand here; wouldn’t you now?’ To which, Aurora emphatically responds, ‘Yes, [...] I would!’⁶³ This statement is somewhat qualified by the narrator’s preceding soliloquy on intense, but short-lived outbursts of anger. This interaction, though, is the last time that Conyers is seen alive, which immediately points suspicion toward Aurora. Captain Prodder hears the gun shot that kills Conyers and finds his body almost directly after leaving Aurora and Conyers together. The instalment concludes

⁵⁹ (August 1862), p. 95.

⁶⁰ (August 1862), p. 96.

⁶¹ (August 1862), p. 96.

⁶² (June 1862), p. 362.

⁶³ (August 1862), p. 97.

with Mellish questioning the whereabouts of Aurora just as Captain Prodder announces the murder.

In the succeeding instalment, September 1862, Aurora re-enters the house after Conyers's death has been reported, coming from the exact location in which the body was found. All of Aurora's actions, her secret meetings and correspondence with Conyers, her reaction to Mellish reading his name as the new trainer, and now her angry fight with him just before his death, position her as the logical suspect for his murder, considering the circumstances. Here, Braddon really begins to pit Aurora's character against the inferred evidence, compelling readers to wonder how far Aurora, even with her benevolent nature, would go to protect her secret. Even Mellish, who is aware that Conyers has something to do with Aurora's secret, immediately thinks of Aurora in connection with the murder:

There was only one person who had any motive for wishing to be rid of this man. One person, who, made desperate by some great despair, enmeshed perhaps by some net hellishly contrived by a villain, hopeless of any means of extrication, in a moment of madness, might have – No! In the face of every evidence that earth could offer, against reason, against hearing, eyesight, judgment, and memory, – he would say, as he said now, No! She was innocent!⁶⁴

Mellish fights and rejects the thought of Aurora's guilt, maintaining her innocence in light of all the circumstances that point to her as the murderer. Captain Prodder, who has never actually met Aurora, also assesses her guilt in conjunction with the fiery temperament he saw her display in her fight with Conyers. Prodder ultimately decides that 'His sister Eliza's child would be likely to be passionate and impetuous; but his sister's child would be a generous, warm-hearted creature, incapable of any cruelty in either thought or deed'.⁶⁵ Put up against the evidence, Aurora's character so far carries her beyond the verdict of guilt. However, when the news of Aurora's marital

⁶⁴ (September 1862), p. 213.

⁶⁵ (November 1862), p. 532.

alliance with Conyers is revealed and one of Mellish's guns, part of a group of guns that Aurora had been handling the day of the murder, is found as the weapon used to kill Conyers, the evidence unites to create a chain of circumstances that link together and lead to Aurora as the murderer more firmly than ever. Just as Austin noted of physical evidence in 'Some Curious Cases', the presentation of the murder weapon has a powerful affect, intensifying the plausibility of Aurora as the murderer. Indeed, once the gun is discovered even Mellish can no longer ignore the possibility of Aurora's guilt. Mellish realizes that the gun

was his own; one of his pet playthings; and it had been kept in the room which was only entered by privileged persons – the room in which his wife had busied herself with the rearrangement of his guns upon the day of the murder.⁶⁶

The statements ends the November 1862 instalment, leaving serial readers with a cliff-hanger that directly connects Aurora to a motive for the crime, the locality of the murder, and now to the murder weapon. The instalment also appeared in the same month as 'Secret Poisoning', the final article in Austin's series in which he illustrated the potential of circumstantial evidence to construct a valid verdict, further solidifying the impact and power of the evidence pointing to Aurora as the murderer.

As noted, Braddon made a few key changes to the volume edition that essentially eliminated the suspicions surrounding Aurora as Conyers's murderer. The most significant of these changes occurs from within the August 1862 instalment, the instalment in which Conyers is shot. In both the serial and the volume edition Aurora finds the Softy in Mellish's private study examining the pistols that have been left out. The volume version of the text reads:

⁶⁶ (November 1862), p. 539.

He had this pistol still in his hand when the door was suddenly opened, and Aurora Mellish stood upon the threshold. The intruder dropped the pistol into the capacious pocket of his fustian jacket as the door opened.⁶⁷

While the same scene in the serial version was given as thus:

He had this pistol still in his hand when the door was suddenly opened, and Aurora Mellish stood upon the threshold. She spoke as she opened the door, almost before she was in the room.⁶⁸

It is clear in the volume version that the Softy steals a gun from Mr. Mellish, dropping it into his jacket pocket. The gun the Softy is examining when Aurora enters the room is the gun that is later discovered to be the murder weapon. In the serial version no mention of the Softy stealing the gun appears. In the volume edition, then, the finding of the gun points to the Softy rather than to Aurora as the guilty party, while in the serial version it implicates Aurora in the crime as she was the last person seen handling the guns. Braddon makes another significant change in the scene in which Aurora is told Conyers has been shot. In the serial version, Aurora, after hearing the news, responds 'He is dead?'⁶⁹ In the volume version she replies 'Is he dead?'⁷⁰ Richard Nemesvari and Lisa Surrige point out that 'This change causes Aurora to ask a question, rather than make an ambiguous question/statement, and thus more clearly implies her innocence'.⁷¹ In the serial version Braddon deliberately manipulates the text to keep readers guessing as to the guilt of Aurora, whereas in the volume version she leaves no doubt as to Aurora's innocence and points the finger of guilt at the Softy before the act even occurs.

The changes position the murder of Conyers in the volume edition as less of a mystery and more of a means of converting Aurora from a transgressive bigamist to a

⁶⁷(August 1862), p. 80.

⁶⁸ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, ed. by P. D. Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 [1863]), p. 260.

⁶⁹ (September 1862), p. 214.

⁷⁰ Edwards, ed., *Aurora Floyd*, p. 307.

⁷¹ *Aurora Floyd*, ed. by Richard Nemesvari and Lisa Surrige (Ontario: Broadview, 1998 [1863]), p. 34.

victim of false suspicions. For although volume readers would suspect the Softy of Conyers's murder, the fictional public in the novel suspect Aurora of the crime from the outset. This is partly due to the Softy attempting to frame Aurora for the murder as revenge for her treatment of him and his subsequent dismissal from Mellish Park. Hence he kills Conyers immediately after Aurora and Conyers's fight. He also accuses Aurora of the crime while discussing the case with Captain Prodder and a few other men in a local pub, supporting his assertion by revealing Aurora and Conyers's marital liaison. The Softy also shows the men the letter in which Aurora told Conyers to meet her in the woods on the night of his murder, a piece of material evidence that certainly would have been detrimental to Aurora should she have been tried for the crime. The idea of Aurora's guilt is also forwarded by Mrs. Powell, who, having overheard Aurora and Conyers's first meeting and being informed by the Softy of their marriage, 'actually believed in the guilt of her beautiful patroness'.⁷² Mrs. Powell sends two anonymous letters, one to the local police and one to Scotland Yard, both of which, 'by a sinuous and inductive process of reasoning', declared 'Aurora Mellish as the murderess of James Conyers'.⁷³ The local newspaper also publishes a letter deriding the manner in which the investigation of the murder is being handled, suggesting that someone in the Mellish household is responsible for the crime. In addition, there are numerous other articles published in the local papers 'which contained dark allusions to the Mellish mystery'.⁷⁴ Aurora's flight from her home on the day of the inquest, known to readers to have been caused by her finding out that her husband had become aware of her first marriage, is also perceived by the fictional public to indicate her guilt. All of these individual instances unite to position Aurora

⁷² (December 1862), p. 113.

⁷³ (December 1862), p. 113.

⁷⁴ (January 1863), p. 263.

as the guilty party in the eyes of the local townspeople and the Mellish servants, who are shown discussing

the strangeness of [Aurora's] conduct, and [dwelling] much upon those singular coincidences by which she had happened to be roaming the Park upon the night of the catastrophe, and [had] run away from her home on the day of the inquest.⁷⁵

Mellish, himself at one time suspecting his wife, rebels against such insinuations, chaffing at 'the old friends of his youth for their base avoidance of him, the servants of his household, for a half-doubtful, half-solemn expression of face, which he knew had relation to that horrible suspicion [against Aurora], which seemed to grow stronger with every hour'.⁷⁶ And yet he can understand their misgivings, observing to Talbot Bulstrode,

if *I*,-I who know her and love her, and believe in her as man never yet believed in woman, - if *I* could have been bewildered and maddened by that horrible chain of circumstances, every one of which pointed [...] at her! – if *I* could be deluded by these things until my brain reeled, what may strangers think?⁷⁷

Bulstrode notes how such assumptions infiltrate and take hold of public opinion, remarking,

Different persons set up different theories; one man writes to a newspaper to declare that, in his opinion, the crime was committed by some person within the house; another man writes as positively to another paper, asserting that the murderer was undoubtedly a stranger. Each man brings forth a mass of suppositious evidence in favour of his own argument, and each thinks a great deal more of proving his own cleverness than of furthering the ends of justice.⁷⁸

Bulstrode's observation highlights how easily society can be seized with false ideas and how quickly such suspicions can spread. Indeed, the ability of the 'suppositious' evidence to persuade even Mellish at one point to believe Aurora guilty illustrates the power of such information.

⁷⁵ (November 1862), p. 538.

⁷⁶ (January 1863), p. 263.

⁷⁷ (January 1863), p. 267. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁸ (December 1862), p. 116.

In the serial edition, it is not until the second to last instalment, when Bulstrode arrives on the scene as amateur detective and Joseph Grimstone, the professional policeman from Scotland Yard, turns up, that Aurora is replaced by the Softy as the main suspect. Facts now come to light, most particularly the discovery of a button from the Softy's waistcoat, which was used as wadding in the murder weapon, that contradict the circumstantial evidence that has hitherto condemned Aurora. In this penultimate instalment, Bulstrode proves how erroneous Mellish has been in his belief that, as Aurora had been handling the gun that killed Conyers, then she must also be the one who used it to kill Conyers. After Mellish tells Bulstrode that no one else had permission to enter the room in which the gun was stored besides Aurora, Bulstrode cross-examines him, asking him if the doors and windows of the room were left unlocked and open. When Mellish replies in the positive, Bulstrode notes that 'it may be just possible that someone who had not permission to enter the room did, nevertheless, enter it for the purpose of abstracting the pistol'.⁷⁹ Bulstrode berates Mellish for trusting such circumstantial evidence, observing to Mellish, 'You presupposed the guilt of the woman you loved; and you were too great a coward to investigate the evidence upon which your suspicions were founded.'⁸⁰ From this point forward, the circumstantial evidence indicting Aurora is gradually negated, leaving no doubt of the Softy's guilt.

The changes Braddon makes from serial to volume indicate that while she was willing to position Aurora as a prime suspect in Conyers's murder in the pages of *Temple Bar*, she was not disposed to continue such a portrayal of her heroine in the volume edition. And though one can only speculate on the motive behind Braddon's alterations, the modifications highlight the significance of studying the text's original

⁷⁹ (December 1862), p. 110.

⁸⁰ (December 1862), p. 111.

serial version. Aurora's culpability in the serial initiates and enhances the text's consideration of the legitimacy of the various forms of evidence, contextualizing the novel within the contemporary debate concerning the reliability of circumstantial evidence. The indeterminacy of the evidence and Aurora's character throughout most of the serial also reflects and registers the larger cultural anxieties of how truth was to be established if all manner of validation was proved fallacious. Taken out of its periodical setting, the novel's dialogue with such contemporary discourses is basically muted.

Reading *Aurora Floyd* in its periodical context also alleviates some of the tension critics have observed in the novel's final scene. In the concluding scene, Aurora, bending over the cradle of her child, is portrayed as a complaisant angel of the house, 'a little changed, a shade less defiantly bright, perhaps, but unspeakably beautiful and tender'.⁸¹ Natalie Schroeder and Ronald Schroeder note that,

This final scene – a Madonna bending over a cradle – is troublesome, and critics dispute its significance to the novel as a whole; whether, that is, it represents Aurora's domestication and (re-) absorption into patriarchal convention, or whether it implies that Aurora has not been meaningfully tamed by the events of her life.⁸²

Schroeder and Schroeder argue that Aurora, ultimately accepting the necessity of conformity, changes 'in degree', but that her character is not absolutely reconstructed (103). Other critics, such as Patricia Stubbs, have read the scene as Braddon bowing to nineteenth-century conventions of a feminine ideal.⁸³ However, Braddon's willingness to bend to convention, in that Aurora reforms her wilful ways and matures into an ideal mother, and defy convention, in that Aurora as a bigamist and fallen woman is allowed to live and prosper within the confines of an affluent middle-class

⁸¹ (January 1863), p. 276.

⁸² Natalie Schroeder and Ronald Schroeder, *From Sensation to Society: Representations of Marriage in the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 1862-1866* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), p. 103.

⁸³ Patricia Stubbs, *Woman and Fiction* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979), p. 46.

home, complements *Temple Bar*'s upholding of Bohemian and bourgeois principles. In the pages of *Temple Bar*, the final depiction of Aurora, like most of the magazine's content, enforces a middle-class ideal and yet highlights the cracks in such an ideal, presenting an alternative form of the middle-class woman rather than a fixed, pre-established standard. Braddon, like *Temple Bar*, was willingly to meddle with and adjust the 'social clock' yet never stop it completely. And this is why *Aurora Floyd*, and the sensation genre more generally, worked so well in *Temple Bar*: sensation fiction, like the magazine, often contested as well as restored conventional boundaries.

A Periodical for the Times

With Sala as its ostentatious conductor, Maxwell as its progressive proprietor, and Braddon as a consistent contributor of serial fiction, *Temple Bar* projected an attitude of both convention and dissent, aiming to create critical, attentive readers able to navigate the progressive social terrain of the 1860s. *Temple Bar*'s Bohemian and yet conventional nature was attuned to the social upheavals occurring in the 1860s, and, rather than try to placate its readers, it worked to educate them to think and act not only for themselves but for the greater good of Britain, even if that meant modernizing traditional social codes.

The next chapter turns to a very different kind of middle-class journal, one that, like the *New Monthly*, was begun in the early nineteenth century. *Blackwood's Magazine*, though, unlike Ainsworth's magazine, was an authoritative presence in the periodical market from its inception right through the nineteenth century. Moreover, in contrast to *Temple Bar*, *Blackwood's* stalwartly preserved a code of middle-class conduct within its pages, bucking the trend of publishing sensation fiction and leaning

more heavily on domestic realism. However, as we shall see, Margaret Oliphant's 1862 serial *Salem Chapel*, which was published in *Blackwood's* concurrently with *Aurora Floyd's* serial run in *Temple Bar*, interrogates the generic parameters that critics erected to segregate sensation fiction from realism, interjecting *Blackwood's* with a sensational interlude during the height of the sensation novel's popularity.

Chapter 3

Shifting Places, Shifting Genres: Mobility, Sense of Place, and the Everyday
in Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*

Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* opens with the geographical location of the eponymous building – 'Towards the west end of Grove Street, in Carlingford, on the shabby side of the street' – beginning a discourse on the significance of space, mobility, and sense of place that comes to represent Oliphant's response to the collision of sensation fiction and literary realism in the early 1860s.¹ Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal essay on the movements of literary characters through time and space, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', traces the literary manifestations of the evolving dynamics of place. Bakhtin's study highlights the significance of what he calls chronotope (time-space) and its 'intrinsic *generic* significance', fundamentally linking specific chronotopes to particular genres.² More recently, Franco Moretti's work on mapping literary texts analyses the 'place-bound nature of literary forms'.³ Moretti seeks to discover the internal logic of narrative through the visual form of graphs, trees, and maps, emphasizing that '*without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible*' (100 Emphasis in original). Place and genre are positioned as dependent upon one another, creating a correlation between the places a text inhabits and the genre it manifests. Building on the idea that where it happens generates what happens, this chapter analyses the construction of place within *Salem Chapel*, focusing on the town of Carlingford and

¹ Margaret Oliphant, *Salem Chapel*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, 91 (February 1862), 207-226 (p. 207). Further references to *Salem Chapel* will refer to the serial version of the novel and will denote month of publication and page number.

² M.M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-259 (p. 84). Emphasis in the original.

³ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 5.

the movements of the serial's two main characters – Arthur Vincent and Rachel Hilyard. The chapter subsequently delineates how Oliphant manipulates the dynamic features of place and mobility as a way of infusing her text with both sensational and realist elements, underscoring Moretti's critique that 'Each space determines its own kind of actions, its plot – its genre' (84).

Salem Chapel was the fourth instalment of the *Chronicles of Carlingford* series to be published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Serial readers would therefore be familiar with the town of Carlingford when it reappears in *Salem Chapel*. However, by invoking realist and sensational representations of place and mobility, the notion of place determining action and narrative mode in *Salem Chapel* becomes paradoxically rigid and elastic. Initially solid in its realist delineations, Carlingford's social and geographic boundaries become blurred as the narrative shifts genres, upsetting the town's once ensconced sense of place. Published at a time when critics were hardening the boundaries between popular and serious fiction, *Salem Chapel's* merging of generic conventions is situated as Oliphant's attempt to promote a more authentic literary representation of the everyday than that depicted individually in either realist literature, which typically registered the prosaic, or sensation literature, which usually delineated the extraordinary and uncanny elements of life. The generic slippage that occurs in *Salem Chapel* is part of Oliphant's endeavour to expose the everyday as a fluid site, a place where both the ordinary and extraordinary meet, a feat she believed Wilkie Collins accomplished in *The Woman in White*. Indeed, in her 1862 'Sensation Novels' article, which appeared in *Blackwood's* alongside the fourth instalment of *Salem Chapel*, Oliphant commends Collins's ability to invoke the sensational through realistic and pragmatic means; a narrative technique she strives to emulate in *Salem Chapel*.

Laurie Langbauer's study of the everyday provides a starting point from which to examine Oliphant's construction of it in *Salem Chapel*, particularly Langbauer's assessment that Oliphant

is not so much interested in portraying the everyday as investigating our construction of it. Rather than fundamentally defining the everyday herself, [...] Oliphant instead uses her series of novels to locate the everyday as the site for just such debate.⁴

Langbauer's work on the everyday connects it to the properties of the series format, arguing,

that precisely because of their expansiveness, their repetitiveness, their complication of closure, those linked novels that are part of extended series seem to mirror and carry properties often defined as essential to everyday life: that it's just one thing after another, going quietly but inexhaustibly on and on. (2)

Applying Langbauer's premise, the following analysis of the everyday in *Salem Chapel* is connected to the novel's position in the *Chronicles of Carlingford*. The series provided Oliphant authorial and spatial room to interrogate definitions of the real and the everyday, to introduce the sensational, and to distort Carlingford's realist sense of place as she could ultimately re-absorb these disturbances within the perpetuation of the series' traditional realist narrative.

Moreover, Oliphant's experimental, hybrid text is not only couched within the realist frame provided by the *Chronicles of Carlingford* series, but also by its home in *Blackwood's Magazine*, which, as a respectable, established periodical, provided a space for the novel that insulated the text within a conservative, trusted milieu. Thus, this chapter moves away from an intertextual reading of the serial and the magazine and instead examines how the generic connotations attached to *Blackwood's* and its periodical 'brand' affect the generic categorization of *Salem Chapel*, which, in turn,

⁴ Laurie Langbauer, *Novels of the Everyday Life: The Series in English Fiction, 1850-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 57.

reflected the delimiting nature of the critical literary landscape of the nineteenth century.

The chapter also relates how *Salem Chapel* captures shifting contemporary perceptions of place and mobility as society moves from one that was essentially static to one that is constantly on the move. The novel thus registers the implications of a modern, mobile population on the integrity of communities and evolving definitions of place, illustrating the challenges of place and space that confronted Victorians in the mid-nineteenth century.

Merging Plots, Merging Genres

Salem Chapel depicts the struggles of Carlingford's new Dissenting minister, Arthur Vincent, an eager, well-educated young man who hopes to convert the upper-class Anglican community in the town with his elegant preaching style and noble sentiments. To his dismay, Vincent finds his Dissenting congregation full of overbearing, pretentious shopkeepers who turn spiteful when he refuses to attend tea parties and fails to call regularly on the leading members of the congregation. The members of Salem Chapel are further aggravated by Vincent's obvious affection for Lady Western, the social leader of Grange Lane, the Anglican section of town. Vincent befriends Rachel Hilyard, a mysterious, poverty-stricken needlewoman who has also recently arrived in Carlingford. Rachel, however, is actually Mrs. Mildmay, an upper-class woman hiding from her abusive husband Colonel Mildmay, Lady Western's brother. In a characteristically sensational plot twist, Rachel's daughter, Alice, and Vincent's sister, Susan, are both abducted by Mildmay, who also assimilates a false identity and bigamously engages himself to Susan, forcing Rachel and Vincent to pursue him across England. Rachel finds him first and, attempting to

kill him, shoots him in the head. Mildmay, however, survives the attack, but refuses to name his assailant. As only Vincent is aware of her crime, Rachel returns to Carlingford and, re-establishing herself as Mrs. Mildmay, takes refuge in her upper-class ancestry to avoid prosecution and prove to Vincent that she is now interred from further criminal behaviour by the restrictive constraints of her social position. Vincent, disillusioned by his ministerial work and his interactions with Rachel, leaves Carlingford, his exposure to sensational incidents having eradicated his naive and myopic view of the world.

From this outline the composite plot seems strikingly obvious: the realist plot composed of Vincent's interactions and struggles with his congregation, the sensational comprised of the Mildmay storyline. Many modern critics view *Salem Chapel's* sensation plot as a ploy on Oliphant's part to pander to the popularity of the sensation craze of the 1860s, presenting it as separate and disconnected from the realist depictions of the Carlingford Dissenters. Robert Colby and Vineta Colby describe the sensational aspects of *Salem Chapel* as an attempt by Oliphant to 'write a best seller', while Elisabeth Jay claims that '*Salem Chapel* suffers badly from the sensational plot, which sits ill at ease with the comic realism with which the Dissenting milieu of its setting is depicted'.⁵ More recently, *Salem Chapel's* bifurcated plot has incited more positive, constructive interest, most notably from Marlene Tromp and Shirley Jones.⁶ Tromp's analysis of the integration of sensational elements in *Salem Chapel* examines the 'way it provides a figurative static in the

⁵ Robert and Vineta Colby, *The Equivocal Virtue: Mrs. Oliphant and the Victorian literary market place* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), p. 49; Elisabeth Jay, *Mrs. Oliphant: 'A Fiction to Herself'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 5.

⁶ See also Tamara Wagner, 'Stretching "The Sensational Sixties": Genre and Sensationalism in Domestic Fiction by Victorian Women Writers', *Victorian Review*, 35 (2009), 211-28; Tara MacDonald, ' "Vulgar Publicity" and Problems of Privacy in Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*', *Critical Survey*, 1 (Spring 2011), 25-41.

transmission of the real'.⁷ Tromp interrogates 'the relationship between the two [genres] through generic boundary slippages, the blurring of sensation and realism' (18). She uses the woman's body, particularly Rachel's, as the source and site of this slippage, highlighting how this disruption overthrows nineteenth-century critics' attempt to keep the two genres separate and distinct. Jones also notes the interplay between the genres in the text, regarding the tension between 'the melodramatic and the comic-realist modes as manifestation of Oliphant's ambiguous response to the sensational'.⁸ Jones evaluates *Salem Chapel* as both 'a sensation and an anti-sensation novel', focusing on the sensational heroine and representations of the maternal (239). Like Tromp, Jones sees a connection between the sensational and realist storylines, arguing that, 'through this novel [Oliphant] attempts to both utilise and modify the sensation form' (239). Tromp and Jones articulate valid and authoritative arguments about the overlooked role that sensation plays in the larger configuration of *Salem Chapel's* narrative. However, I want move away from viewing *Salem Chapel's* generic shifts through the novel's depiction of gender and the female body and examine how the narrative's generic undulations are connected to the novel's depiction of place and mobility. First, though, I want to look at how the critical disparagement of sensation fiction in the nineteenth century positioned the sensation novel in oppositional terms from that of the realist novel. The interweaving of generic conventions within a novel was, consequently, seen as unnatural and viewed with derision. In such an environment, *Salem Chapel's* sensational plotline was overlooked by contemporary critics who were unwilling to recognize the hybrid elements of the narrative, essentially disregarding its importance to the narrative.

⁷ Marlene Tromp, *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation Fiction, and the Law in Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 18.

⁸ Shirley Jones, 'Motherhood and Melodrama: *Salem Chapel* and Sensation Fiction', *Women's Writing*, 6: 2 (July 1999), 239-50 (p. 239).

Critical Hostility to Literary Hybridity

In the mid-nineteenth century, the halcyon days of fictional realism were rivaled by sensation fiction's mass popularity and its treatment of crime and transgression. Sensation fiction's unconventional narrative traits were portrayed in marked contrast to what was positioned as the more reputable mode present in literary realism, which emphasized commonplace, everyday events and life-like characters. Patrick Brantlinger avers that 'the development of the sensation novel marks a crisis in the history of literary realism. At the same time that George Eliot was investing the novel with a new philosophical gravitas the sensationalists were breaking down the conventions of realist fiction'.⁹ Winifred Hughes argues that, 'The sensational fiction of the 1860s launches its attack on the realist center from both extremes at once, appealing to the validity of both fantasy and fiction.'¹⁰ Sensation writers' frequent rewriting of real-life murders, mysteries, and other criminal cases called attention to the true stories on which they based their novels, blending the fantastical with the factual and appropriating the real and everyday as their own domain. Sensation authors such as Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins defended their extraordinary plots and characters by maintaining that their sensational narratives reflected modern society and, indeed, insisted that their novels portrayed a more authentic reality than the prosaic version registered in realist fiction.

Though most modern critics acknowledge the porous nature of literary categories, for many contemporary critics, 'matter-of-fact' sensation novels such as Reade's and Collins's presented an oxymoron. These critics, who were unwilling to recognize the place of such extraordinary events and characters in novelistic

⁹ Patrick Brantlinger, 'What is "Sensational" about the "Sensation Novel"?', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 37 (1982), 1-28, p. 27.

¹⁰ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 50.

depictions of the real, viewed the blurring of the all-important boundaries between the high art of realism and the mass market productions of sensation fiction as transgressive and hostile. Mary Poovey notes, ‘For these critics, it seemed essential to draw the line between the few works that counted as Literature and all the works that did not – even if some of the latter resembled some of the former in troubling ways.’¹¹ While critics sought to delimit the form of the novel, in *Salem Chapel*, Oliphant attempts to fuse and synthesize what she views as the best elements of each genre. Poovey, though, comments that in the literary climate of the mid-nineteenth century ‘hybridity of any sort seemed to be transgressive, for any mixture *within* a Literary work threatened to blur the all-important boundary necessary to define *Literature*’ (323 Emphasis in original).

Nineteenth-century reviews of *Salem Chapel* substantiate Poovey’s argument, consistently marginalizing the sensational aspects of the novel and focusing principally on Vincent’s struggles with his congregation. Rather than evaluate the hybrid nature of *Salem Chapel*, critics simply ignore it. Since reviewers were unwilling to engage with the contentious portions of the novel, most of the reviews were positive, noting the verity of Oliphant’s depiction of the Dissenting population of Salem Chapel and complimenting Oliphant on her insight into such an overlooked community. In February 1863, immediately following the publication of the volume edition of *Salem Chapel*, *The Saturday Review* declares, ‘We prize the *Chronicles of Carlingford* because they open to us new ground, and take us among people who have every appearance of being life-like, but who are quite new to us.’¹² When the sensation plot is mentioned in reviews, it is either cast off as irrelevant or a diversion to create a bit of ‘zest’. *The Spectator*, for instance, suggests that the novel would be

¹¹ Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), p. 323. .

¹² ‘Rev. of *Chronicles of Carlingford*’, *The Saturday Review*, 15 (14 February 1863), 210-11 (p. 211).

improved if the sensation plot could be ‘skilfully removed from the book by some neat surgical operation’.¹³

The National Review was one of the only magazines to examine *Salem Chapel*’s fusion of genres, observing that the novel ‘consists of two different and incongruous parts, – the plot of a sensation novel, and a series of descriptions of the inner life of a dissenting congregation’.¹⁴ The sensation plot is dismissed as ‘not only bad but unnecessary’ (350). The review, though, is interesting not only because it is one of the few to analyse the sensation plot in any depth, but also for the distinction, and connection, it makes between literary realism, idealism, and sensation. Lyn Pykett has shown that, beyond the dispute between realism and sensation fiction, mid-nineteenth-century critics also debated the merit of literary idealism as compared to realism, a debate that is reflected in *The National Review* article.¹⁵

The author of the review is a decided advocate of the idealist form of the novel, remarking,

That there is in everyday life, however trivial, a latent something which might have been great; and that every nature, however dull, may be lighted up with a casual gleam of beauty, is happily so true as to be beyond dispute. (360)

The review goes on to blame the tedium evoked by pedestrian realism as the impetus of sensation fiction:

The monotony of common things, after a point easily reached, becomes unnatural. [...] The sensation novel itself is proof of it. The description of average men and women [...] palls after a time upon the reader and his jaded attention demands to be excited by stimulants. (361)

Oliphant’s ‘unheroic hero’ – Arthur Vincent – and her derision of Vincent’s enthusiasm – i.e. his idealism – leads the reviewer to conclude that Oliphant

¹³ ‘Rev. of *Salem Chapel*’, *The Spectator*, 1807 (14 February 1863), 1639 (p. 1639).

¹⁴ ‘Rev. of *Chronicles of Carlingford: Salem Chapel*’, *The National Review*, 32 (April 1863), 350-62 (p. 350).

¹⁵ Lyn Pykett, ‘The Real versus the Ideal: Theories of Fiction in Periodicals, 1850-1870’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 15:2 (Summer 1982), 63-74.

has learned to disbelieve in all singleness of motive and grandeur of life, and the feeling comes out painfully in all she writes. In default of this, she tries to crowd her pages with startling incident. She can believe in great crime and extravagant folly, if she distrusts absolute virtue. (362)

The article thus claims that since Oliphant seems not to have faith in or cannot reach the artistic heights of idealism, she must revert to sensation to fill her pages. It blames the monotony of realism on the emergence of sensation fiction, while also implying that sensation is a poor substitute for idealism. The review positions *Salem Chapel* in the crossfire between literary sensation, realism, and idealism, exposing the critic's uncomfortable reaction to the novel's hybridity while also highlighting the larger critical contention over the most authentic means of depicting the everyday. The inability to pigeonhole the text ultimately forces the critic to ridicule the Mildmay plot as useless, deride the realism as mundane, and scorn the absence of a higher idealist vision within the novel.

Critical responses like that of *The National Review* emphasize Pamela Gilbert's assertion that 'Readers, critics, authors, and publishers in the nineteenth century (as in the present) colluded to naturalize the "boundaries" of genres'.¹⁶ Gilbert notes how, when such boundaries were destabilized, 'the onus of classification devolved upon the "master-readers" of the marketplace – review critics' (62). If the designation of genre, as Gilbert argues, 'operates not only as a way of binding the reading process, but of locating the text within the "boundaries" of a "space" within the marketplace', then the periodical location of a serial would, in turn, influence the placing of a text within a specific space, and, therefore, a specific genre. Journals, themselves located within a 'space' in the periodical market, could consequently produce generic coloration, particularly as many journals frequently published a

¹⁶ Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 62.

relatively consistent genre of fiction. For example, *All the Year Round*, which published three of Wilkie Collins's novels in the 1860s, and *Belgravia*, which published numerous Braddon novels, were recognized for their publication of sensation fiction. In comparison, *Cornhill* and *Blackwood's* typically serialized domestic realism from writers such as George Eliot and Anthony Trollope. Certainly there was overlap between authors, journals, and genres, but, in general, most magazines published a consistent style of fiction.¹⁷ Indeed, during *Salem Chapel's* serialization, *The Saturday Review* coupled the serial with George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which had been serialized in *Blackwood's* in 1857, and *Adam Bede*, which had been published in volume form by the Blackwood's publishing firm. The review remarks, 'It is difficult to suppose that *Salem Chapel* can come from any other pen than that to which we owe *Adam Bede* and *Scenes of Clerical Life*.'¹⁸ The critical disregard of *Salem Chapel's* sensational plot then, may have been affected by the novel's serialization in *Blackwood's*, particularly as the *Blackwood's* name was in itself a powerful signifier.

In looking at the Blackwood organization, including the publishing firm as well as the magazine, David Finkelstein asserts that 'the firm set about creating a distinctive identity for itself within national and international boundaries'.¹⁹ Finkelstein notes how authors and readers were subsequently invited into the invisible 'Blackwoodian "community" or "ecumene" ' (16). *Blackwood's Magazine* was an essential ingredient in fostering this Blackwoodian community. And, like any community, *Blackwood's* creates a sense of place amongst its pages. In describing how sense of place functions, Tim Cresswell states that it is 'a way of seeing,

¹⁷ For instance, Wilkie Collins published *Armadale* (November 1864-June 1866) in *Cornhill*.

¹⁸ 'Light Reading', *The Saturday Review* (19 April 1862), 433-35 (p.433).

¹⁹ David Finkelstein, *The House of Blackwood: Author -Publisher Relations in the Victorian Era* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p. 16.

knowing, and understanding the world'.²⁰ Through its contents, *Blackwood's*, like many magazines, manufactured and reaffirmed a specific vision of the world, consequently providing a relatively consistent generic signifier for the fiction in its pages.

In addition, the strict practice of anonymity in the journal gave precedent to the supremacy of the magazine over individual authors or articles. Laurel Brake argues,

The main point to make about *Blackwood's* may be another aspect of the meaning of anonymity rather than on failure to name the individual – the emphasis on the corporate sign of the journal – in its title, so that the literary authority of the journal derives from the name of the publishing house (Blackwood) and the collective genre of the Magazine.²¹

The indisputable *Blackwood's* imprint lay just below the surface of all of the journal's content, never to be lost in the opinions and declarations of the solitary contributions, and consistently blending the contents together under the stalwart banner of 'Maga', the friendly sobriquet by which the magazine was known.

Oliphant was one of *Blackwood's* most frequent contributors during the mid- and late-nineteenth century, publishing hundreds of essays, reviews, and fictional contributions to the magazine.²² It was even rumoured at one time that she had written an entire issue of the magazine. Oliphant's association with the magazine, her presence in the Blackwood's 'ecumene', the publication of *Salem Chapel* in *Blackwood's*, as well as the critical generic classification of her previous novels, most of which fell under the umbrella of domestic realism, would have immediately

²⁰ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), p. 11.

²¹ Laurel Brake, 'Maga, the Shilling Monthlies, and the New Journalism', in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006) pp. 184-214 (p. 192).

²² Finkelstein, *The House of Blackwood*, p. 16.

allocated *Salem Chapel*, in the mind of critics, to the realm of realism.²³ For as Gilbert posits,

once an author/text is established within a certain generic domain, that is, coming from a certain 'location' within the marketplace and appealing to a certain consumership, critics, publishers, authors, and readers will enforce, through master-readings (reviews), packaging, textual references, and reading assumptions, a reading of that text which is congruent with its assigned generic pedigree. (59)

Jay notes that Oliphant's position as perpetual reviewer for *Blackwood's* often influenced her fiction, remarking, 'Her fiction did not change merely according to the dictates of the market, but, fed by her activities as a reviewer, often embodied a response to her voracious reading of other novelists.'²⁴ However, though Oliphant may have been influenced by other writers, particularly those published in *Blackwood's*, *Salem Chapel* can also be traced to Oliphant's admiration of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, which she reviewed for her 1862 article 'Sensation Novels'.²⁵ By deconstructing 'Sensation Novels', it is possible to establish Oliphant's interest in Collins's sensational literary model and its influence on *Salem Chapel*, particularly *The Woman in White's* production of sensation through what Oliphant deems 'legitimate means'.²⁶ Generally, Oliphant is imprudently cast as an anti-sensation advocate, with many of her articles picked apart for the literary equivalent of a good 'sound bite'. Her 1862 article, though, is, like many of her reviews, a combination of appreciation and derision, of interest and repulsion. Oliphant's view of the sensation genre had certainly evolved by the time of her 1867 'Novels' article to be more depreciating of the quality and quantity of sensation fiction, particularly

²³ For information on many of Oliphant's other novels see the articles in *Margaret Oliphant: Critical Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, ed. by D. J. Trela (Selingsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995).

²⁴ Jay, *Mrs. Oliphant*, p. 5.

²⁵ Elisabeth Jay, 'Freed by Necessity, Trapped by the Market: The Editing of Oliphant's Autobiography', in *Margaret Oliphant: Critical Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, ed. Trela, pp. 135-46, argues that the *Chronicles of Carlingford* 'clearly owed much to George Eliot and Trollope' (142).

²⁶ Margaret Oliphant, 'Sensation Novels', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 91 (May 1865), 564-84 (p. 566).

that written by women, but ‘Sensation Novels’ expresses her admiration of the genre’s potential during the exclusive period of *Salem Chapel*’s publication.

‘The principle may be used with high and pure results’

Oliphant’s main censure of the sensation genre in ‘Sensation Novels’ is the artificial means by which it produces effect, which, according to Oliphant, is ‘invariably attained by violent and illegitimate means, as fantastic in themselves as they are contradictory to actual life’ (565). Oliphant’s criticism, that sensation fiction is typically ‘contradictory to actual life’, is the crux of her opposition to the genre, or, indeed, to any genre. However, when the discussion turns to Wilkie Collins’s latest novel, *The Woman in White*, Oliphant distinguishes it from such a class of novels:

Mr. Wilkie Collins takes up an entirely original position. [...] [*The Woman in White*’s] power arises from no overstraining of nature: – the artist shows no love of mystery for mystery’s sake; he wastes neither wickedness nor passion. His plot is astute and deeply laid, but never weird or ghastly. [...] His effects are produced by common human acts performed by recognizable human agents, whose motives are never inscrutable, and whose line of conduct is always more or less consistent. [...] The more we perceive the perfectly legitimate nature of the means used to produce the sensation, the more striking does that sensation become. (566)

Oliphant’s assessment of *The Woman in White* illustrates her respect for Collins’s ingenuity; rather than denigrate his form of sensation, she praises its authenticity. Her recognition of Collins’s depiction of ‘common human acts performed by recognizable human agents’ and the ‘perfectly legitimate nature’ of the novel’s sensational elements differentiates him from other sensationalists who use supernatural, grotesque, or unrealistic means to bring about excitement. Oliphant is not against sensation per se, but merely opposed to the use of violence, crime, and extraordinary events, which have no place in justifiable reality, for the sole purpose of effect. She criticizes Dickens’s *Great Expectations* for this fault, commenting that, ‘whenever

[Dickens] has aimed at a scene, he has hurried aside into regions of exaggeration, and shown his own distrust of the common and usual by fantastic eccentricities' (574). Oliphant condemns Dickens's distrust of the trivial to produce strong effects and prefers Collins's ability 'to produce effects as startling by the simplest expedients of life' (566). Oliphant ultimately declares of Collins's novel,

we cannot object to the means by which he startles and thrills his readers; everything is legitimate, natural, and possible [...] and there is almost as little that is objectionable in this highly-wrought sensation-novel, as if it had been a domestic history of the most gentle and unexciting kind. (566)

However, in the most comprehensive statement of Oliphant's view of sensation fiction, she notes her respect for Collins's novel, and thus the redeemable qualities of the genre, but also her wariness of the sensation novel, realizing that most specimens would not obtain the artistic height of *The Woman in White*:

The rise of a Sensation School of art in any department is a thing to be watchful with jealous eyes; but nowhere is it so dangerous as in fiction [...] We will not deny that the principle may be used with high and pure results, or that we should have little fault to find with it were it always employed with as much skill and self-control as in *The Woman in White*; but that is an unreasonable hope; and it seems but too likely that Mr. Wilkie Collins, in his remarkable novel, has given a new impulse to a kind of literature which must, more or less, find its inspiration in crime and, more or less, make the criminal its hero. (568)

Gilbert has argued that genres 'were, to an extent, considered spatially contingent to one another, and this partially determined their status'.²⁷ Critics, as we've seen, situated sensation fiction and realism as far apart from one another as possible in the space of the literary landscape. However, Oliphant's argument in 'Sensation Novels', rather than polarizing the literary field, envisions a more cohesive literary spectrum. Indeed, Oliphant's account of *The Woman in White*, particularly her analogy of it as 'a domestic history', locates novels such as Collins's somewhere

²⁷ Gilbert, p. 63.

between realism and sensation fiction. Such a position is where, I would argue, Oliphant also hopes to situate *Salem Chapel*.

In her 1867 article ‘Novels’, Oliphant presents a much harsher criticism of sensation fiction and does not hesitate to position such works as far away from serious fiction as possible. Oliphant even inserts a printer’s line between her analysis of sensation fiction and her subsequent examination of what she sees as the ‘higher ground’ of fiction to invoke ‘as distinct a separation as the printer’s skill can indicate’.²⁸ In the article, Oliphant contrasts the lack of credibility in sensation fiction with the authenticity of novels by writers such as Anthony Trollope. Once again, Oliphant’s insistence on genuine, faithful representations of reality is the linchpin of her criticism: the sensation novelists of 1867, as she suspected in 1862, are not living up to the quality of *The Woman in White*. Regardless of her sentiments in 1867 though, in 1862 Oliphant was encouraged by the quality of *The Woman in White* and *Salem Chapel* echoes her fascination of the possibilities of such an amalgamation of realism and sensation as that which she sees in Collins’s novel.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that the publication of ‘Sensation Novels’ in the same month – May 1862 – that the sensational elements of *Salem Chapel* really begin to take shape and gain momentum was coincidental. Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein argue that,

arranging issues was taken seriously by the Blackwoods, whose views on matters such as the most appropriate placing of work can be found in the daily letters sent between the cooperative of directors and office managers that effectively controlled and orchestrated the journal’s production.²⁹

The April 1862 instalment of *Salem Chapel* contained the first germs of the sensation plot and May’s instalment places Vincent and his family directly into the sensational

²⁸ Margaret Oliphant, ‘Novels’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 102 (September 1867), 257-80 (p. 275).

²⁹ Robert L. Patten and David Finkelstein, ‘Editing *Blackwood’s*; or, What Do Editors Do?’, in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition, 1805-1930*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006), pp. 146-83 (p. 162).

foray. Although John Blackwood, *Blackwood's* editor, could not know which direction Oliphant's narrative would take in future instalments, the May 1862 instalment was on the verge of taking Vincent out of Carlingford on a mission to find his wronged sister and had already suggested the murderous intentions of Rachel, whose false identity had been revealed in the April instalment. By publishing 'Sensation Novels' in the same issue with that particular instalment of *Salem Chapel*, *Blackwood's* validates *Salem Chapel's* melodramatic storyline. The juxtaposition of the article and *Salem Chapel's* slide into the sensational might also have been a way to placate the readers of *Blackwood's* who may have been wary of the rise of the sensation genre. Especially as, as Finkelstein notes, *Blackwood's* readers were an 'audience that was viewed as suspicious of change and unwilling to tolerate challenges to the literary and status quo'.³⁰ In addition, *Blackwood's*, having published the previous instalments of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*, offered Oliphant a congenial space in which to experiment with generic boundaries of the series.

Mapping Carlingford

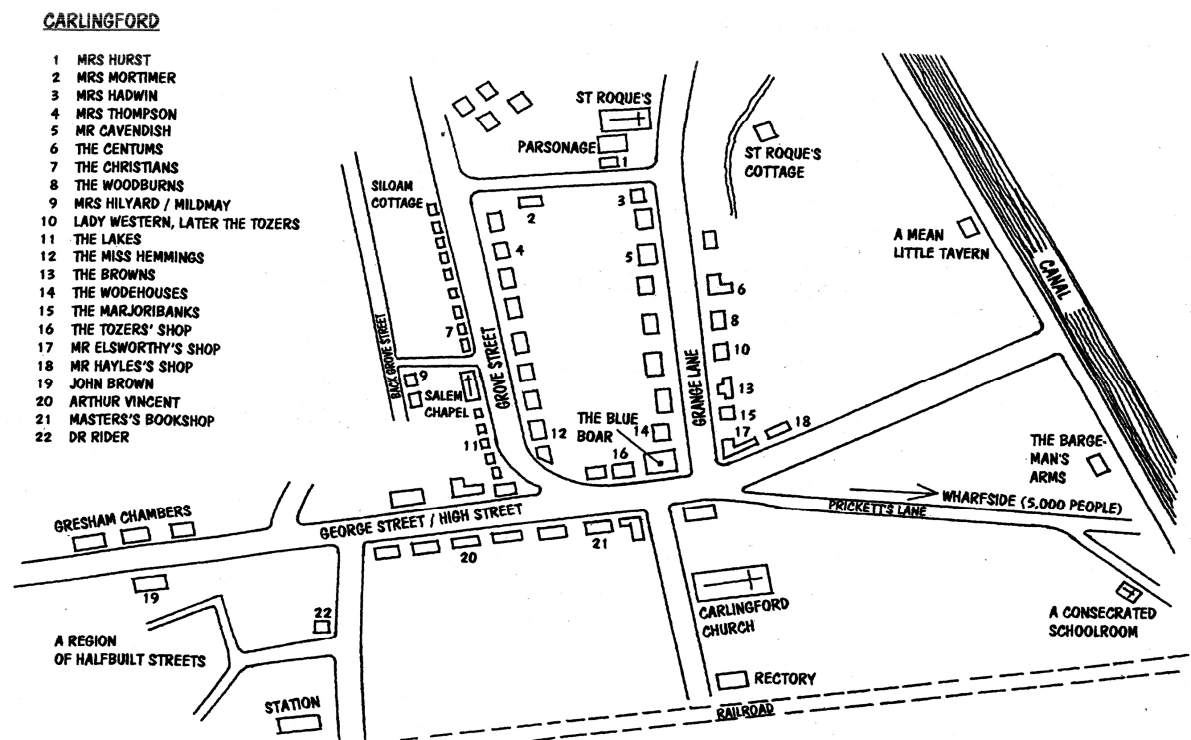
Previous to *Salem Chapel*, the *Chronicles of Carlingford* included two short stories, 'The Executor' (May 1861) and 'The Rector' (September 1861), and the four-part story, 'The Doctor's Family' (October 1861–January 1862). The series would later include the full-length novels *The Perpetual Curate* (June 1863–September 1864), *Miss Majoribanks* (February 1865–May 1866), and *Phoebe Junior* (1876); the final novel being the only chronicle not to appear in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine*.³¹ A cursory glance at the previous instalments of the *Chronicles of Carlingford* reveals

³⁰ Finkelstein, *The House of Blackwood*, p. 78.

³¹ *Phoebe Junior* was not published serially but in volume form by Hurst and Blackett.

how clearly Oliphant mapped Carlingford and delineated the social layout of the fictional town.

In 'The Executor', which tells the story of John Brown, a lawyer who is bequeathed fifty thousand pounds under rather unusual circumstances, Oliphant gives the reader a distinct overview of the community of Carlingford. Following the excitement caused by the shocking will, the narrator peeps in at 'the manner in which the evening of that day was spent in various houses in Carlingford'.³² In this way, four various points on the Carlingford map are distinguished by their locations, their inhabitants, and their interiors, constructing a geographical map of the town as well as a social index of each location.³³



Oliphant also begins 'The Rector' with a description of Carlingford, one that, again, intersperses geographical and social signifiers:

³² Margaret Oliphant, 'The Executor', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 89 (May 1861), 595-614 (p. 599).

³³ The four locations are the houses of John Brown, Dr. Rider, The Christians, and Mrs. Thompson, which, on the map are represented by numbers 19, 22, 7, and 4. The map is from Margarete Rubik, *The Novels of Margaret Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

There is a very respectable amount of very good society at Carlingford. To begin with, it is a pretty place – mild, sheltered, not far from town. [...] The advantages of the town in this respect have already put five per cent upon the house rents; but this, of course, only refers to the *real* town, where you can go through an entire street of high garden walls, with houses inside full of the retired exclusive comforts.³⁴

The emphasis on the *real* town, meaning Grange Lane and its middle- and upper-class Anglican inhabitants, implies that the rest of the town, which consists mainly of lower-class Dissenters, is insignificant. This point is further emphasized when it is noted that ‘Naturally there are no Dissenters in Carlingford – that is to say, none above the rank of a greengrocer or milkman’ (284). Oliphant commences the third instalment of the series, ‘The Doctor’s Family’, in the same way, differentiating the area of Carlingford in which Dr. Rider resides from that of the town’s elite area, Grange Lane: ‘Young Dr. Rider lived in the new quarter of Carlingford: had he aimed at a reputation in society, he could not possibly have done a more foolish thing.’³⁵ As compared to the ‘exclusive houses in Grange Lane, where the aristocracy of Carlingford lived retired within their garden walls, [Dr. Rider’s] own establishment [...] was of a kind utterly to shock the feelings of the refined community’ (420).

When Oliphant turns her attention to the Dissenting community in *Salem Chapel*, she again begins by delineating their geographical and social position within the town. Consisting mainly of shop owners, dress makers, and others from the working and lower class, the Dissenting community mainly inhabits Grove Street, which looked at ‘the big houses opposite, which turned their backs and staircase windows to the street, [and] took little notice of the humble Dissenting community’.³⁶ The ‘big houses’ are those of Grange Lane. The animate description of the Grange

³⁴ Margaret Oliphant, ‘The Rector’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 90 (September 1861), 284–301 (p. 284). Emphasis in the original.

³⁵ Margaret Oliphant, ‘The Doctor’s Family, Part I’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 90 (October 1861), 420–39 (p. 420).

³⁶ (February 1862), p. 207.

Lane houses, with their backs turned in condescension to the inferior region of Grove Street, is central to Oliphant's vision of Carlingford: the town's neighbourhoods exude a sentient awareness of their locality and inhabitants, creating a sense of place that is ingrained in the individual areas, their inhabitants, and their houses. As Margarete Rubik notes, 'Oliphant's tableaux, even those of buildings and interiors, cannot all simply be dismissed as page-fillers; with them the author manages to convey mood and atmosphere.'³⁷ The residents' understanding and acceptance of the disaggregation of the town – Grange Lane as compared to Grove Street – is immediately deferred to in *Salem Chapel*: 'To name the communities [...] in the same breath, would have been accounted little short of sacrilege in Carlingford.'³⁸

Grove Street and Grange Lane run parallel to one another with George Street, the local high street and site of the town's commercial businesses, connecting the two. Indicative of George Street, the only link between the two areas of town is trade:

The names which figure highest in the benevolent lists of Salem Chapel, were known to society only as appearing, in gold letters, upon the backs of those mystic tradesman's books which were deposited every Monday in the little heaps at every house in Grange Lane.³⁹

Thus, Carlingford's social and physical layout, the precise mapping of each distinct section of the town and the various communities who inhabit each area, reveals a social and spatial hierarchy entrenched in and segregated by conventional class, religious, and social codes.

Where it Happens determines What Happens

In her autobiography, Oliphant wrote that the *Chronicles of Carlingford* 'made a considerable stir, [...] and *almost* made me one of the popularities of literature.

³⁷ Margaret Rubik, 'The Subversion of Literary Clichés in Oliphant's Fiction', in *Margaret Oliphant: Critical Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, ed. Trela, pp. 49-65 (p. 52).

³⁸ (February 1862), p. 207.

³⁹ (February 1862), p. 207

Almost, never quite, though “Salem Chapel” really went very near it, I believe’.⁴⁰ The *Annals of a Publishing House*, a history of the Blackwood’s publishing firm, also notes that *Salem Chapel* was a favourite of John Blackwood’s, stating, ‘John Blackwood always referred to [*Salem Chapel*] with pleasure as one of Mrs. Oliphant’s cleverest novels.’⁴¹ Blackwood wrote to Oliphant during the novel’s serialization relating his enthusiasm for the story, exclaiming,

Bravo! This part of ‘Salem’ is splendid. You are winning the race. [...] I am delighted. [...] A relay of compositors are passing the Queen’s birthday in setting it, and proofs will go to you by this post or the later one. [...] I do not believe any man alive could have read it the pace I did, and I could not have done it had I not been desperately anxious – keen as if I had been playing a pitched match at golf, and no human emotions can rise higher than that.⁴²

As Queen Victoria’s birthday was on May 24, one can presume that Blackwood refers to the June instalment, which witnesses Vincent and his mother’s rushed journey to his mother’s house in Lonsdale only to find Susan gone, taken under false pretences by Mildmay; no doubt causing the desperate anxiety felt by Blackwood. Blackwood’s description of his reading experience – obsessive and fast-paced, inducing high-pitched, anxious emotions – expresses the exact characteristics for which critics condemned sensation fiction. Indeed, Blackwood’s response to the instalment is indicative of the serial’s continued slide into the sensational, highlighting the text’s increased drama and narrative tempo.

However, as much as Blackwood enjoyed *Salem Chapel*, Oliphant mentions in her autobiography that he wrote to her ‘pointing out how I had just missed doing something that would have been made worth the while’ in the novel.⁴³ In discussing the alterations Blackwood made to the October 1864 instalment of *The Perpetual*

⁴⁰ Margaret Oliphant, *Autobiography and Letters of Mrs. Margaret Oliphant*, ed. by Mrs. Harry Coghill (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974 [1899]), pp. 69-70. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹ Mrs. Gerald Porter, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons, Their Magazine and Friends: John Blackwood* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1898), pp. 76-77.

⁴² Quoted in Porter, p. 77.

⁴³ Oliphant, *Autobiography*, p. 84.

Curate, the subsequent novel in the Carlingford series, Joanne Shattock notes Blackwood's dislike of the eponymous curate's rapid movements within the instalment and the abrupt introduction and swift travels of the curate's brother. Shattock cites the letter Blackwood wrote to Oliphant relaying his dislike for such actions: ‘“Now why will you run yourself into such a corner as this,” he expostulated, “It is not doing yourself justice, and I am sure you damaged ‘Salem’ by the same sort of thing”’.⁴⁴ Though Blackwood enjoyed the anticipation and excitement caused by the June instalment of *Salem Chapel*, he seems to view too many movements and journeys in so little time and space as detrimental to the structure of *The Perpetual Curate*; a view that may have led him to believe that *Salem Chapel*, with all of Vincent's and Rachel's hasty journeys to find Mildmay, just missed being a great novel.

Blackwood's dismay at the fast-paced movements in *The Perpetual Curate* implies unease with rapid spatial shifts, a common sentiment in the ever-progressing industrial and technological age of the nineteenth century. Helena Michie and Ronald R. Thomas explain that in the nineteenth century ‘the experience of space was changing in dramatic ways as a result of new developments in technology, communication, and transportation’.⁴⁵ Particularly through the development and mass movement evoked by the railway, the ‘annihilation of time and space’ became the topos of the mid-nineteenth century, changing the way time, place, and mobility were thought of and experienced.⁴⁶ As a result of such changes, Michie and Thomas

⁴⁴ Joanne Shattock, ‘The Making of a Novelist: Oliphant and John Blackwood at Work on *The Perpetual Curate*’, in *Margaret Oliphant: Critical Essays on a Gentle Subversive*, ed. by Trela, pp. 113-23 (p. 117).

⁴⁵ Helena Michie and Ronald R. Thomas, ‘Introduction’, in *Nineteenth-Century Geographies: The Transformation of Space from the Victorian Age to the American Century*, ed. by Helena Michie and Ronald R. Thomas (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

⁴⁶ For more on the annihilation of time and space in the nineteenth century see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1977).

propose that the ‘transformations of nineteenth-century culture necessitated a radical reimagining of place and of human relations to it’.⁴⁷ Such revisualization of place is reflected in both the realist and sensational narratives of the day, but re-imagined in very different ways.

Josephine McDonagh, articulating the realist narrative conventions of place, notes,

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the classic period of literary realism, places in fiction have tended to have clear geographical markers, and texts have been admired for the way in which they convey an authentic ‘feel’ for the sites they depict. With the emergence of place as a key constituent of realist narrative, literary texts that conform to readers’ realist experiences begin to exude what is often referred to as a ‘sense of place’.⁴⁸

In terms of how sense of place is perceived by audiences of art or literature, Cresswell asserts that it creates ‘a feeling that we the reader/viewer know what it is like to “be there” ’.⁴⁹ In *Carlingford*, Oliphant certainly invokes a concrete, realist sense of place, one with clear geographical markers and an authentic feel. Many readers may, by the beginning of *Salem Chapel*, have even begun to feel for *Carlingford* what Yi-Fu Tuan terms ‘topophilia’, the affective bond between people and place, particularly as Oliphant was so adept at investing her fictional environments with a sense of reality and ambiance.⁵⁰ Indeed, this element was a noted feature of her work. In an 1897 review of Oliphant’s oeuvre, one nineteenth-century critic posited that,

There is no more prominent feature in her art than the combined precision and delicacy with which the physical and social surroundings of her characters are indicated. [Oliphant’s] novels are rich in ‘atmosphere’; [...] the background of the picture is not left to take care of itself.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Michie and Thomas, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Josephine McDonagh, ‘Space, Mobility, and the Novel: “The Spirit of Place is a great Reality”, ’ in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 50-67 (p. 50).

⁴⁹ Cresswell, *Place*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Tuan’s notion of topophilia is discussed in Cresswell, *Place*, p. 20.

⁵¹ ‘Mrs. Oliphant as a Novelist’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 162 (September 1897), 305-19 (p. 310).

Carlingford's physicality was so prominent and familiar to readers that the critic specifically notes the enduring quality of the town:

Every street in Carlingford seems familiar to us. If we put up for a night or two at the Blue Boar, we should need no guide to take us round the town: first to Tozer's shop; then to Mr. Vincent's lodging at the High Street end of George Street; on to Salem Chapel in Grove Street; winding up, after a dash through Prickett's Lane and Wharfside, and a peep at the elaborate decorations at St. Roque's, with a sumptuous luncheon at one of those comfortable mansions that stand in dignified seclusion behind high brick walls which front Grange Lane. (310)

Even twenty years after the final instalment, the reviewer's memory of the series is embedded in its map and the individual idiosyncrasies of each locality. Such topophilia is also seen in the inhabitants of Carlingford, with each community recognizing, respecting, and upholding the prescriptive codes that organize and structure the town. Even Vincent, who never really fits in at Carlingford, feels a longing for the place when he is away from it tracking Mildmay: 'When he plunged off from Carlingford [...] and looked back upon the few lights struggling red through the mists, it was with a sense of belonging to the place.'⁵²

In contrast to realism's clear geographical markers and articulation of a concrete sense of place, sensation fiction, according to Nicholas Daly, 'depend[s] on the rapid succession of diverse locations. [...] Alternating locations are not of course unique to these novels, but only in the world of sensational crime do they become essential'.⁵³ Daly's assertion echoes George Henry Lewes's claim in 1866 that 'Sensation novels [...] depend on [the] [...] breathless rapidity of movement; whether the movement be absurd or not matters little, the essential thing is to keep moving'.⁵⁴ Daly argues that sensation fiction's rapidity of movement was an attempt to

⁵² (July 1862), p. 116.

⁵³ Nicholas Daly, *Literature, Technology, Modernity, 1860-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 47.

⁵⁴ George Henry Lewes, 'Farewell Causerie', *Fortnightly Review*, 6 (1 December 1866), 890-96 (p. 894).

acclimatize its readers to ‘railway time and space’, which consequently marks the sensation novel as a modernizing form of literature.⁵⁵ Sensation fiction’s modernity, though, was often seen as part of the genre’s pernicious undertones, for as Daly describes it, modernity equated to the ‘disruption of a traditional social and political order, as well as the creation of a new experience of time and space’.⁵⁶ Many sensation novels channelled mobility’s and modernity’s transgressive associations, exploiting them to instil the narratives with a sense of excitement and anxiety. In *Salem Chapel*, though Vincent’s and Rachel’s hurried journeys in pursuit of Mildmay certainly accentuate the sensational aspects of the novel, so too do their movements within Carlingford. In fact, by constructing the sensational features of the text around mobility’s negative connotations, Oliphant gestures toward contemporary anxieties about mobility and its disruption to tradition connotations of place and space.

Cresswell remarks that ‘mobility and movement, insofar as they undermine attachment and commitment, are antithetical to moral worlds. By implication, mobility appears to involve a number of absences – the absence of commitment and attachment and involvement – and a lack of significance’.⁵⁷ For Victorians, this signalled the disaggregation of communities, a mass movement from the rural to the urban, and the disintegration of communal ties. Mobility is viewed as one of the main causes for what Edward Relph describes as an ‘inauthentic attitude’ to place, which portrays ‘essentially no sense of place, for it involves no awareness of the deep and symbolic significances of place and no appreciation for their identities’.⁵⁸ Mobility thus equates to placelessness, invoking the image of the vagabond, the wanderer, and the drifter; all of whom threatened the social order. As a result, as Cresswell notes,

⁵⁵ Daly, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Daly, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 31.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Cresswell, *Place*, p. 44.

‘The creation of place by necessity involves the definition of what lies outside of it.’⁵⁹ Vincent and Rachel’s inability to carve out a place for themselves in any of Carlingford’s communities, their homelessness, in the sense of being ‘without a place’, thus positions them as outsiders and marks them as dangerous entities within the town.⁶⁰

Rachel’s first appearance in the novel is pre-empted by a discussion of her between Mrs. Brown, a member of Salem Chapel, and Vincent, in which Mrs. Brown notes that Rachel ‘doesn’t belong rightly to Salem. She’s a stranger here, and not a joined member’.⁶¹ The description of Rachel directly disassociates her from the people of Salem Chapel and the town of Carlingford generally. Mrs. Brown also remarks that Rachel has something on her mind to tell the minister, observing the vast number of secrets that ministers have confided in them:

‘You ministers’, said Mrs. Brown, with a look of awe, ‘must have a deal of secrets confided to you. Folks may stand out against religion as long as things go on straight with them, but they’re sure to want the minister as soon as they’ve got something on their mind’.⁶²

The role of the minister as a receptacle of secrets creates anticipation in connection with Rachel and the disclosures she may confide to Vincent, immediately enfolding her with a sense of mystery and revelation. Moreover, Rachel lives in Back Grove Street, an obvious step down the social ladder from even Grove Street.⁶³ Her geographic position is literally pushed to the perimeter of the town, hidden behind Salem Chapel. Her marginalized position keeps Rachel, a poor outsider, on the fringe of society.

⁵⁹ Cresswell, *Place*, p. 102.

⁶⁰ See Cresswell’s *Place* for a discussion of homelessness.

⁶¹ (February 1862), p. 213.

⁶² (February 1862), p. 213.

⁶³ Rachel’s home in Back Grove Street is represented by the number 9 on Rubik’s map on page 117.

However, Rachel's 'educated countenance' and general manner create a glaring contrast to her marginalized position and meagre surroundings, causing Vincent to wonder 'Who she was or what she was – how she came there?'⁶⁴ Rachel's identity is further convoluted when, in her threadbare room, Vincent meets Lady Western, with whom Rachel seems to be on exceptionally friendly terms, calling her by her Christian name. On Lady Western's departure, Rachel forgets herself and, after hearing that Vincent did not offer to escort Lady Western to the carriage because he 'feared to presume', tells him, 'with the air of a duchess', that 'Lady Western could not think that any man whom she met in *my* house presumed in offering her a common civility'.⁶⁵ This imperious statement, so incompatible with the place and position of Rachel, is immediately recognized with a 'perception of the ludicrous'.⁶⁶ The contrast between Rachel's position and location to her demeanour further shrouds her in mystery, creating confusion over her proper place in the strict social system and spatial construction of Carlingford. Tromp notes that Rachel's marginalization allows her to behave in unorthodox ways, making her 'the novel's preeminent marker of broken boundaries and the link between all its seemingly disparate elements'.⁶⁷ Tromp's description of Rachel denotes the social boundaries Rachel is able to breach as well as the generic slippage she initiates in the text because of her marginality, but the idea of 'broken boundaries' also suggests Rachel's physical movement. Rachel's double identity, though precluding her from fully joining any of Carlingford's communities, paradoxically provides her illimitable access to all of Carlingford: her real identity provides her access to Grange Lane while her status as Mrs. Hilyard exiles her to Back Grove Street. Her blurred identity also allows her the fluidity to

⁶⁴ (February 1862), p. 221.

⁶⁵ (March 1862), p. 272. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁶ (March 1862), p. 272.

⁶⁷ Tromp, p. 160.

track and shoot Mildmay, compelling Tromp to note that ‘Rachel does not have the social authorization to enact murder; rather, she seizes the license to perform it based on the lack of limitations to bound her fluid identity’ (178).

Rachel’s placelessness, though, is of her own making: she needs the unfettered mobility in order to protect her and her daughter from Mildmay, who is relentlessly pursuing them. She purposely remains aloof from the communities of Carlingford, then, in order to retain the freedom to move about quickly and unobserved. For instance, when Rachel and Vincent discover that Mildmay has kidnapped Susan and Alice, Rachel, in ‘the next moment’, ‘had taken down a travelling-bag [...] and began to transfer some things to it’.⁶⁸ In comparison, Vincent remarks to his mother, ‘I thought we could rush off directly; but [...] I am not a free man [...] I am in fetters to Salem.’⁶⁹ Vincent is bound to Carlingford by duty, whereas Rachel’s lack of entrenchment allows her to move instantly and effortlessly.

Vincent’s disassociation from Carlingford is based in class terms and his inability to find an appropriate niche for himself in the town.⁷⁰ Vincent recognizes the arrangement and social customs of Carlingford and Salem Chapel and yet he rejects them, hoping to convert the Anglican portions of the town and break down the religious and social prejudices of Grange Lane: ‘He pictured to himself how, by-and-by, those jealous doors of Grange Lane would fly open at his touch.’⁷¹ In Carlingford, his position as an educated, refined Dissenting minister, in his mind, elevates him above the crude dimensions of Salem Chapel and its congregation’s commercially tainted parlours. However, his position, in actuality, dissociates him from the upper-

⁶⁸ (May 1862), p. 626.

⁶⁹ (June 1862), p. 760.

⁷⁰ See Joseph H. O’Mealy, ‘Scenes of Professional Life: Mrs. Oliphant and the New Victorian Clergyman’, *Studies in the Novel* (1991), 244-61 for an incisive argument of the evolving social and religious expectations placed on clergymen in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁷¹ (February 1862), p. 208.

class environment of Grange Lane. Vincent is bewildered by the crassness of his congregation, but, in attending a party at Lady Western's, he realizes that 'no link of connection existed between him and this little world of unknown people'.⁷² He is thus left with no community, an outsider to both Grange Lane and Salem Chapel.

Rachel and Vincent's status as outsiders and their disregard for Carlingford's social and spatial traditions mark them as transgressive elements within the town. Cresswell sees this form of transgression as simply crossing a line: 'unlike the sociological definition of "deviance" transgression is an inherently spatial idea. The line that is crossed is often a geographical line and a socio-cultural one.'⁷³ Cresswell's definition certainly applies to Vincent and Rachel, whose deviance is initiated by their unconstrained mobility and neglect of social and geographical parameters. It is not until Vincent and Rachel are situated in proper, suitable social positions that the serial reinstates a conservative status within Carlingford, eradicating the sensational and resetting the predominance of the prosaic.

The Purveyor of Sensation

Rachel, figured as the purveyor of sensation owing to her fraudulent identity and scandalous past, is consistently thrust out of her ambiguous position in Back Grove Street and into other regions in the town. In this way, Oliphant deploys her as a transmitter of the sensational. Indeed, Rachel is the main cause of the narrative's generic shifts, particularly as her more sensational appearances are juxtaposed against mundane events, forcing the reader to weave in and out of the parallel narratives as they become further intertwined.

⁷² (March 1862), p. 281.

⁷³ Cresswell, *Place*, p. 103.

Rachel's first sensational intrusion, and the initial disruption of the realist ambiance in the text, occurs in the April 1862 instalment, when, during a speech by Vincent to his congregation, Rachel sees Lady Western and Colonel Mildmay enter Salem Chapel. Rachel, not expecting to see her estranged husband in Carlingford, rises from her seat with a confused and startled look. Her stance and expression interrupts and discomposes Vincent who is left with a 'helpless feeling of excitement'.⁷⁴ Later that night, Vincent meets Rachel walking near Lady Western's house in Grange Lane, a place to which Rachel, as a poor needlewoman, nor Vincent, a Dissenting minister, belong. The two social outcasts seem drawn together, prompting Vincent to ask, 'What is it that brings you here, and me to your side? – what is it in the dark-veiled house yonder that draws your steps and mine to it? It is not accidental, our meeting here.'⁷⁵ Rachel's appearance stimulates a sense of fatalism in Vincent, inducing him to slip into the sensational. Rachel, noting this descent, replies, 'You are talking romance and nonsense, quite inconceivable in a man who has just come from the society of deacons.'⁷⁶ Meeting with Rachel, so strange and mysterious, eradicates Vincent's pragmatic thoughts and sends them into the realm of the melodramatic. Bakhtin has remarked of the street that,

On the road [...] the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people [...] intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the various fates may collide and interweave with one another.⁷⁷

The street, then, is a fitting place for the type of interaction that occurs between Rachel and Vincent. For as Rachel and Vincent walk, their conversation again slips into the recess of sensation when Rachel, talking of Vincent's mother and sister in the distant town of Lonsdale, remarks,

⁷⁴ (April 1862), p. 492.

⁷⁵ (April 1862), p. 496.

⁷⁶ (April 1862), p. 496.

⁷⁷ Bakhtin, p. 243.

On such a dark night as this, with such wet gleams about the streets, when I think of people at a distance, I always think of something uncomfortable happening. Misfortune seems to lie in wait about those black corners. I think of women wandering along dismal solitary roads with babies in their shameful arms – and of dreadful messengers of evil approaching unconscious houses, and looking in at peaceful windows upon the comfort they are about to destroy; and I think [...] of evil creatures pondering in the dark vile schemes against the innocent.⁷⁸

Rachel's comments mingle the sensational and the everyday, noting how the mobile 'messengers of evil' are able to penetrate unprotected, 'peaceful' homes that are unaware of the danger right outside their doors. Vincent, in turn, feels the uncomfortable affect of Rachel's statement: 'The suggestion of coming danger and the evil with which Rachel's words had invested the very night [...] filled him with discomfort and dread.'⁷⁹ This interaction is one of many between Vincent and Rachel that, in addition to invoking the sensational, is meant to shake Vincent, figured as the inexperienced idealist, out of his naiveté, serving to enlighten him of the combination of the mundane and the sinister that constitute the everyday.

Rachel breaks off her discourse of hidden evils to peer at Mildmay through the keyhole of Lady Western's garden door. Grange Lane's garden walls are frequently referred to in the Carlingford series as great fortresses meant to heighten the grandeur of the establishments and keep their inhabitants protected from unwelcome visitors. Even in the brief descriptions of Carlingford given in the previous section, two references to the garden walls and their role as fortifications of the Anglican gentility are mentioned.⁸⁰ Birgit Kamper views these garden walls as suggesting 'the idea of jealously protected privacy'.⁸¹ In *Salem Chapel* they are described as adding 'a far-withdrawing perspective of gentility and aristocratic seclusion to the vulgar

⁷⁸ (April 1862), p. 497.

⁷⁹ (April 1862), p. 498.

⁸⁰ See the descriptions of Carlingford on page 118.

⁸¹ Birgit Kamper, *Oliphant's Carlingford Series: An Original Contribution to the Debate on Religion, Class and Gender in the 1860s and '70s* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 169.

pretensions of George Street'.⁸² Rachel, though, has no qualms about peering right through Lady Western's door into the inner sanctum of Grange Lane, a place that she, as Lady Western's sister-in-law, could have full access if she wanted. Instead, she chooses to prowl on the outside, mimicking the lurking evil she describes so vividly.

Once Vincent is parted from Rachel and her sensational influence, having deposited her back to Back Grove Street, he 'found less and less reason for attaching any importance to Mrs. Hilyard's hints and alarms'.⁸³ Consoling himself that his sister was safe in the confines of his mother's house, he muses that, 'To think of an innocent English girl in her mother's house as threatened with mysterious danger, such as might have surrounded a heroine of the last century, was impossible.'⁸⁴ When Vincent enters his own home and finds a cheerful letter from his mother and sister, which instils a sense of security and safety on the Lonsdale home, he almost entirely divests himself of the sensational taint of Rachel:

Here, in this humble virtuous world, were no mysteries. It was a deliverance to a heart which had begun to falter. Wherever fate might be lingering in the wild darkness that January night, it was not on the threshold of his mother's house.⁸⁵

Of course, this conviction is utterly misplaced as Mildmay quite easily infiltrates Vincent's mother's home, destroying the illusion of a secure domestic hearth. Vincent's misplaced trust in an idealized reality, in which his mother's cottage and her good nature are enough to keep iniquity and wickedness at bay, is artificial and naïve. The home, just as much as the dark street, is susceptible to the scandalous and shocking, a point that many sensation novels brought to the attention of their readers. It is a lesson Vincent must learn through his own sensational experiences.

⁸² (April 1862), p. 496.

⁸³ (April 1862), p. 500.

⁸⁴ (April 1862), p. 500.

⁸⁵ (April 1862), p. 500.

Though Vincent is initially able to rid himself of the effect of Rachel's morbid talk, the influence of their conversation contaminates the tone of his subsequent speech to his congregation during an otherwise sedate tea-meeting. Vincent speaks to the members of the

dark unknown existence that throbbed and echoed around: he bade them remember the dark night which enclosed that town of Carlingford, without betraying the secret of its existence even to the nearest village; of those dark streets and houses which hid so many lives and hearts and tragic histories.⁸⁶

The sensationalism of his address infects his congregation, leaving them 'startled, frightened, enchanted. If they had been witnessing a melodrama, they scarcely could have been more excited. He had put the dreadful suggestions in their mind of all sorts of possible trouble'.⁸⁷ Oliphant's conscious manipulation of the sensation mode, her amplification of it through a sensational speech stimulated by a sensational encounter, turns Vincent into a source of sensation, unleashing its affects onto his congregation. The melodrama of Vincent's speech is interesting in that, while he doesn't seem to believe his own words, he does acknowledge that 'he sat down with the consciousness of having done his duty by Salem for this night at least'.⁸⁸ Vincent doesn't make the speech for mere entertainment purposes, although he does find some humour in the reaction of the members. He seems to do it to shake the community out of their complacency, which Oliphant, in turn, then does to Vincent. Indeed, the truth of Vincent's lecture reverberates directly outside of the tea-meeting, where, in the graveyard of the chapel, Rachel and Mildmay have a heated and violent confrontation. In retiring to the vestry after his speech, Vincent, overhearing Rachel's raised voice, 'suddenly changed from the languid sentimentalist, painful and self-conscious, which the influences of the evening had made him, into a spectator very wide awake and

⁸⁶ (April 1862), p. 503.

⁸⁷ (April 1862), p. 503.

⁸⁸ (April 1862), p. 504.

anxious'.⁸⁹ Oliphant, rather than restoring faith in the realist plot, surges deeper into the sensational, transporting it right into the consecrated ground of Salem Chapel.

Rachel notes the suitability of the graveyard for her discussion with Mildmay, stating, 'If you must speak, speak here, [...] it is scarcely the atmosphere for a man of your fine taste, to be sure; but considering the subject of the conference, it will do.'⁹⁰ Mildmay, however, views the location as a scene of murder: 'By Jove, it looks dangerous! – what do you mean to suggest by this sweet rendezvous – murder?'⁹¹ The privacy of the place, distanced from the strictures of Grange Lane, and its morbid atmosphere combine to create the ideal space to hold the conversation, a tête-à-tête in which Rachel threatens to murder Mildmay and Mildmay actually lifts his stick in a motion to strike her as she leaves. The juxtaposition of the ordinary, commonplace tea-meeting, the sensational lecture, with its sinister implications, and the vicious conversation taking place just outside create confusion between the real and the sensational. What should have been a sedate gathering of the congregation turns into a melodrama of the most thrilling kind, causing hearts to pound and faces to pale. And rather than contradict the sentiments of Vincent's speech, Oliphant follows it up with a case in point, depicting an argument in which a husband and wife trade insults and terrorize one another with threats of murder. Moreover, Mildmay's departure down Grove Street after his interview with Rachel adds to the excitement of the night for the members of Salem Chapel as 'The sight of this very fine gentleman picking his way along the dark pavement of Grove Street [...] gave a climax to the evening in the excited imaginations of Mr. Vincent's admirers'.⁹² The interpolation of Mildmay into the drama of Vincent's speech further connects the scene within the chapel and the

⁸⁹ (April 1862), p. 504.

⁹⁰ (April 1862), p. 504.

⁹¹ (April 1862), p. 504.

⁹² (April 1862), p. 507.

scene outside, increasing the interplay between the realist and the sensational plotlines.

From this ferocious argument, Rachel moves immediately into the lighted hall of the tea-meeting, an act that mystifies Vincent in his heightened agitation: ‘Out of her mysterious life – out of that interview, so full of violence and passion – the strange woman came, without a moment’s interval, to amuse herself by looking at and listening to all those homely innocent people.’⁹³ Rachel’s fluidity and her experience of the sensational allow her to adjust to her surroundings quickly and easily, causing Vincent to wonder whether ‘she flesh and blood after all, or some wonderful skeleton living a galvanic life?’.⁹⁴ Vincent, so new to the wonders of the lurid and the sensational, cannot understand Rachel and is overwhelmed by the incident. He does not hesitate, though, to throw himself headlong into the breach of the drama when Rachel, telling him ‘It is life or death’, asks him to send a telegraph warning her daughter’s nurse of Mildmay’s knowledge of their location in Lonsdale.⁹⁵ Rachel again is the incentive of Vincent’s descent into the sensational when, seeing Mildmay on the train as he dispatches the telegraph, Vincent experiences an influx of melodramatic emotion:

With a thrill of active hatred and fierce enmity which it was difficult to account for, and still more difficult for a man of his profession to excuse, the young man looked forward to the unknown future with a certainty of meeting that face again.⁹⁶

The telegraph is, however, too late, and Mildmay takes both Alice and Susan to Dover in the hope of getting to France. Rachel, though, intercepts them at Dover and shoots Mildmay in his hotel room. When Rachel returns to Carlingford after shooting Mildmay, her fluidity again overwhelms Vincent as he tries to take her

⁹³ (April 1862), p. 507.

⁹⁴ (April 1862), p. 507.

⁹⁵ (April 1862), p. 508.

⁹⁶ (April 1862), p. 509.

prisoner. She first invokes her position as a poor needlewoman to excuse her malicious actions, stating, 'I am only a needlewoman, and live in Back Grove Street.'⁹⁷ In the same breath though, speaking to Lady Western, she seeks sanctuary from the consequences of her actions:

Take me with you, [...] take charge of me, keep me prisoner, until all this is cleared up. I am about tired of living a disguised princess. [...] You will find me safe, Mr. Vincent, when you happen to want me, with Lady Western in Grange Lane.⁹⁸

To seek asylum in her heritage had been Rachel's plan all along, as three instalments earlier, as she embarked on her quest to find Mildmay and her daughter, Rachel had mocked Vincent with the question of who would believe harm of 'a woman who was born to the name of Rachel Russell, the model English wife? Will the world ever believe harm, do you imagine, of such a name? I will take refuge in my ancestress'.⁹⁹ Not only does Rachel hide behind her ancestry after shooting Mildmay, but she does so in the respectable, safe area of Grange Lane, prompting Tromp to argue that, 'Lady Western's presence lends Rachel's fluid identity shape and allows for her (temporary) absorption into what Arthur conceives of as a safe social space.'¹⁰⁰ By calling attention to the differentiation of her position, socially and geographically, at the time of the crime – Rachel Hilyard, poor needlewoman of Back Grove Street – as compared to the present – Mrs. Mildmay of Grange Lane – Rachel distances herself from the crime behind the shield of class, position, and geographical place. She acknowledges this when she says, 'I do not think Back Grove Street will do any longer.'¹⁰¹ The announcement of Rachel's name as Mrs. Mildmay rather than Mrs. Hilyard upon her arrival at Vincent's lodging after Mildmay's attack, a name that the

⁹⁷ (October 1862), p. 444.

⁹⁸ (October 1862), p. 444.

⁹⁹ (June 1862), p. 776.

¹⁰⁰ Tromp, p. 181.

¹⁰¹ (October 1862), p. 445.

narrator also discontinues using, saying, ‘not Mrs. Hilyard: that was over’, is itself an indication of her transformation.¹⁰² Further, when attempting to demonstrate to Vincent that by embracing her true identity she will be contained by the restrictions of her position, Rachel is accompanied by Mr. Fordham, her soon-to-be brother-in-law. Mr. Fordham’s presence represents the authoritative control that Rachel is under now that she has resumed her identity as Mrs. Mildmay.¹⁰³ Rachel remarks the change when she states, ‘They think in Grange Lane that it is only a man who can speak to a man [...] and now that I have come to life again, I must not manage my own affairs.’¹⁰⁴ The statement emphasizes the contrast between Grange Lane and Back Grove Street: in Back Grove Street Rachel could act for herself, and, indeed, commit a heinous crime, but in Grange Lane she needs a man to sanction her actions. The gendered implications of this announcement gesture toward the reinstatement of a conservative, male-dominated social structure within the narrative, in which Fordham must act as mediator between Rachel and Vincent.

Rachel’s ultimate liberation is indicative of the narrative’s shift back into realism. At this point, the sensational aspects of the story have subsided and the deviant Rachel is confined to Grange Lane and its social strictures. Within the confines of upper-class, conservative society, readers could feel confident of Rachel’s containment. Her vagabond status now eradicated, Rachel is forced to subscribe to the established codes of society and those of place and class. She is no longer at liberty to move about freely taking up false positions but is, in actuality, held within the prison of society and its delimiting, safe boundaries.

¹⁰² (January 1863), p. 63.

¹⁰³ Such an informal form of punishment for her crime, rather than a legal or judicial penalty, calls to mind D. A. Miller’s argument in *The Novel and the Police* of the powerful influence evinced by social control in the Victorian novel, an issue that will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁴ (January 1863), p. 63.

False Idealism and Discovering the Everyday

Arthur Vincent arrives in Carlingford full of vigour and ambition, with an idealized view of society and the triumphs he can achieve. Vincent, though, unable to acclimate to the Dissenting community of Salem Chapel or find a place in the upper-class Anglican society of Grange Lane, reverts into a fantasy world based on a fictitious, romanticized version of reality, one particularly centred on an idealized relationship with Lady Western. Vincent's fantasies are depicted as a manifestation of the minister's exaggerated idealism, which preclude him from being satisfied with any of the aspects of his life, consequently revealing his desperate search for a contented, appropriate place in society. Vincent's daydreams and fantasies, immaterial and inherently ethereal, portray a form of place and mobility in the text that is not bound by any social or geographical limits, providing him with a place to mentally 'go' when the troubles or boredom of his real life prove too much for him. However, these fantasies further alienate him from his congregation by corrupting his perception of the real and the everyday, as well as that of place.

Vincent spends so much time locked up in his room in a haze of daydreams that, under the impression that he is hard at work, a rumour of his devotion to his study circulates among his congregation. He is, however, 'shut up in a world of dreams which nobody knew anything about'.¹⁰⁵ His fantasy world, which the reader is told of but not privy to, further interrupts his natural duties as 'he [spends] the days in a kind of dream, avoiding all his duties, paying no visits, doing no pastoral work, neglecting the very sermon over which his landlady saw him hanging so many silent hours'.¹⁰⁶ Vincent's fantasies are shown to invade and almost overpower the real, taking over his reality to such an extent that his congregation begins to think of

¹⁰⁵ (March 1862), p. 279.

¹⁰⁶ (March 1862), p. 279.

replacing him for another minister when they realize he isn't actually doing any pastoral work. These fantasies also intrude upon Vincent's thoughts when he is trying to find Mildmay:

[He] could not help, in the very deepest thoughts about Susan, breaking off now and then into a momentary digression, which suddenly carried him into Lady Western's drawing-room. [...] In and out, and round about that grievous doubt which had suddenly disturbed the quiet history of his family, the capricious fairy [Lady Western] played, touching all his anxious thoughts with thrills of sweetness.¹⁰⁷

The underlying progression of Vincent from idealistic dissenting minister to mature professional writer, which Vincent eventually becomes at the end of the novel, is predicated on his ability to rid himself of his idealized fantasies and accept the everyday as a place where the trivial and the extraordinary coalesce. Kamper comments on the essential role of the sensational and realist elements of the story in contributing to Vincent's maturation, noting,

Vincent's outlook on life is modified by different experiences. For one thing, in the realist plot, his attitude towards life is changed through everyday humiliations, setbacks and compromises. For another, in the sensation plot, he is confronted with despair, crime, hatred and death and has to come to terms with the fact that his insight into life is rather narrow and that his powers of changing the world are limited.¹⁰⁸

Although I would add that Vincent's realization of the futility of his imprudent fantasies is part of his maturation, the point Kamper makes is legitimate: Vincent needs the experience of the extraordinary to fully understand what constitutes the real. The disassembling of Vincent's idealized visions, and thus of his escapist, fantasy sphere, obliges him to come to terms with the actualities of his life and his position. The amalgamation of sensationalism, idealism, and realism within the text are thus crucial for Vincent to find his rightful place within society. Jones, in comparing Vincent's development to *The Woman in White's* protagonist Walter Hartright, notes

¹⁰⁷ (May 1862), p. 616.

¹⁰⁸ Kamper, p. 275.

that, ‘Arthur Vincent’s experience in the novel exemplifies Walter Hartright’s maxim that: “Through all the ways of our unintelligible world the trivial and terrible walk hand in hand together”.’¹⁰⁹ Charting Vincent’s growth as he navigates the generic oscillations of the text, Oliphant discloses the negative aspects of a monocentric vision of reality. In revealing the eclectic nature of the everyday, *Salem Chapel* also challenges the limiting confines of literary categories that were based on a solitary depiction of reality, merging realism, sensation, and idealism in an attempt to accentuate each one’s role in the construction of everyday.

Vincent’s inability to comprehend the complexity and simplicity of the everyday is apparent from the beginning of *Salem Chapel*. He takes offense at common, neighbourly gestures, as when a chapel member sends him a left-over jelly, which leaves him ‘thrilling with offence and indignation’.¹¹⁰ He also cannot understand his mother’s continued attention to trivial incidents, such as a smoking lamp, amidst their family troubles: ‘To think you should talk about the lamp at such a time, or notice it all, indeed, if it smoked like fifty chimneys? [...] Why, mother, this is life or death.’¹¹¹ Mrs. Vincent, in turn, remarks, ‘Ah! Arthur, you are so young and hopeful. It is different with me, who have seen so many terrors come true’.¹¹² Mrs. Vincent, though certainly overwhelmed by their troubles at times, is better able to compartmentalize and yet mingle the common and the sensational.

Part of Vincent’s inability to cope with the sensational intrusion in his life is due to the public scandal that results from his sister’s involvement in the Mildmay shooting. Waiting to see a lawyer about the case, Vincent sees a group of clerks, who, ‘full of lively interest and excitement’, are reading of his sister’s story in the

¹⁰⁹ Jones, p. 242.

¹¹⁰ (February 1862), p. 216.

¹¹¹ (May 1862), p. 607.

¹¹² (May 1862), p. 617.

newspaper. Seeing his family tragedy discussed in public ‘made the entire world a chaos to Vincent’, turning his personal drama into a spectacle and enhancing its sensational proportions in his mind. Vincent regains his composure, though, in explaining Susan’s case to the lawyer, in whom ‘No shivers of wonder or pain convulsed [...] as he listened’.¹¹³ To a professional, who hears stories like Susan’s every day, the incident is not as scandalous and shocking as it is to Vincent:

Under [the lawyer’s] touch, Susan’s dreadful position became one not unprecedented, to be dealt with like any other condition of actual life; and when Vincent, after furnishing all the information he could, [...] left the office [...] [it was] with a mind somewhat calmed out of its first horror.¹¹⁴

The ability of the lawyer to neutralize the sensational event by situating it in the realm of the everyday restores a sense of tranquility and normalcy to the situation and to Vincent, though this mood is short lived. Upon his return to Carlingford, Vincent finds his fellow lodgers moving out of his building in order to distance themselves from the taint of the affair. This revives Vincent’s disillusionment with the affair. In order to escape his fears and distress, Vincent lapses into fantasies about the life he wishes he had, daydreaming about rising above what he sees as the plebeian confines of Salem Chapel but, most often, romanticizing his relationship with Lady Western.

Vincent first encounters Lady Western occurs in Back Grove Street, where he observes her exiting her carriage to visit Rachel. The brief encounter is permeated with an aggrandized rhetoric that elevates Lady Western into a ‘beautiful dazzling creature’ out of a fairy-tale: ‘That vision descended out of the heavenly chariot upon the mean pavement.’¹¹⁵ After seeing this ‘apparition’, Vincent’s world is utterly disrupted:

The world on the other side of these prancing horses was a different world from that on this side. Those other matters, of which he had been thinking so

¹¹³ (September 1862), p. 331.

¹¹⁴ (September 1862), p. 332.

¹¹⁵ (February 1862), p. 225.

hotly, had suddenly faded into a background and accessories to the one triumphant figure which occupied all the scene.¹¹⁶

‘Those other matters’ are the daily concerns and duties of Salem Chapel.

Still under the spell of Lady Western, Vincent, ‘idling and meditative as was natural in such a condition of mind’, transgresses the social code of Carlingford and enters Masters’s book shop, the Anglican book shop that is ‘the last place in the world his masters at the chapel would have advised him to enter’.¹¹⁷ Here, in a place that Vincent is not welcomed and does not belong, he is invited by Lady Western to a garden party. The invitation does the final stroke of obliterating all conventional social and geographical signifiers for Vincent: ‘With [Lady Western], Back Grove Street was Paradise. Where her habitation was, or what he should see there, was indifferent to Vincent.’¹¹⁸

On his way to Lady Western’s party, Vincent, envisioning that he is going ‘into the Bower of Bliss’, prepares himself to ‘take his own place in that unknown world’.¹¹⁹ Upon arrival though, Vincent, knowing no one besides Lady Western, becomes a ‘silent statue’, feeling ‘so preposterously alone, so dismally silent, so shut up in himself’.¹²⁰ When Vincent emerges from the party ‘the fairy vision was gone’ and ‘the road no longer gleamed with any rose reflections, but was harder, more *real*, more matter-of-fact than ever it had looked before’.¹²¹ Vincent’s experience forces him to realize how disconnected he is to the elite society of Grange Lane and to Lady Western. This experience becomes the first of many that finally rid him of his rampant idealism. It is also one of the narrative’s most critical in delineating how such uninhibited idealism is destructive to the conception of an authentic reality.

¹¹⁶ (February 1862), p. 225.

¹¹⁷ (March 1862), p. 274.

¹¹⁸ (March 1862), p. 278.

¹¹⁹ (March 1862), p. 279.

¹²⁰ (March 1862), p. 280.

¹²¹ (March 1862), p. 280. Emphasis added.

Vincent's daydreams, though, are only truly dispelled when he finally accepts the repercussions of the sensational disruption caused by Susan's abduction and the commonplace responsibilities of Salem Chapel. His daydreams and fantasies now gone, Vincent is forced to reconcile his experiences into a single, united philosophy that incorporates both the mundane and the fantastical. Vincent's clarity occurs in the final instalment of the serial, when, after seeing Lady Western immediately following her wedding to Mr. Fordham, Vincent, for almost the first time in the serial, 'began to see clearly'.¹²² It is only after this that Vincent can, undeterred, look to his own life: 'Nothing now stood between him and the crisis which henceforward must determine his personal affairs.'¹²³ Vincent, rid of the fraudulent, fantasy world and past the trials of the sensational, yet cognizant of their lessons, can now turn to the authentic and natural duties of his life.

The denouement of *Salem Chapel*, though insisting that Vincent has come to terms with the everyday and the obligations inherent in the real, also implies that he has not completely thrown off his idealism. When Susan, Alice, and his mother rejoin him in England after a few years abroad, Vincent indulges his romantic side, noting that Susan and Alice moved about 'with lovely fairy lightness', and feeling himself like 'an enchanted prince in a fairy tale'.¹²⁴ Vincent realizes though, that 'however wonderful they were, they were *real* creatures, who did not vanish away, but were close to him all the evening.'¹²⁵ Their presence helps resign Vincent to the varied complexion of life and accept the fate of his reality, but still maintain a hint of idealist hope: 'Life became glorious again under their touch [...] He could not tell what wonderful thing he might not yet do in this wonderful elevation and new inspiring of

¹²² (January 1863), p. 71.

¹²³ (January 1863), p. 71.

¹²⁴ (January 1863), p. 82

¹²⁵ (January 1863), pp. 82-83. Emphasis added.

his heart.’¹²⁶ Vincent’s decision to leave the ministry and take up a literary life, for ‘it is believed in Carlingford, [that Vincent was] the founder of the *Philosophical Review*, the new organ of public opinion’, also points to a more pragmatic direction for Vincent.¹²⁷ Rather than trying to topple the Established Church single-handedly, Vincent chooses to participate in a collective debate within the medium of the press. Vincent’s experience with Rachel and Salem Chapel thus liberate him from his idealized, one dimensional vision of reality, forcing him to accept the amalgamation of the real, the sensational, and the ideal in the complexion of the everyday.

Carlingford in the 1870s

An 1864 review of the *Chronicles of Carlingford* in *The London Review*, remarks, just after mentioning the ‘glaring improbabilities’ set forth in *Salem Chapel*, that in the subsequent story, *The Perpetual Curate*, ‘Mrs. Oliphant contents herself with telling the a simple tale of everyday life, a record of very ordinary troubles and pleasures.’¹²⁸ Though *The Perpetual Curate* and most of the subsequent *Chronicles* contain some elements of the sensational, Oliphant’s reinstatement of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*’s fundamental realism reflects Langbauer’s argument that ‘The formal properties of the series represent a cycle of perpetuation and revitalization of the status quo’.¹²⁹ Or, as the narrator describes it in ‘The Doctor’s Family’,

Affairs went on in Carlingford with the usual commonplace pertinacity of human affairs. Notable events happened but seldom in anybody’s life, and matters rolled back into their ordinary routine, or found a new routine for themselves after the ordinary course of humanity.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ (January 1863), p. 83.

¹²⁷ (January 1863), p. 81.

¹²⁸ ‘*Chronicles of Carlingford*’, *The London Review* (26 November 1864), 591-2 (p. 591).

¹²⁹ Langbauer, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Margaret Oliphant, ‘The Doctor’s Family: Part II’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 90 (November 1861), 525-45 (p. 525).

Though Oliphant's exploration of sensational motifs may not have been as prevalent in the succeeding instalments of the series, her study of the evolving dynamics of space and place on the construction of Carlingford is not abandoned. The final book in the series, *Phoebe Junior*, published fourteen years after *Salem Chapel*, centres on the subsequent generation of Carlingford inhabitants. In it, Oliphant dramatically alters Carlingford's social map and the sense of place that had pervaded the town in earlier instalments of the series, completely overturning its once solid social and spatial traditions. Here, the aged Tozers, a leading Dissenting family, now inhabit the house that once belonged to Lady Western. This depiction of the town suggests that by the mid 1870s even a place as entrenched in traditional geographical and social customs like Carlingford was not exempt from the effects of ever-increasing mobility, migration, and disaggregation that continued to change the map of Britain during the nineteenth century.

Oliphant's exploration into the themes of place and space, just as much as her foray into the sensational in *Salem Chapel*, is thus a timely evaluation of the ramifications of an increasing mobile and unknown population on the complexion of communities and representations of place. Her employment of a realist-sensational hybrid form in *Salem Chapel*, much like her argument concerning *The Woman in White*, was an attempt to emphasize the artistic potential of sensation fiction. The critical environment of the period, though, refused to acknowledge the pliable nature of literary genres, ignoring the novel's sensation plot as irrelevant and expendable. However, although the novel's hybridity may have been neglected and derided by contemporary reviewers, it is this distinctive quality that positions *Salem Chapel* as an important text in understanding the literary evolutions of the mid-nineteenth century,

as well as illuminating the way mobility, place, and space were defined, depicted, and experienced by Victorian readers.

The following chapter will continue to look at sensation fiction's synthesis of varied genres and discourses, examining how the sensation novel participated in the religious reformation of the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 4

Sensational Sermonizing: Ellen Wood, *Good Words*, and the Conversion of the Popular

Historian Owen Chadwick posits that ‘mid-Victorian England asked itself the question, for the first time in popular understanding, is Christian faith true?’¹ Chadwick remarks that although doubt had been growing before 1860, it was not until that year that it ‘touched the national life, the assumptions of legislators, the convictions of moralists’ (2). Although Chadwick delineates the importance that science played in contributing to this growing doubt, he contends that the unsettling of faith was primarily caused by a general re-evaluation of the Bible, largely forwarded by Darwin, but more overtly by the 1861 publication of *Essays and Review*. *Essays and Reviews*, a collection of articles written chiefly by clergymen, highlighted the gap that had opened between Christian doctrine and the real beliefs of educated men and positioned the Bible as a historical text that could be read and interpreted as any other book.² *Essays and Reviews* sparked major debate over the truth of the Bible, becoming, as Josef Altholz avers, ‘the center of one of the major religious controversies of Victorian England’.³ The conflict came to a head in 1864 when the writers of *Essays and Reviews* were allowed to retain their clerical positions. As Chadwick notes of this event, the ‘judgment posed the problem of the modern church in a stark form; the problem which plagued all the churches during the sixties

¹ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part I: 1834-1859* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971), p. 1.

² Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II: 1860-1901* (London: SMC Press, 1980), p. 77. Benjamin Jowett’s article in *Essays and Reviews* was the most adamant in its depiction of the Bible as an interpretable text.

³ Josef Altholz, ‘The Mind of Victorian Orthodoxy: Anglican Responses to *Essays and Reviews*’, in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, vol. 4 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 28-40 (p. 28).

and seventies. Part of the traditional teaching of the Christian churches was being proved, little by little, to be untrue'.⁴

In addition to what was being taught, a debate about how Christianity was being preached also arose during the period, initiating controversy over the style and method of preaching and preachers. Indicative of this debate was the immense popularity of Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher commonly referred to as the 'Prince of Preachers' who exploded onto the religious scene in the mid 1850s, and whose modern and expressive form of preaching polarized mid-Victorian society as to the proper, most effective mode of preaching. Spurgeon's demonstrative, emotional style of sermonizing, which recalled the sensational oratory of John Wesley and George Whitefield during the Methodist revival of the late eighteenth century, helped popularize an effusive form of preaching in the mid-nineteenth century, one that used accessible, emotional language in a bid to connect with and convert the working and middle classes. Mark Knight, in tracing the sensational techniques employed by influential Evangelical leaders to combat growing disillusionment with religious faith, comments, 'the growing doubts about the adequacy of Scripture [...] left Evangelicals with little choice but to rethink their bibliolatry and turn to the language of sensation to promote their beliefs'; something Spurgeon did with great success.⁵

Good Words, a popular religious magazine, capitalized on society's proclivity for emotional preaching and affective literature in the early 1860s, publishing a mix of moralizing, didactic material and more general, secular content in an attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible. In doing so, the magazine looked to remodel standard methods of disseminating spiritual doctrine, ultimately offering an extremely popular medium in which to communicate theological doctrine. As Knight describes it, '[A]

⁴ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II*, p. 88.

⁵ Mark Knight, 'Rethinking Bibliolatry: Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism', *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, 3 (2000), 47-58 (p. 56).

recognition of the need to repackage the Word for the secular market lay behind the formation of *Good Words*.⁶ Once the magazine began to be issued monthly, part of its attempt to ‘repackage the Word’ included publishing fiction by popular writers such as Ellen Wood, who serialized *Oswald Cray* in the journal from January through December of 1864. However, Patricia Thomas Srebrnik, quoting a letter from Alexander Strahan, *Good Words*’s proprietor, to John Hollingshead, an avid contributor to Dickens’s periodicals, demonstrates how Strahan was careful to explain the distinction between *Good Words* and purely secular magazines: ‘with us, everything must have a purpose. To interest and amuse are not enough in themselves.’⁷ Strahan’s remark reveals how pure amusement was insufficient to warrant publication in the pages of *Good Words*; rather, the material had to strive for a higher intent. *Good Words* thus aimed to create a balance among its content that was entertaining but also morally uplifting, particularly in the important area of serial fiction.

Jeanne B. Elliot notes that a mixture of sensationalism and sermonizing was ‘Mrs. Henry Wood’s trademark’, a literary fusion that would seem to position Wood as an ideal contributor to *Good Words*.⁸ Yet, *Oswald Cray*’s blend of sensational motifs and religious allegory was slated by critics, many of whom criticized the novel for being dull and insipid. *Oswald Cray* was certainly more sensational than the previous full-length serial in *Good Words*, Dinah Mulock Craik’s *Mistress and Maid* (1862), or the one succeeding it, Charles Kingsley’s *Hereward the Wake* (1865), but it was less so than many of Wood’s preceding novels. Thus, for critics accustomed to Wood’s more sensational, daring novels, like *East Lynne* and *Verner’s Pride*, *Oswald*

⁶ Knight, ‘Rethinking Bibliolatry’, p. 55.

⁷ Patricia Thomas Srebrnik, *Alexander Strahan: Victorian Publisher* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986), p. 42.

⁸ Jeanne B. Elliot, ‘A Lady to the End: The Case of Isabel Vane’, *Victorian Studies*, 19:3 (March 1976), 329-44 (p. 330).

Cray seemed lacklustre. The *Athenaeum* speculates that the novel's failure was due to its publication in *Good Words*, commenting,

‘Oswald Cray’ appeared in the pages of *Good Words*, a periodical in which a writer of fiction is placed under some limitations. Whether Mrs. Wood has not felt herself at ease and liberty [...] we do not know; but it is certain that in ‘Oswald Cray’ her usual skill in weaving a story pleasantly and naturally deserts her. ‘Oswald Cray’ is dull and long drawn out. The incident upon which the interest centres is so weak that the reader is inclined to resent it.⁹

Here again, as in the case of *Salem Chapel*, Gilbert's notion that ‘once an author/text is established within a certain generic domain, [...] critics, publishers, authors, and readers will enforce, through master-readings (reviews), packaging, textual references, and reading assumptions, a reading of that text which is congruent with its assigned generic pedigree’ can be seen to affect the reception of a text.¹⁰ For though Wood had published serials in the religious weeklies *The Quiver* and *The Leisure Hour* previous to the serialization of *Oswald Cray*, and frequently interspersed her sensation novels with religious coloration, her status as a sensationalist, a label affixed to her since the publication of *East Lynne*, was her dominant ‘generic domain’. When taken out of *Good Words*, *Oswald Cray*'s sensational sermonizing, rather than feeding into a larger spiritual message, was seen as tedious and uninteresting. The affect and influence of *Oswald Cray*'s periodical placement is further explored through a comparison of the text with *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*, a novel Wood was concurrently serializing in the secular weekly *Once A Week* and which was one of Wood's more sensational novels.

The following analysis of *Oswald Cray* thus highlights how interconnected sensational and Evangelical rhetoric was in the 1860s, but also the tension that existed between the two discourses. Indeed, much like *Oswald Cray*, Spurgeon and *Good*

⁹ ‘Rev. of *Oswald Cray*’, *Athenaeum*, 1939 (24 December 1864), 859 (p. 859).

¹⁰ Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 59.

Words were both attacked by critics for their blend of popular, sensational elements and religious sentiment. However, the hybridity of Wood's narrative, Spurgeon's sermons, and *Good Words*'s content signifies the widespread re-evaluation of the dissemination of religious doctrine in the 1860s, revealing how the pulpit, literature, and print culture all attempted to renovate religious rhetoric by embracing an affecting, sensational model.

The 'Prince of Preachers'

In the mid-nineteenth century, Evangelicalism was often regarded as the religion of the heart for its promotion of emotion as a key aspect in inducing conversion and maintaining faith. Mark Knight and Emma Mason note that the Evangelical idea that 'all of society was fallen' was accompanied by the belief in the possibility 'of salvation and a commitment to converting contemporaries and transforming the world in which they found themselves'.¹¹ As a February 1862 article in *Good Words* states, conversion and salvation was initiated from within the heart:

[It is] in the heart that cleansing must begin, [...] which alone secures, alone changes, alone transforms, and makes creatures of accident [...] a divinely upheld being, whose life is clean and pure because the heart is first washed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.¹²

Central to the inducement of such cleansing was Evangelicalism's tradition of demonstrative preaching, which, in order to initiate conversion, was directed toward the emotions of the audience.

Spurgeon's biographer, J. C. Carlile, contends that it was Spurgeon's ability to arouse his listeners' emotions through his affective preaching style and his simple language that distinguished him as a preacher: 'Perhaps the greatest innovation was

¹¹ Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 128-29.

¹² C. J. Vaughan, 'Plain Words on Christian Living: Seat and Exit of Evil', *Good Words*, 5 (February 1862), 123-26 (p. 125).

that Spurgeon turned the pulpit into a platform. [...] He adopted a direct method of address just as personal as the prophet's form of speech.'¹³ When reading Spurgeon's sermons today it is difficult to recreate the emotional drama of the initial performance. It is, however, easy to distinguish the straightforwardness of his rhetoric. For example, he often used common analogies in his sermons, such as comparing the struggle over one's soul to a pawn shop: 'Look here! – your soul is in pawn to the Devil; Christ has paid the Redemption money; you take faith for the ticket, and get your soul out of pawn.'¹⁴ Such commonplace, direct examples, combined with his emotionally permeated sermons and theatrical presence, allowed him to connect with his audience and instigate the process of conversion. In his autobiography, Spurgeon gives an example of how the process worked. Relating the conversion of a prostitute, Spurgeon describes how the woman, who was on her way to throw herself over Blackfriars Bridge, heard his sermon and believed he was speaking directly of her iniquitous actions: 'While I was preaching the wretched woman was melted to tears by the thought that her own evil life was being depicted to the congregation'.¹⁵ Overcome with emotion, the woman is converted on the spot.

Spurgeon's style of oration made him a pivotal figure in the nineteenth-century debate over methods of preaching. In September 1857, the *New Monthly Magazine* published a piece, 'How Shall We Preach?', investigating a question 'which seems to be growing in importance in the present day' and particularly discussing Spurgeon's role in answering such a question.¹⁶ Interestingly, the issue of the magazine also included the final instalment of Ellen Wood's six-part novella

¹³ J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1934), pp. 112-13.

¹⁴ 'Sermons and Sermonizers', *Fraser's Magazine*, 55:325 (January 1857), 84-94 (p. 85).

¹⁵ Charles Haden Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon: The Early Years, 1834-1859* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), p. 267.

¹⁶ E. P. Roswell, 'How Shall We Preach?', *New Monthly Magazine*, 111 (September 1857), 50-5 (p. 50).

Parkwater, suggesting that Wood was aware of the cultural significance of the debate.¹⁷ E. P. Roswell, the author of ‘How Shall We Preach?’, aims ‘to inquire a little closely how it is that the ammunition directed from the pulpit against our hard hearts so continually fails’, and, more importantly, to ask ‘what kind of preaching is most efficacious?’ (50-1). To this question, Roswell replies that ‘a practical answer seems to stare us in the face at this time in the amazing popularity of the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon’, in whose attractiveness ‘we must suppose there is some indication of a general approval of the particular style which he has adopted’ (51 and 55). Roswell, however, finds Spurgeon’s emotionally infused approach mawkish and ineffective:

We gathered from Mr. Spurgeon’s remarks that he would be in favour of a vast shaking hands all round, all petty distinctions done away, my butcher, my baker, and my candlestick-maker all greeting me as their neighbour, and giving me a friendly hug on every occasion of our coming in contact. Here would be a delightful state of things. Our streets would daily witness scenes of deepest pathos. [...] But our tears are gathering at the affecting thought. (54)

Roswell’s derision toward Spurgeon is directed at the preacher’s egalitarian ideology, in which ‘all petty distinctions done away’, and the sermon’s endorsement of a sentimental discourse, which would throw society into the ‘deepest pathos’; ultimately ridiculing the entire homily with the production of sarcastic, fictitious tears. A letter to the editor in *The Times* in the same year however, commends Spurgeon, comparing his style to more sedate forms of preaching. The author of the letter recounts how he sent his children to hear a sermon by an Archbishop. His children, responding to why they could not recall the sermon, replied that they ‘could not hear a word he said. He is very old, and has got no teeth; and, do you know, I don’t think he has got any tongue either, for, though we saw his lips moving, we could not hear a

¹⁷ Ellen Wood, *Parkwater*, *New Monthly Magazine*, 111 (April–September 1857).

single word'.¹⁸ The author is then invited to hear Spurgeon speak and describes his very different and exciting experience:

To the hum and rush and trampling of men succeeded a low concentrated thrill and murmur of devotion, which seemed to run at once like an electric current through the breast of every one present, and by this magnetic chain the preacher held us fast bound for about two hours. (9)

Chadwick likewise compares Spurgeon's preaching style to that of the Tractarian John Keble, noting,

Keble and Spurgeon [...] were opposite types of Victorian leaders. [...] Keble believed in reserve, [...] Spurgeon disbelieved reserve and wanted to speak highest truth to the crowd, that out of the crowd a few might be converted. Keble thought jest in the pulpit worse than unfitting and of set purpose preached dull sermons, [...] Spurgeon [was] quick and abounding with gusto and panache, overflowing with illustration wise or gay or piercing.¹⁹

Their contrasting forms of preaching differentiates them, causing Chadwick to conclude,

Keble was English religion of the past, shepherd in ordered peaceable squire-ruled village of farm labourers; Spurgeon was English religion of the future, preacher to a waste of London, more brash, aggressive, public, biting, and worldly, because haunted by multitudes of souls athirst.²⁰

Spurgeon is representative of a new form of preacher, one that was compatible with the evolving social and spiritual landscape of the mid-nineteenth century, a society that was urban, industrialized, unbelieving, and spiritually adrift.

Spurgeon's performative preaching style combined with his vast popularity positioned him, in the language of many critics, in a similar vein to sensation writers: both were derided for eliciting physical and emotional responses; for their melodramatic style; and their mass-market, cross-class appeal and popularity. Moreover, the emotive characteristics of Evangelicalism, and thus the seeming rejection of rationalism, incited some critics to situate its religious rhetoric as

¹⁸ 'Preaching and Preaching', *The Times*, 16 March 1857, p. 9.

¹⁹ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: Part II*, p. 421.

²⁰ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: Part II*, p. 421.

uneducated and anti-intellectual; again invoking similarities to the discourse surrounding sensation fiction, which was castigated for foregoing intellectual and moral instruction and instead, as Henry L. Mansel declared, ‘preaching to the nerves’. However, when Mansel made this claim, he was in fact citing a comment made in relation to a class of popular sermons, noting,

the remark need not be limited to sermons alone. A class of literature has grown up around us, usurping in many respects, intentionally or unintentionally, a portion of the preacher’s office, playing no inconsiderable part in moulding the mind and forming the habits and tastes of its generation; and doing so principally, we had almost said exclusively, by ‘preaching to the nerves’.²¹

Mansel’s comment highlights how sensational and contemporary religious discourses were directly interlinked through a parallel rhetoric that promoted emotional stimulation, both physically and mentally, within an audience.

The similar practices exercised in both religious preaching and popular literature was attributed to a society in which stimulation and excitement were necessary in order to gain and hold people’s attention. In 1856, *The London Journal* observes this phenomenon and its effects on the style of preaching emanating from the pulpit:

We do not mean to assert outright that the people want stimulating as to the vital truths of religion, but it is quite evident that the masses cannot be drawn to places of worship in which the pulpits are occupied by very pious, but very dull preachers. The mental pulse of England is beating rapidly, the national mind is voracious, it revels in excitement, and the pulpit must keep pace with it, or be content to occupy an inferior position.²²

The *Christian Remembrancer* detects the same caprice in the popularity of sensation novels:

The ‘sensation novel’ of our time, however extravagant and unnatural, yet is a sign of the times – the evidence of a certain turn of thought and action, of an

²¹ Henry L. Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Quarterly Review*, 113 (April 1863), 481-514 (p. 482).

²² ‘The Reverend C. H. Spurgeon’, *The London Journal*, 24 (27 December 1856) 264 (p. 264).

impatience of old restraints, and a craving for some fundamental change in the working of society.²³

Society's predilection for sensational, exciting literature and emotional, inspiring preaching is a reflection of the general tenor of the times, in which the population was eager for an affecting mode in its reading and its preaching. *Good Words*, like Spurgeon, looked to capitalize on society's penchant for affective preaching and literature.

Repackaging of the Word

Good Words began as the brainchild of Scottish publisher Alexander Strahan. Strahan had been raised in the Free Church of Scotland, and although he eventually moved back into the main branch of the Scottish Church, Srebrnik notes that the 'Free Church emphasis on social reforms and the political claims of 'the people' remained part of [his] philosophy even after his religious opinions became more moderate'.²⁴ Srebrnik contends that Strahan looked to the publishing industry as a conduit of social reform, believing 'in the power of the printed word to educate the masses and thus effect a transformation of society' (3). Srebrnik goes on to remark that Strahan 'placed his greatest faith in the power of general literature to transform the world', rather than in solely religious material (34). When Strahan began his publishing empire in the late 1850s, which would later include *The Contemporary Review*, *Saint Paul's Magazine*, and *The Argosy*, he aimed to create a journal that would attract secular and religious readers, thereby constructing a magazine with a mix of both religious and more general material. Strahan's first publication venture, the penny weekly *Christian Guest*, was supplanted after only a year by another weekly, *Good*

²³ 'Our Female Sensation Novelists', *Christian Remembrancer*, 46:121 (July, 1863), 209-36 (p. 210).

²⁴ Srebrnik, p. 3.

Words, edited by the popular Scottish clergyman Norman Macleod. Macleod was a generation older than Strahan, yet, like him, was attuned to the power of the popular periodical and the printed word as a means of advocating religious ideals. In taking on the editorship of *Good Words*, Macleod declared that his principle motive was not only to ‘blend “the religious” and “the secular”, but [also to] *yoke* them together without compromise’.²⁵ Macleod’s statement highlights *Good Words* wish to redefine the scope of religious periodicals, many of which had tended, hitherto, to segregate religious material from what was considered weekday reading. Macleod and Strahan were also keen to uphold a non-denominational policy, announcing in the first issue of the magazine that *Good Words* would ‘have no denominational connexion [*sic*], but is intended to be a medium of communication between writers and readers of every portion of the Church of Christ’.²⁶ *Good Words*’s open forum was another major break with traditional religious periodicals, which usually employed their specific theological viewpoint to separate themselves from other faith-based journals. The combination of Macleod and Strahan thus produced an editor and proprietor both eager to collapse journalistic niches and construct a new literary space in which religious and popular genres could coexist.

Srebnrik describes Strahan as a savvy publisher, purposely arranging the contents of his periodicals to meet market demands and, in the case of *Good Words*, to attract as wide a breadth of readers as possible:

He made the periodicals as successful as they were partly by making extensive use of the names of his contributors, partly by carefully identifying and to some extent creating a market for his wares: in the case of *Good Words*, for example, he achieved high circulation figures by consciously amalgamating a variety of reading audiences- readers of fiction and readers of sermons,

²⁵ Norman Macleod, ‘Note by the Editor’, *Good Words*, 1 (23 December 1860), 796 (p. 796).

²⁶ Norman Macleod, ‘Prospectus’, *Good Words*, 1 (January 1860), front inside cover.

English readers and Scottish readers, readers from the middle class and readers from the lower class, Anglican and Nonconformist readers.²⁷

However, when *Good Words* began as a weekly in 1860 it received little notice amidst the popularity of Dickens's new fiction-carrying weekly *All the Year Round* and that of the new shilling monthlies like *Macmillan's Magazine* and *Cornhill*. In late 1860, Strahan, after studying the phenomenal success of *Cornhill*, decided to transform *Good Words* from a weekly to a monthly, with the significant difference of charging only 6 pence, half the price of most other family monthlies.²⁸ By January 1862, *Good Words's* circulation had risen to 70,000 copies per month, not far behind *Cornhill's* 80,000, and by 1864 *Good Words* was outselling the *Cornhill*.²⁹

Macleod's editorial note in the final weekly issue of the magazine declares in a single sentence paragraph that, 'The magazine will henceforth be published monthly, and the names of the contributors will almost invariably be added to their articles.'³⁰ Though rather inconspicuously announced, the most interesting aspect of Macleod's note is his farewell: 'And now I make my Editorial bow, and retire behind the scenes' (796). The statement implies that as the names of the contributors will now be published with their articles, Macleod's position as conductor, and thus symbolic face of the journal, is diminished, and therefore he is now 'behind the scenes', leaving the content to speak for itself. The theatrical language of the statement also insinuates that a curtain would now open and some kind of performance or entertainment would begin. And this was in reality true: in entering the monthly market *Good Words* moved into a much more competitive and inventive

²⁷ Srebrnik, p. 2. It seems Strahan may not have had the best business acumen in other areas, eventually losing almost all of his magazines to financial entanglements.

²⁸ See Mark W. Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000) for an overview of *Good Words's* transition from a weekly to a monthly magazine.

²⁹ Circulation numbers for *Good Words*: Srebrnik, p. 38; for *Cornhill*: *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, ed. by Walter E. Houghton, vol. 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966-79) p. 324.

³⁰ Macleod, 'Note by the Editor', p. 796.

medium, a market in which fiction and the ability to entertain a broad range of readers elevated the most popular magazines above the rest.

Once in monthly form, Strahan, conscious of the power and popularity of serial fiction, looked to include full-length serials by well-known authors. In April 1862, Strahan, who undertook most of the day-to-day work of the magazine, including contracting with contributors, negotiated a deal with Anthony Trollope, whose *Framley Parsonage*, *Cornhill's* first serial, was instrumental in the initial success of that magazine, to publish a serial in *Good Words* beginning in July 1863. Advertisements for Trollope's serial began to appear early in 1863. Macleod, however, intervened at the last moment and rejected the novel, *Rachel Ray*, outright. Mark W. Turner argues persuasively that *Good Words's* veto of *Rachel Ray* was due to the novel's 'caustic attacks on the clergy's role as society's moral guardians', as well as 'the difficulty the magazine was having in establishing its own identity'.³¹ For Turner, part of the magazine's identity crisis was its recent shift from weekly to monthly publication, which forced it to compete with the style and content of popular, secular journals. Indeed, in 1863 *Good Words* came under intense scrutiny in the Evangelical press for its increasingly secular content.³² The *Evangelical Record* attacked the magazine's 'mingle-mangle' of secular and sacred material, particularly condemning the inclusion of a serial by Trollope, whom the *Record* described as a sensation writer.³³ The *Patriot*, a nonconformist, Congregational journal, defended *Good Words*, but remarked,

We regret the employment of Mr. Trollope and others of his class, believing that in this entering into competition with the 'sensation' magazines, *Good Words* is abandoning its own proper position, and departing, in some measure, from its original design.³⁴

³¹ Turner, p. 70.

³² For full details of this attack see Turner, p. 71; Srebrnik, p. 58.

³³ Quoted in Turner, p. 72.

³⁴ Quoted in Turner, p. 75.

Knight and Mason argue that the Evangelical reaction against sensation fiction arose ‘out of the recognition that sensation fiction and the conversion narrative favoured by Evangelicalism in general and Revivalism in particular, shared much in common’.³⁵ The rebuke of the *Record* and the *Patriot*, combined with the critical response from religious leaders like the Archbishop of York, who preached a sermon against popular literature like sensation fiction in 1864, illustrates the difficulty that Macleod and Strahan faced in exploiting the popular, secular market while maintaining a spiritually focused journal; particularly as Strahan welcomed the increased sales brought on by the controversy over the inclusion of a serial by Trollope, while Macleod did not.³⁶

Nevertheless, after all the hue and cry over the inclusion of Trollope, who was more often referred to as a writer of realism rather than sensation fiction, *Good Words*’s subsequent full-length serial was the work of none other than Ellen Wood, a writer commonly referred to as one of the originators of the sensation genre. Wood’s serialization of *Oswald Cray*, which was denoted as ‘By the Author of *East Lynne*’, did not, however, receive any critical hostility, not even from the antagonistic *Record*. Turner attributes Wood’s inclusion in the magazine at this period to the complete transition of *Good Words* from a blend of Sunday and weekday reading to the full commercialization of the magazine as an illustrated monthly, while Srebrnik regards it as evidence of Macleod slipping back into the habit of letting Strahan have a free hand in the complexion of the journal.³⁷ However, the publication of a serial by Wood, whose distinct brand of fiction, which frequently converted sensational affect and scandal into religious allegory, can also be seen as an attempt by *Good Words* to preserve in its aim of combining the popular and the pious.

³⁵ Knight and Mason, p. 139.

³⁶ The Archbishop of York’s sermon is quoted in W. Fraser Rae, ‘Sensation Novelists: Miss Braddon’, *North British Review*, 43 (1865), 180-204 (p. 203).

³⁷ Turner, p. 85; Srebrnik, p. 64.

Previous to publishing *Oswald Cray* in *Good Words*, Wood had serialized a number of novel-length serials and novellas in other religious periodicals: four had been serialized in *The Quiver*, a penny weekly with a strong Evangelical character, and her 1862 Condition of England novel, *A Life's Secret*, was serialized in the Religious Tract Society's magazine, *The Leisure Hour*. Beth Palmer asserts that the 'interconnecting discourses of evangelicalism and sensation [was] vital to all of Wood's writing'.³⁸ Palmer's examination of this interconnection exposes how Wood 'recognized the commonality of the two discourses and put it to profitable use' (189). In *Oswald Cray*, the narrative blends the ingredients of sensational and religious rhetoric together in such a way that the narrative actually diffuses any division between the binary forces and unites them in a single discourse of morality and conversion. Though *Good Words* may have been consumed by a 'more commercial and unreligious' aspect as the 1860s progressed, as Turner argues, the inclusion of Wood within its pages signals *Good Words*'s resolve, regardless of the attacks from other religious periodicals, to persevere in their intention of mingling the popular and the religious.

Interestingly, in July 1863, the month the first instalment of Trollope's *Rachel Ray* should have appeared, *Good Words* published 'A Word of Remonstrance with Some Novelists', by Henrietta Kiddie, a frequent contributor to the magazine. Whether this was a planned piece or added in response to the *Record's* attack is unknown, but it is *Good Words*'s only article addressing the sensational inclination of contemporary fiction. The article begins by illustrating a number of wicked characters and events from Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott and how their ends would be twisted and manipulated in present-day literature so that 'Lady Macbeth would wash

³⁸ Beth Palmer, ' "Dangerous and Foolish Work": Evangelicalism and Sensationalism in Ellen Wood's *Argosy*', *Women's Writing*, 15: 2 (2008), 187-198 (p. 189).

her little hands quite clean; then having disposed of Macbeth by a lucky accident at Dunsinane, would marry Malcolm Canmore, or become a second wife to Macduff'.³⁹

Kiddie's main censure of current literature is its unapologetic redemption of malevolent characters, observing that,

Falseness, dishonesty, murder even, are rapidly claiming our most intense sympathies. [...] We began our infatuation by executing the sentence of reprobation on our favourites. We hanged them, [...] we banished them – at least, we exiled them and condemned them to die. [...] But now, even this small concession is cast aside, and after a little temporary anguish we bring back our criminals to sit at our tables. (525)

Kiddie continues, remarking,

I do not protest against the introduction of wickedness into art, living as we do in a wicked world. [...] [But] do not let us have liars and cheats, and false wives, transformed by a touch into dying saints and honorable matrons. Do not let crime or its penalty be the crucible which converts our dross into gold. (525)

The practice of transforming corrupt characters into martyrs 'by a touch' is seen by Kiddie as presenting false depictions of redemption and repentance, belittling the conversion experience into an effortless occurrence. The vacuous conversions elide the challenges of overcoming degradation and sin, leaving Kiddie to pray that 'our good writers, moralists, satirists, humourists, by precept and example [...] exorcise this evil possession of our literature' (526).

In contrast, much of the fiction *Good Words* published, whether short stories or longer serials, portrays the emotional catharsis inherent in moral and spiritual transformations. In order to do so, much of the fiction employs sensational events and melodramatic elements as a means to highlight and dramatize the emotional journey of conversion. Once a character is converted, the sensational events are subsequently situated as a necessary prelude to conversion, retroactively subverting the sensational

³⁹ Henrietta Kiddie, 'A Word of Remonstrance with Some Novelists', *Good Words*, 4 (July 1863), 524-26 (p. 524).

attributes of the stories by associating them with pre-conversion. This formula follows Evangelical declarations of conversion, which often dwelt on the pre-converted details of the person's life, exploring the deplorable aspects of their character and actions before conversion. Knight and Mason assert that 'Evangelical testimonies frequently described in lurid detail the pre-conversion experience of sin' as a way to 'accentuate their account of God's work in people's lives'.⁴⁰ Hilary Fraser notes the influential effect of such explicit testimonies on the history of the novel, arguing,

the development of the novel as a genre can be said to have been profoundly affected by the beliefs, practices and spiritual narratives of evangelicalism, with its assertion of the unique importance of the individual and its focus upon self-examination, moral development, and conversion.⁴¹

Early eighteenth-century novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), which Fred Kaplan calls a 'sermon in fiction', follow this formula, highlighting the spiritual journeys of their protagonists.⁴² Much of the fiction in *Good Words* also exploits this narrative tradition, invoking sensational elements only to then defuse their sensational resonance by positioning them in the context of religious conversion.

One such example is Wood's 'Martyn Ware's Temptation', a one-part story that appeared in *Good Words* in December 1863, the month preceding the start of *Oswald Cray*. 'Martyn Ware's Temptation' tells the story of Helen, who, on the eve on her wedding, gives the last ten pounds of her wedding trousseau money to Bob Rutt, a poor boy who needs the money in order to sail to America with his mother. The narrative then jumps many years, describing how Helen's son Martyn has fallen into bad company, gambling and betting and eventually getting into debt. To avoid

⁴⁰ Knight and Mason, p. 139.

⁴¹ Hilary Fraser, 'The Victorian Novel and Religion', in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 101-18 (p. 102).

⁴² Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 34.

debtors prison, Martyn steals money from his employers to pay his bills. However, he immediately feels remorse for his actions and tells his mother the whole story. Helen visits Martyn's new boss in a bid to save her son from exposure. Helen, though, discovers that Martyn's boss is Bob Rutt, who, because of Helen's generosity all those years ago, was able to get his first position and has since become a successful businessman. In his gratitude for Helen's charity, Rutt allows Martyn to retain his position. Martyn, upon hearing of the success of his mother's intercession, gave 'a yearning cry to heaven: to that heaven which had surely intervened to save him. "Lord, be with me from henceforth! keep me, keep me from temptation"'.⁴³ The story thus incorporates the message of charity, honesty, and forgiveness, while also comprising the drama of Martyn's depravity and sin.

Wood's story is illustrative of much of the fiction that appeared in *Good Words*, which typically depicted a character's iniquity or 'fall', in the form of temptation, crime, or wickedness, and the sensational, usually emotional, events that at last lead to spiritual and religious awakening, or, in the case of Martyn Ware, re-awakening. D. Bruce Hindmarsh notes that Evangelical conversion narratives, often reprinted in the media, 'led laypeople [...] to hope that such an experience could be duplicated among themselves'.⁴⁴ *Good Words*'s incorporation of stories such as 'Martyn Ware's Temptation' act in a similar manner, providing relatable examples of conversion and redemption that readers could apply to their own lives. Wood employs a similar narrative methodology and pre-conversion/conversion dichotomy in *Oswald Cray*, where mystery, transgression, and crime act as the catalyst for spiritual conversion and repentance.

⁴³ Ellen Wood, 'Martyn Ware's Temptation', *Good Words*, 4 (December 1863), 568-84 (p. 84).

⁴⁴ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 71.

Sensational Conversion and Spiritual Journey in *Oswald Cray*

Oswald Cray's plot revolves around a family secret, an accidental murder, and the ramifications produced by the false impressions of a meddling, spying servant. The novel, which centres on the Davenal and Cray families, depicts a family drama in which Dr. Davenal and his daughter Sara are forced to keep an illicit family secret, which brings an early death to the doctor and obliges Sara to pay her inheritance as blackmail money to a devious lawyer. The secret, which is eventually revealed to be the falsifying of bills by Edward Davenal, Sara's brother, is mistakenly linked to the death of Lady Oswald, who is killed by an overdose of chloroform given to her by Mark Cray, Dr. Davenal's assistant, against the doctor's orders. The malicious servant Neal misconstrues the various conversations and information he overhears and relates his wrongly inferred idea that Dr. Davenal intentionally killed Lady Oswald to Oswald Cray. When Lady Oswald's will reveals that she has bequeathed her money to Dr. Davenal, Oswald breaks off his relationship with Sara, believing her father to be a murderer. Mark Cray's departure from the field of medicine into the world of financial speculation provides a subplot in which he and his wife Caroline experience a social rise and subsequent fall when Mark's corrupt speculation fails, forcing him and Caroline to flee to France. Neal also maliciously perpetuates the false impression that Edward Davenal commits bigamy in order to marry an heiress.

The various plot intricacies, especially when viewed in the context of *Good Words*, reverberate with a message of patience, redemption, and faith. Specifically, the Cray's shift into greed and imprudence showcases Caroline's dissipated lifestyle, while the death of Prince Albert provides an emotional catalyst for Caroline's conversion in the penultimate instalment of the serial. Meanwhile, the mysteries and secrets in the narrative act as the impetus behind Oswald Cray's dubious actions,

causing his pride, shown to develop from virtue to vice, to overpower his better judgment. The dramatic incidents in the narrative are ultimately situated as conduits for the religious conversion of Caroline and the redemption of Oswald's better nature. By emulating conversion narratives and yet transplanting their methodology into the popular form of sensation fiction, Wood is able to preach emotional and spiritual awareness in *Oswald Cray*, but also attempt to satisfy the contemporary hunger for mystery and transgression.

The most blatant representation of religious discourse in the serial is the conversion of Caroline Cray immediately before her death. Wood situates Caroline as the antithesis to the heroine Sara Davenal, portraying Caroline as impetuous and thoughtless in comparison to the humble, trustworthy character of Sara. Whereas Sara's story is one of silenced emotion and unfaltering loyalty, Caroline's is composed of demonstrative reactions, selfish motives, and a grasping after materialistic gains. The cousins' divergent physical features denote the girls' interior differences as well, as Wood makes clear in the first instalment of the serial:

Seated on the lawn, on a garden-bench, was a young lady reading. A graceful girl of middle height, with large hazel eyes quite luminous in their brightness, a well-formed gentle face, rather pale, and brown hair that took almost a golden tinge when the sun shone through it. [...] A far more beautiful face was that of another young girl, who was restlessly moving amidst the side clusters of shrubs and flower, plucking the choicest. [...] She was little, fairy-like, some-what pettish and willful in her movements.⁴⁵

Sara, the light, gentle girl is instantly recognized as the less transgressive of the two, calmly reading while Caroline is portrayed as restive and unoccupied, tearing up flowers and moving 'restlessly' and wilfully. Caroline's flippant qualities are strengthened by her marriage to Mark Cray, who is shown to be self-centred and careless, killing Lady Oswald by directly disregarding Dr. Davenal's orders. Mark

⁴⁵Ellen Wood, *Oswald Cray*, *Good Words*, 5 (January 1864), p. 39. Further references to *Oswald Cray* will refer to the serial version of the novel and will denote month of publication and page number.

and Caroline's materialistic ambitions eventually lead them into ruin and disgrace. For Caroline, their social and financial descent culminates in the physical manifestation of a stomach tumor, which eventually kills her. Before her death though, Caroline is spiritually converted when she returns to Britain from France on the night of Prince Albert's death. Caroline, hearing the details of the Prince's illness, 'forgot her own weakness, her fatigue, in these all-absorbing tidings'.⁴⁶ When she hears St. Paul's bell ringing out the death of the Prince,

a solemn awe had laid hold of her, and she felt as she had never felt in her life. Her whole soul seemed to go up in – may I dare to say? – heavenly commune. It was as if heaven had opened – had become very near.⁴⁷

The narrator describes Caroline's conversion in terms of the agony she had once felt in her distance from God and her consequent relief in finding her faith:

Heaven seemed no longer the far-off mysterious place she had been wont to regard it, but a *home*, a refuge, all near and real. [...] [Prince Albert] did not seem to have gone entirely away; he was only hidden beyond reach and sight for a little while; that same refuge would open for her, Caroline, and others; a little earlier, a little later, and she and all would follow him. Heavy as the blow was in itself, incapable as she was of understanding it, it yet seemed an earnest of the overruling presence of the living God.⁴⁸

It is in this moment that Caroline is able to quantify her own worldly experiences within the Christian ideals of heaven. From here until her death, Caroline is a changed person, she is less wayward and more resigned to the conditions of her life. Immediately before her death, Mark repents of his role in her illness, but Caroline interrupts, saying, 'Don't regret it Mark, God's hand was in it all. I look back and trace it. But for the trouble brought to me then, I might never have been reconciled to go.'⁴⁹ Caroline contextualizes all of her and Mark's past troubles as 'petty trials' through which 'God was always leading', moralizing to her husband and family that

⁴⁶ (November 1864), p. 824.

⁴⁷ (November 1864), p. 826.

⁴⁸ (November 1864), p. 826.

⁴⁹ (December 1864), p. 912.

through all of life's challenges they must 'trust God'.⁵⁰ By positioning Caroline's previous indiscretions and troubles as predecessors to her conversion, and by portraying Caroline's realization of this, Wood authenticates Caroline's transition rather than converting her 'by a touch' as Kiddie had criticized many other popular writers as doing. Caroline's conversion is complete when she is able to accept her death and look forward to entering a higher realm:

the death of the Prince [...] had taken great hold on the mind of Mrs. Cray. [...] Several times during her later weeks of illness she had alluded to it. Her principle feeling in relation to it appeared to be that of *gratitude*. Not gratitude for his death [...] but for the strange impression it had left on her mind, the vista of the Hereafter. [...] [I]t most certainly in a measure had the effect of reconciling her to her own removal, of tranquilising her weary heart, of bringing her thoughts and feeling into that state most fitting to prepare for it.⁵¹

Complete and permanent conversion during the nineteenth century was usually seen as an extended process, through which a person gradually came to a fuller and more complete understanding of the existence of an omnipresent God. However, Wood, by using the death of Prince Albert as the impetus of Caroline's conversion, is able to historicize her transition, and more importantly, to produce the emotional inducement necessary within Caroline and readers to validate the conversion. By employing the death of such an eminent and beloved figure as Prince Albert, the narrative creates a tangible connection between Caroline's spiritual response and emotional reaction and that of the audience, all of whom would clearly remember the actual event. The narrator distinctly remarks the inevitability that readers would have felt as Caroline did when she first hears of the Prince's death, noting, 'I may be mistaken, but I believe this same feeling was experienced by many in the first startling shock.'⁵² The narrator continues to reinforce the collective remembrance of the event by remarking that, 'None of you have forgotten the wide

⁵⁰ (December 1864), p. 912.

⁵¹ (December 1864), p. 912.

⁵² (November 1864), p. 826.

gap in the Litany that Sunday morning; the pale lips of the clergymen; [...] the quivering, breathless hearts that answered it.’⁵³

Miriam Bailin notes the importance of ‘culturally authorized models of feeling and response’, stating that the ethical core of sentimentality ‘is to transcend distinctions in the interests of a common humanity, [creating] a shared, organic response to suffering and joy’.⁵⁴ The narrative’s emphasis on the demonstrative reaction of readers at the time of the Prince’s actual death provides a ‘culturally authorized’ form of expression that captures and validates the universal sadness and emotional impact of Prince Albert’s passing; emotions Wood reawakens in readers through her delineation of Caroline’s experience. By exploiting such a personalized, sentimental rhetoric, Wood creates empathy for Caroline, which makes her spiritual revolution plausible and accessible to readers and ultimately provides an vivid illustration of the possibility and power of conversion.

Moreover, when Caroline is saying her final goodbye to her family before she dies, she uses the opportunity to preach God’s love, declaring,

When we are on the threshold of the next world our eyes are opened to the poor value of this. Its worst cares have been [...] but hillocks that we had to pass in our journey upwards. [...] If we could but trust to Him! If we did but learn to resign our hands implicitly to his!⁵⁵

Hindmarsh notes the vital role of deathbed scenes in spiritual autobiographies, remarking that ‘the deathbed was to be one’s final pulpit, from which one could speak with a unique authority’.⁵⁶ In this deathbed scene, Caroline, proclaiming that all of life’s trials are ‘sent by [God]’, desperately tries to make her husband Mark turn to God before she passes away, leaving him, like the audiences of Spurgeon’s sermons,

⁵³ (November 1864), p. 827.

⁵⁴ Miriam Bailin, ‘“Dismal Pleasure”: Victorian Sentimentality and the Pathos of the Parvenu’, *EHL*, 66:44 (Winter 1999), 1015-32 (p. 1020 and 1022).

⁵⁵ (December 1864), p. 912.

⁵⁶ Hindmarsh, p. 259.

feeling ‘somewhat awed’.⁵⁷ Wood thus completes her appropriation of conversion narratives by turning Caroline’s deathbed into a pulpit and Caroline herself into a preacher.

The final scene of the novel continues to endorse a pre-conversion and self-examination model as the narrator invokes the metaphor of life as a pilgrimage: ‘Only through God’s mercy. My friends, may it be shed on us all throughout our pilgrimage in this chequered life, and ever abide with us unto the end!’⁵⁸ Barry Qualls notes that nineteenth-century novelists often invoked the spiritual pilgrimage originally presented in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), averring that ‘Victorian novelists [...] were determined that their words could still lead “Christian” of the latter day to the Celestial City’.⁵⁹ When discussing his own spiritual conversion, Spurgeon mentions Bunyan’s text, saying,

When I first read *The Pilgrim’s Progress* [...] I felt so interested in the poor fellow, that I thought I should jump with joy when [...] he at last got rid of [his heavy load.]; and that was how I felt when the burden of guilt, which I had borne so long, was for ever rolled away from my shoulders and my heart [*sic*].⁶⁰

Oswald Cray’s delineation of Caroline’s conversion, as well as the spiritual progression of Oswald Cray, suggests that Wood was indeed tracing the development of their moral value systems, positioning them, like Christian, on spiritual journeys.

For Oswald, it is his incessant pride that directs his moral compass, a ‘pride of innate rectitude which keeps its owner from doing a mean, a wrong, or a disgraceful action’.⁶¹ His pilgrimage entails the realization that his pride has overpowered his moral sensibility, leading him to falsely believe Dr. Davenal murdered Lady Oswald,

⁵⁷ (December 1864), p. 912.

⁵⁸ (December 1864), p. 914.

⁵⁹ Barry Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The Novel as Book of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. ix.

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, p. 85.

⁶¹ (January 1864), p. 47.

which, as a result, causes him to retract dishonourably from his engagement to Sara: 'Mr. Oswald Cray, in his haughty spirit, his besetting pride, decided that he could no longer be on terms of friendship with [Dr. Davenal], and that Sara Davenal must be no wife of his'.⁶² The narrator laments that, 'But for his overweening pride, how different things might have been!'⁶³ Part of Oswald's moral deficiency is that his pride blinds him to the truth and prevents him from addressing the issue in a direct, open manner, particularly in terms of Sara's guilt in what Oswald sees as her father's crime:

one whose pride was less in the ascendant than Mr. Oswald Cray's, whose self-esteem was less sensitively fastidious, might have acted upon the consciousness of [Sara's] immunity from blame, and set himself to see whether there was not a way out of the dilemma rather than have to give her up.⁶⁴

The text suggests that, if his pride had allowed, Oswald 'might have gone in his candour to Dr. Davenal' and the entire mistake would have been cleared up, but 'Not so Mr. Oswald Cray and his haughty pride'.⁶⁵

Oswald eventually discovers, through no exertion on his part, that his belief in Dr. Davenal's guilt is completely misplaced, that he had 'been upon the mistaken road of wrong; been treading it for years'.⁶⁶ When he finally learns the truth of Dr. Davenal's innocence his remorse is deep and he is forced to re-evaluate his previous actions:

Above his own self-reproach; above the bitter feeling of repentance for the wrong he had dealt out to her whom he best loved on earth; above his regrets for the late years wasted in a miserable illusion; was his remorse for having so misjudged that good man.⁶⁷

⁶² (May 1864), p. 366.

⁶³ (May 1864), p. 366.

⁶⁴ (May 1864), p. 367.

⁶⁵ (May 1864), p. 367.

⁶⁶ (December 1864), p. 908.

⁶⁷ (December 1864), p. 905.

The full value of Dr. Davenal's 'Christian conduct' and Sara's 'patient endurance' finally resonates with Oswald and he is left in a state of 'shame and repentance' for which he must 'atone'.⁶⁸ Evangelical idiolect is rife in Oswald's realization, representing his enlightenment in terms of repentance and atonement and mercy on the part of Sara in forgiving his callous actions.

Moreover, Oswald's mistaken road 'had been making an ice bolt of his heart', but his repentance allows him to open his heart and feel love again.⁶⁹ Sara perceives this transformation when he confesses his error to her: 'Generally, especially of late years, he was cold almost to a fault. And now he was as one blazing with an inward fire: his lips were scarlet, his brow was flushed, his voice quite hoarse with emotion.'⁷⁰ In the final scene of the novel, speaking to Sara, whom he has just married, Oswald acknowledges that only through God could such repentance and forgiveness occur: 'Oh, my wife, my wife, how much is there in the past for many of us to repent of! [...] And it is only through God's mercy that we do repent.'⁷¹

For the two main villains of the text, the lying, cowardly Mark Cray and the spying servant Neal, there is neither repentance nor punishment for their treacherous acts. Rather, the narrator only questions what their individual fates will be, wondering if rogues like Neal maintain their treachery – 'Will it be so till the end of their career? Will it be so with Neal? I sometimes wonder' – or if Mark would ever overcome his worldly ambitions:

What would be poor Mark Cray's future? Would he abide at Barbadoes [*sic*], applying himself as well as his abilities would allow him to the pursuit of his legitimate profession? – or would his unstable, weak mind be dazzled with these illegitimate and delusive speculations to the end, until they engulfed him?⁷²

⁶⁸ (December 1864), p. 905 and 910.

⁶⁹ (December 1864), p. 906.

⁷⁰ (December 1864), p. 908.

⁷¹ (December 1864), p. 916.

⁷² (December 1864), p. 913 and 915.

This is perhaps because however mischievous, calculating, and self-serving they are, neither Mark nor Neal commits any act that would truly justify punishing them in the typical melodramatic manner: with death; prison; or transportation. The uncertainty of the antagonists' destinies is instead tied to Evangelic ideas of free will, in which salvation could be freely chosen.

The fundamental conservatism of Wood's fiction, which generally follows the tradition of punishing the villain and vindicating the hero, is thus absent in *Oswald Cray*, yet so is a conventional villain. Edward Davenal, the only actual criminal in the story, is left happily married to a wealthy heiress, barely having made any sacrifice or redemption for his crime. The narrator notes that Edward was 'Gay, handsome, free, sunny, it might have been thought that not an hour's care had ever been upon him'.⁷³ Alfred King, the unscrupulous lawyer blackmailing the Davenals, teeters on the point of becoming a bona-fide villain, with his threatening letters and curling moustache, but his threat is dissolved before it can mature into any real interest for the reader. In fact, beyond the lack of an exciting villain, the narrative also fails to sustain any real mystery or suspense. The death of Lady Oswald is played out before the readers, leaving no mystery attached to it; a secret midnight visitor to Dr. Davenal occurs in March only to be revealed as Edward Davenal in the June instalment; the suspicion of Edward's bigamy is divulged in the September part only to be easily invalidated in the December instalment; and Edward's crime turns out to be forged bills, hardly the shocking transgression its drawn out cover-up deserves. It seems between the covers of *Good Words* Wood was reluctant to depict a genuinely wicked villain or a narrative that indulged in too many, or too indecent, sensational events. And this is, arguably, why the novel received such negative reviews. When taken out of the religious

⁷³ (December 1864), p. 897.

framework of *Good Words*, *Oswald Cray*'s narrative of conversion and repentance, rather than calling forth spiritual connotations, is seen as tiresome and dull. The mediocre villains, rather than being seen in the light of potential converts, are likewise viewed as uninteresting. *The Saturday Review* complains that 'the whole novel is choked up with all that is most trivial and commonplace in the ordinary actions of men'.⁷⁴ And the *Athenaeum* notes that 'Neal, the wicked servant, is a weak and ineffective villain'.⁷⁵ Most significantly, though, *The Saturday Review* attacks *Oswald Cray* for its religious sermonizing: 'Last, and most heinous, of the crimes which gather round mere wordiness is that of sermonizing.'⁷⁶ For these critics, *Oswald Cray* does not include enough sensational elements, and those that it does include are 'weak' and 'trivial', while the religious tone is lambasted as mere 'wordiness'. The *British Quarterly Review* blames the story not *Good Words* for the narrative's weaknesses, remarking,

we have so high a sense of the value of that excellent periodical, that we regret its editor should have suffered so worthless a story to occupy so large a space in its pages. [...] There is no high moral to be inculcated, and no prevailing sin to be rebuked'.⁷⁷

Here, the novel is criticized because it doesn't have enough moral character or enough 'prevailing sin'. It seems that from within the pages of *Good Words* Wood is unable to mollify her sensation fans or those who expected a more spiritual bent.

The influence of *Oswald Cray*'s periodical location is further emphasized by comparing the text to *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*, Wood's novel that was being serializing in *Once A Week* at the same time that *Oswald Cray* was appearing in *Good Words*. Such a comparison highlights how the serials' different periodical hosts influence the narrative development of the two novels, producing similar stories but

⁷⁴ 'Rev. of *Oswald Cray*', *The Saturday Review*, 18 (18 February 1865), 203-04 (p. 203).

⁷⁵ 'Rev. of *Oswald Cray*', *Athenaeum*, p. 859.

⁷⁶ 'Rev. of *Oswald Cray*', *The Saturday Review*, p. 204.

⁷⁷ 'Rev. of *Oswald Cray*', *The British Quarterly Review*, 41:81 (January 1865), 256 (p. 256).

very different results: in the pages of *Good Words* Wood played up her moral sermonizing, while in *Once A Week* she unleashed one of her most sensational works.

Murder Makes for Good Reviews

Lord Oakburn's Daughters was serialized in the weekly journal *Once A Week*, Bradbury and Evans's riposte to Dickens's *All the Year Round*, from 19 March to 8 October 1864. *Once A Week* was designed for liberal-minded, middle-class readers and thereby published a typical mixture of miscellaneous material and high-quality illustration meant for the enjoyment and entertainment of its audience.⁷⁸ Shu-Fang Lia contends that, although *Once a Week's* editor Samuel Lucas was opposed to the trend of sensation fiction, it was 'Bradbury and Evans' wish to promote sales by means of sensation novels'.⁷⁹ The magazine had previously published Wood's *Verner's Pride* (June 1862-February 1863), one of Wood's more sensational novels, which included the reappearance of a supposedly dead man and the mysterious murder of a young woman. In such an atmosphere, compared to the more restrained, devout tone of *Good Words*, Wood was able to include more scandalous and lurid elements in *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* without being accountable to provide a higher moral purpose. And although *Oswald Cray* and *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* have some ostensible plot similarities, the different periodical locations yield very diverse narratives: while *Oswald Cray* engages with mediocre villains and a lacklustre mystery, emphasizing the ultimate morality of its protagonists, *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* indulges in the brutal murder of a wife by her husband and the thrill of uncovering her true identity.

⁷⁸ *Once A Week's* distinctive feature was its high-quality illustrations; however, *Lord Oakburn's Daughter* was not accompanied by any illustrations in the magazine.

⁷⁹ Shu-Fang Lai, *Charles Reade, George Meredith and Harriet Martineau as Serial Writers for 'Once a Week'* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt, 2008), p. 18.

Lord Oakburn's Daughters and *Oswald Cray* both revolve around the lives of provincial doctors; both include the death of a patient in which the wrong doctor is suspected of incompetence; and both focus on the financial ups and downs of the central family, which in *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* is the Chesney family, who are unexpectedly elevated to the aristocracy through a number of surprising deaths, resulting in the Lord Oakburn of the title. The major differences between the two serials, though, are indicative of their respected places of publication. *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* is a fast-paced, incident-driven narrative with a principal crime that creates and sustains mystery and suspense throughout the serial. The novel culminates in a sensational trial scene that includes the last minute discovery of a hidden marriage certificate, the shocking revelation of the identity of the murderer, and the exposure of a ghostly apparition that has appeared continually throughout the narrative. Whereas in *Oswald Cray* Lady Oswald's death is accidental and never a source of mystery, in *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* the murder of Mrs. Crane, who is actually one of Lord Oakburn's daughters using a pseudonym, is the focal point of the serial. Mrs. Crane's death is ultimately laid at the hands of her husband and doctor, Lewis Carlton, who kills her in order to marry her sister. Carlton, like many melodramatic villains, is killed in the final instalment of the novel, suffering heart failure while in jail. Compared to the tepid villains of *Oswald Cray*, on whose future the narrator speculates without casting judgment (seeming to leave it God's hands), Carlton is the epitome of a sensational rogue: murdering; lying; scheming; and committing adultery, and all under the cover of a gentlemanly demeanour.

Further, the shorter, more concise weekly instalments in *Once a Week* allowed and required Wood to continually use a deluge of startling or unexpected incidents in order to provide each part with some occurrence to keep the plot moving forward and

readers engaged. Thus, not only did the secular, more lenient editorial policy of *Once a Week* provide a marked difference to that of *Good Words*, but the publication format – weekly versus monthly – also produced a distinctly quicker pace to the narrative. This is evident in the appearance of a number of secondary subplots and events in *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* that supply each instalment with a self-contained episode but aren't entirely essential to the progression of the main story line. As a result, the weekly instalments of *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* usually contained almost as much, if not more action than a typical monthly part of *Oswald Cray*, which on average was twice the length of an instalment of *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*.⁸⁰

Moreover, unlike *Oswald Cray*, *Lord Oakburn's Daughters'* narrative does not divulge the mysteries of the story until the very end, embracing the typical hide-and-seek methodology of sensation fiction. Overall, *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* is much more emblematic of the sensation genre than *Oswald Cray*, and Wood's religious tone in the novel is much more subtle than in *Oswald Cray*. Indeed, the murder of Mrs. Crane and Carlton's ensuing deceits are not seasoned with any moral meaning or message. The story is told to entertain, a fact that the narrator makes clear in the first paragraph of the serial:

A small country town in the heart of England was the scene some few years ago of a sad tragedy. I must ask my readers to bear with me while I relate it. These crimes, having their rise in the evil passions of our nature, are not the most pleasant for the pen to record; but it cannot be denied that they do undoubtedly bear for many of us an interest amounting almost to fascination. I think the following account of what took place will bear such an interest for you.⁸¹

Furthermore, Carlton never repents of his actions, he sends a letter to his second wife asking for her forgiveness but plans to continue to plead innocent and defend himself

⁸⁰ A typical instalment of *Oswald Cray* was twenty-two pages while that of *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* was nine and a half.

⁸¹ Ellen Wood, *Lord Oakburn's Daughters, Once a Week*, 10 (19 March 1864-8 October 1864), 351-60 (p. 51). All subsequent references to *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* will refer to the serial version and will denote date and page number.

in court, saying in his letter, ‘whatever confession I may make to you, I make none to the world.’⁸² In fact, none of the characters are seen to be penitent or shown to learn anything from the various incidents. A review in *The Saturday Review* reflects this when the critic remarks that *Lord Oakburn’s Daughters*

manifestly aims at no higher or more recondite object than that of helping readers to while away a few dull hours. And few who are content to take up books for the sake of mere passing amusement will grumble at the quality of the article here held out to them. [...] With sufficient complexity of plot to keep up the desirable degree of uncertainty and suspense, with characters freshly conceived and contrasted with clearness and force, with a spice of horrors enough to go down with ordinary lovers of sensation, eked out with touches of the supernatural not too harsh to grate upon the taste of the cynical or the sceptic, *Lord Oakburn’s Daughters* will probably be pronounced - by at least the class of readers we have had in view, and for whose benefit it has been written - a highly clever and entertaining work.⁸³

Lord Oakburn’s Daughters is thus dismissed as mere entertainment, having no higher objective than to amuse and interest.

Lord Oakburn’s Daughters, published in the more entertainment-focused, less pious columns of *Once of Week*, provided a periodical location in which Wood could indulge her more sensational side, while writing for *Good Words* she engaged with more sentimental, spiritual features. The ability to write two such diverse serials, each catering to their specific place of publication with such deliberateness, is a mark of Wood’s versatility, a quality few serial writers achieved with such ease. Indeed, ‘The key to Wood’s phenomenal success’, according to Maria Riley, ‘lay in her adaptability and opportunism which manifests itself in her ability to identify her target market and tailor her material accordingly.’⁸⁴ However, *Oswald Cray*’s poor reviews emphasize the precarious balance Wood attempted to strike with her sensational sermonizing. Yet, like Spurgeon’s sensational preaching and *Good Words*’s

⁸² (1 October 1864), p. 415.

⁸³ ‘Rev. of *Lord Oakburn’s Daughters*’, *The Saturday Review*, 18 (15 October 1864), 488-89 (p. 488).

⁸⁴ Maria Riley, ‘Writing for the Million: The Enterprising Fiction of Ellen Wood’, in *Popular Victorian Woman Writers*, ed. by Kay Boardman and Shirley Jones (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 165-85, 181.

assortment of secular and religious content, *Oswald Cray*'s blend of sensational and religious elements highlights the common trend of intermingling religious and sensational discourses in the 1860s as a means of recapturing the public's failing faith in religious doctrine.

In the wake of mounting religious doubt and an ongoing debate surrounding a sensationalized form of preaching, *Good Words*'s effort to create a religious periodical that combined religious and popular, secular discourses was validated by its commercial success. However, though Wood's fusion of sensational sermonizing in *Oswald Cray* followed a similar pattern of amalgamating sensation and religious allegory, the novel failed to satisfy critics. Reading *Oswald Cray* in its periodical location, though, underscores how interconnected the sensation genre and religious discourse were in the 1860s, while also pointing to the contention that existed within the relationship. Nevertheless, in an age when religious doubt was seeping into the current of social thought, the combination of sensational and religious rhetoric emerged as an appealing stop-gap to the flow of unfaith. Challenging traditional methods of preaching, Spurgeon, *Good Words*, and Wood adopted sensational models of affect in an attempt to modernize and renovate religious doctrine by presenting spiritual truths through fresh, inspiring modes of communication, whether from the pulpit or the printed page.

The next chapter moves into the early 1870s to examine how the sensation genre was not only merged with other popular genres and discourses, but was rewritten. The final chapter thus offers a foretaste of how sensation fiction transformed as the sensation sixties came to a close and the nineteenth century progressed.

Chapter 5

Rewriting the Sensation Narrative: Detection and Gossip in Anthony Trollope's
The Eustace Diamonds

Winifred Hughes's *The Maniac in the Cellar*, though touching upon the 'remnants of [sensation fiction's] brief popular reign', constructs the 1860s as a self-contained sensational decade, commenting that the 'fad' of sensation fiction 'abolished itself as a viable and relevant means of expression' as the 1860s came to a close.¹ Lyn Pykett, however, argues persuasively that the sensation genre continued to prosper well beyond the 1860s, averring,

Just as the phenomenon of sensationalism existed before the term entered general usage, sensation conventions and plots continued their existence long after the term went out of fashion. [...] The tentacles of sensationalism spread widely and deeply into many different kinds of fiction in the mid-Victorian period [...].²

Even before the heyday of sensation fiction began to wane, Tamara Wagner notes that, in the mid-1860s and early 1870s, realist domestic novels began reassessing sensational plotlines. In her examination of this reassessment, Wagner describes how the 'intertextual rewriting' of sensation fiction addressed 'the narrative functions of secrecy with an important self-reflexivity'.³ Since domestic fiction's main concern was with moral economies and not titillations of exposure or reconnaissance, Wagner looks specifically at the reworking of the detective plot in domestic literature during the 1860s, exploring how such novels 'help facilitate a reconsideration of the development, more generally, of popular fiction at the time' (115). Appropriating

¹ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) p. 167.

² Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: From 'The Woman in White' to 'The Moonstone'* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 68.

³ Tamara S. Wagner, 'Detecting Business Fraud at Home: White-Collar Crime and the Sensational Clergyman in Victorian Domestic Fiction', in *Victorian Secrecy: Economies of Knowledge and Concealment*, ed. by Albert D. Pionke and Denise Tischler Millstein (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 115-34 (p. 115).

Wagner's theory of the rewriting of sensation fiction, the following chapter reads Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds* as invoking yet inverting sensational narrative strategies in a bid to re-present and reassess sensational motifs, as well as means of reconsidering authentic representations within literature.

The Eustace Diamonds centres on the greedy, pathological liar Lizzie Eustace, who, after her first husband Sir Florian Eustace dies, refuses to return the Eustace family's diamond necklace, prompting a lawsuit and the rupture of Lizzie's engagement to Lord Fawn. After an attempted robbery of the necklace, Lizzie commits perjury, telling the police that the necklace was indeed stolen. Lizzie, however, is still in possession of the diamonds, having put them under her pillow on the night of the burglary. Lizzie retains the diamonds, hiding them in her desk, until a second, successful robbery occurs. After the second robbery, initiated, like the first, by Lizzie's maid Patience Crabstick, the nefarious jeweller Mr. Benjamin, and the professional thieves Smiler and Cann, Lizzie's deceit and lies are uncovered. Tainted by her deceitfulness, Lizzie marries the scheming Jewish clergyman Joseph Emilius. There is also a significant subplot concerning Lizzie's cousin Frank Greystock and his wavering between marrying Lizzie or staying faithful to his fiancé Lucy Morris, a governess. *The Eustace Diamonds*'s narrative, like so many sensation novels, relies on the concealment of secrets, on the deviant transgressions of a deceitful woman, and the legal ambiguities surrounding middle- and upper-class white-collar crime. However, unlike most sensation novels, the narrator reveals Lizzie's retention of the diamonds immediately, essentially negating any mystery over the 'disappearance' of the diamond necklace.

The Eustace Diamonds has been associated with the sensation genre since Henry James Wye Milley compared the novel to Collins's *The Moonstone* in 1939.⁴ *The Eustace Diamonds* has since been consistently evaluated against Collins's novel, with Wye Milley and James R. Kincaid observing similarities between the plotlines of the two novels, particularly the centrality of a missing jewel in each, and others, like W. J. McCormack, portraying Trollope's novel as pandering to the popularity of *The Moonstone*.⁵ However, this chapter will explore how Trollope reworks some of the characteristic narrative procedures of sensation fiction more generally, particularly how Trollope inverts, and to some extent subverts, the narrative methodology of novels with a secret. By revealing the secret of Lizzie's action immediately, the narrative deconstructs the typical formula of the sensation novel, which characteristically started with a mystery and ended with the sensational revelation of the secret or crime; a blueprint developed in *The Woman in White* and various other sensation novels. Trollope, though, as Wye Milley notes, 'writes a mystery-story and leaves out the mystery'.⁶ As the policy of honesty upheld by the narrator relegates the mystery of the diamonds to the periphery of the text, the fictional public's fumbling with gossip and speculation surrounding the missing diamonds becomes the central focus of the story. As a result, whatever truth becomes most dominant in the valuation of the social elite becomes true in the novel. Subsequently, rather than pursue fact, the novel tracks the gossip and rumours that develop from the controversy surrounding Lizzie's retention of the Eustace diamonds, her engagement to Lord Fawn, and the two robberies of the necklace. In substituting fact for gossip, *The Eustace Diamonds*

⁴ Henry James Wye Milley, 'The Eustace Diamonds and The Moonstone', *Studies in Philology*, 36:4 (October, 1939), 651-63

⁵ Wye Milley; James R. Kincaid, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 202; Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds*, ed. by W. J. McCormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982 [1872]), p. xxiv.

⁶ Wye Milley, p. 660.

replaces detection and evidence with hearsay and rumour while the figure of the detective is supplanted by the nattering gossip. Such displacement consequently destabilizes conventional sensational techniques of reconnaissance and revelation, the heart of most sensation novels.

My reading of *The Eustace Diamonds* begins by examining Trollope's connection with the *Cornhill Magazine* and how this association helped generate the image of him as an author of rural, domestic fiction during most of the 1860s. In contrast, the unique composition and complexion of the *Fortnightly Review*, the original periodical home of *The Eustace Diamonds*, was a decided move away from the cookie-cutter shilling monthlies that had inundated the periodical market since the inception of *Cornhill*, offering Trollope a less conservative, less restrictive forum in which to publish. The *Fortnightly* is thus positioned as a comparatively congenial space for the publication of *The Eustace Diamonds* and its portrayal of a wicked young woman and the morally bankrupt society in which she is surrounded. Moreover, just as the *Fortnightly* looked to renovate and revise the typical format of the middle-class periodical, *The Eustace Diamonds* likewise attempts to modify literary perceptions of seemingly ideal and faultless heroes and heroines, depicting more flawed, and thus, according to Trollope, more genuine characters.

In considering the serial version of the text, the chapter, rather than reading the novel intertextually with the *Fortnightly*, looks more specifically at the serial pattern of Trollope's novel. The analysis emphasizes the implications of publishing in parts on the thematic structure of the novel, elucidating how the finite quality of individual instalments facilitates the expansiveness of the narrative as a whole. What is more, by deconstructing the serial's structure, it is possible to see how the configuration of *The*

Eustace Diamonds's instalments accentuates the text's engagement with gossip by mimicking the repetitive and circulatory nature of gossip.

The final section will examine two particularly active investigative gossipers – Lady Glencora Palliser and Mrs. Hittaway – and how their means of obtaining gossip and information both imitates and overshadows that of the official detectives in the novel. However, as Patricia Meyer Spacks posits, when discussing the role of gossip in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), 'gossip both derives from and generates a need to know the facts of the case – generates that need in the reader as well as in the fictional society. Out of such need develops the pattern of revelation'.⁷ Thus, by replacing fact with gossip, Trollope is able to undermine the sensational formula of secrecy and detection and yet retain the sensational pattern of detection and revelation. The technique allows the reader to enjoy the sensation of the 'missing' diamonds vicariously while disposing of any actual mystery. Trollope's rewriting of the narrative structure of popular fiction is ultimately situated as a means of reconsidering literary traditions at a time when both sensational and realist literary paradigms were beginning to be reshaped. The importance of *The Eustace Diamonds* in the complexion and tone of the Trollope's Palliser series, of which *The Eustace Diamonds* was the third novel, is also touched upon, coming full circle to understanding the progression of Trollope's work and the general rearticulating of sensational plotlines as the sensational sixties gave way to the 1870s.

Building a Reputation: From the *Cornhill Magazine* to the *Fortnightly Review*

In late 1859 George Smith, the proprietor of *Cornhill Magazine*, asked Trollope to write a serial to appear in the initial issue of the new magazine. At the time, Trollope

⁷ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip: A Celebration and Defense of the Art of 'Idle Talk'; a Brilliant Exploration of its Role in Literature (novels, memoirs, letters, journals) as well as in Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 7.

had for some months been writing the Irish story *Castle Richmond*, which he offered to Smith. Smith, however, declined, wanting instead, as Trollope notes in his autobiography, ‘an English tale, on English life, with a clerical flavour’.⁸ Smith’s request reflects the tone of Trollope’s most popular preceding novels: *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), and *Doctor Thorne* (1858), all of which were set in the fictional provincial county of Barsetshire. Trollope had written a number of novels set elsewhere, but it was the Barset novels that had propelled Trollope to popular and critical success, and it was a novel of similar dimensions that Smith wanted for *Cornhill*. Trollope, who had yet to publish a novel serially, began *Framley Parsonage* immediately. *Framley Parsonage* (January 1860-April 1861) was an immense success and Trollope subsequently published three more serials in *Cornhill* during the 1860s: *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson* (August 1861-March 1862); *The Small House at Allington* (September 1862-April 1864); and *The Claverings* (February 1866-May 1867). As a result, Trollope’s reputation and image became increasingly entwined with that of *Cornhill*. According to Mary Hamer, ‘When Trollope had his first great popular success with *Framley Parsonage* it meant that he had gained not only recognition as a writer whose books would sell, but a status and identity as a *Cornhill* novelist.’⁹ Much like Margaret Oliphant in the ‘ecumene’ of *Blackwood’s*, Hamer posits that Trollope ‘was aligned with the editorial policy of [the *Cornhill*] which, under Thackeray, its first editor, was designed never to give offence to or to disturb its readers’ (33).

Thackeray elucidates the *Cornhill*’s editorial policy in an 1859 open letter, stating, ‘At our social table, we shall suppose the ladies and children always present;

⁸ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, ed. by Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1883]), p. 142.

⁹ Mary Hamer, *Writing by Numbers: Trollope’s Serial Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 32.

we shall not set up rival politicians by the ears; we shall listen to every guest who has an apt word to say.’¹⁰ *Cornhill*’s aim to be ‘social’, to be read and enjoyed by the entire family is reflected in its content, which included material on travel, art, literature, and culture, avowedly avoided politics or controversy of any kind, and ingeniously included two serial novels. Even the cover of *Cornhill*, with its rich gold color and illustrations of a ploughman, sower, reaper, and thresher was meant to create a sense of comfort and reassurance. As Spencer L. Eddy expresses it, the cover portrayed an ‘almost bucolic and Virgilian innocence to which the reader might escape from the grime and grind of London in 1860’.¹¹ The magazine also included two to three illustrations per issue by well-known artists, including John Everett Millais, Frederic Leighton, and George de Maurier, which, as Barbara Quinn Schmidt states, ‘provided examples of styles of living read at a slow enough pace so that the possibilities could be envisioned, pondered, discussed and experienced between issues’.¹² Likewise, Helen Debenham comments that the serial fiction published in the journal, which, in the 1860s, included novels by Trollope, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Thackeray, displayed ‘a leisurely pace and self-conscious realism which reflect[ed] an ideological resistance to sensation’s urgency and topicality’.¹³

The *Cornhill*’s editorial policy of avoiding politics and providing material that could be safely read in the presence of woman and children inflected Trollope’s fiction with the same sense of innocence and wholesomeness and cemented his status as a chronicler of clerical stories and provincial, domestic realism. Indeed, throughout the 1860s Trollope was often held up as the antithesis of sensation fiction, as the

¹⁰ *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. by Gordon N. Ray, 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946) p. 161.

¹¹ Spencer L. Eddy Jr., *The Founding of the Cornhill Magazine* (London: Muncie, 1970), p. 16.

¹² Barbara Quinn Schmidt, ‘The *Cornhill Magazine*: Celebrating Success’, *Victorian Periodical Review*, 32:3 (1999), 202-08 (pp. 203-04).

¹³ Helen Debenham, ‘The *Cornhill Magazine* and the Literary Formation of Anne Thackeray Ritchie’, *Victorian Periodical Review*, 33:1 (2000), 81-91 (p. 88).

printer's line in Oliphant's 1867 article 'Novels', discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, indicates, separating the work of Trollope from that of sensationalists like Braddon.¹⁴ Trollope's popularity, as illustrated in Chapter 4, did provoke the *Record* to describe him as a sensationalist.¹⁵ However, the slight was directed more towards *Good Words* than Trollope. Predominantly, Trollope's novels were lauded for their life-like characters and authentic depictions of the everyday.

Gordon N. Ray posits, 'The notion that Trollope is an author who appeals to comfortable people who want at least temporarily to become comfortable, derives particularly from the novels which he wrote between *Framley Parsonage* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (December 1866-July 1867).'¹⁶ Ray also notes, though, that

With [Trollope's] farewell to Barsetshire in *The Last Chronicle*, he in effect crossed a great divide. Henceforth his readers were not to expect that he would be primarily the chronicler of nice people, that young ladies and clergymen would predominate in his books, and that his stories would be altogether wholesome. (329)

Ray points to *Phineas Finn*, the second instalment of the Palliser series, serialized in *Saint Paul's Magazine* from October 1867 through May 1868, as the turning point of Trollope's career, when he 'no longer shrank from analysing the darker aspects of life and character' (329). David Skilton also believes the change was propelled by the end of the Barchester series, while Michael Sadleir and Bradford Booth maintain that the transition was made in part to accommodate the fiction of the 1870s.¹⁷ Trollope's unsuccessful bid for Parliament in 1866 and his exposure to the corruption of the election process has also been cited as a motive for the contemptuous depiction of

¹⁴ See page 115.

¹⁵ See page 158.

¹⁶ Gordon N. Ray, 'Trollope at Full Length', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 31:4 (August 1968), 313-40 (p. 328).

¹⁷ David Skilton *Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction* (London: Longman Group, 1972), p. 31; Bradford Booth, *Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1958); Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London: Octagon Books, 1925).

social and political life that infiltrates his novels of the late 1860s and onward, particularly in the Palliser series.¹⁸

Trollope's shift into a 'new mode', as Ray calls it, of fiction coincides with the publication of his novels in magazines other than *Cornhill*.¹⁹ The late 1860s and early 1870s saw Trollope publish his work in magazines such as *Saint Paul's Magazine*, a political journal devoted to masculine subjects and a male readership, of which Trollope was the editor, and the *Fortnightly*.²⁰ Hamer notes the vastly different complexions of the *Cornhill* and the *Fortnightly*, asserting that the *Fortnightly* 'was in fact to be the reverse of the *Cornhill*: a publication to dispel otiose tranquillity and develop consciousness'.²¹

The *Fortnightly*, which premiered on 15 May 1865, was, as its name suggests, published fortnightly until 15 October 1866 and thereafter produced monthly. Unlike many of the popular monthlies, the *Fortnightly* was priced at two shillings rather than a shilling. The profile of the periodical was also unlike many other popular monthly magazines in that it combined the seriousness of the quarterly reviews with the more entertainment-focused aspects of the shilling monthly, most particularly by including serial fiction alongside weighty political reference articles. Mark W. Turner notes, 'The *Fortnightly* was in the vanguard of change in the 1860s. Avowed as an experiment, it attempted to create yet another middle-class reading market, one that would accept serious articles on politics alongside serial, circulating-library fiction.'²² The *Fortnightly*, unlike *Cornhill*, did not intend to pamper readers with a sense of

¹⁸ J. A. Banks, 'The Way They Lived Then: Anthony Trollope and the 1870s', *Victorian Studies*, 12:2 (December 1968), 177-200.

¹⁹ Ray, p. 330.

²⁰ Trollope also published a number of novels in part-issue during the mid-1860s, including the first in the Palliser series, *Can You Forgive Her?*, and *The Last Chronicles of Barset*.

²¹ Hamer, p. 136.

²² Mark W. Turner, 'Hybrid Journalism: Women and the Progressive *Fortnightly*', in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity: From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 72-90 (p. 72).

disingenuous prosperity or ‘polite entertainment’. In discussing the formation of the *Fortnightly* in his 1870 speech ‘On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement’, Trollope, who was one of nine original investors in the magazine, declared,

We had before us in projecting our new literary enterprise, a certain object, which was certainly that of instruction rather than of amusement. We meant, in fact, to be grave and thoughtful. Grave we certainly were. It was our high ambition to teach truth in politics, truth in philosophy, truth in literature, and truth in social science. It certainly was not our ambition to cater for the delectation of young ladies.²³

Trollope’s admission that it was not the *Fortnightly*’s purpose to accommodate young ladies speaks directly to the journal’s more masculine audience, as well as its endeavour to provide more evocative material than that which appeared in magazines such as *Cornhill*, especially as the *Fortnightly* was explicitly political: directly contrary to *Cornhill*’s no politics policy. The *Fortnightly*’s prospectus also made it clear that the magazine aimed to provide an impartial forum rather than an environment hemmed in by a totalitarian editorial policy:

we propose to remove all those restrictions of party and of editorial ‘consistency’ which in other journals hamper the full and free expression of opinion; and we shall ask each writer to express his own views and sentiments with all the force of sincerity. He will never be required to express the views of an Editor or Party. He will not be asked to repress opinions or sentiments because they are distasteful to an Editor, or inconsistent with what may have formerly appeared in the Review.²⁴

Contributors to the *Fortnightly* would not be restricted by an overpowering editorial ideology, nor, with the magazine’s policy of signature, would their work be stifled by an imposing brand name, as was the case in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, but would be left to stand on its own merit. Walter E. Houghton notes, though, that ‘however open in theory the pages of the review were to liberals and conservatives alike, the innate sympathies of its first two editors tended inevitably to stamp the *Fortnightly* as a great

²³ Anthony Trollope, ‘On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement’, in *Four Lectures*, ed. by Morris L. Parrish (London: Constable, 1938 [1870]), pp. 66-88 (p. 72).

²⁴ ‘Prospectus’, *Fortnightly Review*, 1 (May 15, 1965), inside front cover.

liberal periodical'.²⁵ Even so, the *Fortnightly*, formed by a committee of men rather than backed by a publishing house, like *Blackwood's*, *Macmillan's* and *Cornhill*, was not constructed around a limiting house style nor used as a means of recruiting writers for the publisher-owner and was consequently less limited in the character of its contents and contributors.²⁶

As Trollope notes in his autobiography and in his 1870 speech, he was against the inclusion of fiction in the journal.²⁷ Trollope, though, was overruled by the other committee members, who undoubtedly realized the necessity of serial fiction to the popularity of a journal in the mid-1860s. Trollope was subsequently asked to contribute the magazine's first serial, *The Belton Estate* (15 May 1865-1 January 1866), and, though, with the departure of George Henry Lewes, the *Fortnightly's* first editor, and the sale of the magazine to the publishers Chapman and Hall in 1866, Trollope's involvement with the magazine lessened considerably, he would later serialize both *The Eustace Diamonds* and *Lady Anna* (April 1873-April 1874) in the magazine.

The *Fortnightly's* progressive manifesto and political complexion provided a periodical host in which *The Eustace Diamonds's* political backdrop, examination of the social intrigue of upper-class white-collar crime, and reconsideration of literary representations of truth could be contextualized within the magazine's objective, as Trollope had stated it, 'to teach truth in politics, [...] [and] truth in literature'. The darker, more sardonic tone of *The Eustace Diamonds*, as compared to that of the serials Trollope published in *Cornhill*, is indicative of the shift in Trollope's oeuvre.

²⁵ Walter E. Houghton, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966-1979), p. 176.

²⁶ For a discussion of how, even with the absence of a publishing house, the 'all-male, club-like configuration of house journals is replicated' in the configuration of the *Fortnightly*, see Mark W. Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), p. 96.

²⁷ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 196; Trollope, 'On English Prose Fiction', p. 73.

Indeed, by the time he came to write *The Eustace Diamonds*, Trollope had certainly moved far beyond depicting the quaint, rural society of Barsestshire.

Heard it through the Grapevine

Trollope's formulaic method of writing is well-documented in *An Autobiography*, which describes his business-like approach to the writing of novels: rising at 5:30A.M, re-reading his previous day's work for a half hour and writing, at a pace of 250 words per quarter of an hour, until 8A.M.²⁸ To track his progress Trollope kept meticulous diaries, divided into weeks, in which he entered the total number of pages written each day and tallied the overall number of pages completed thus far. After his first serialized success with *Framley Parsonage*, Trollope continued to write and divide his novels in parts, regardless of whether they had been commissioned for serial publication. Also, Trollope, unlike Dickens or Collins or, indeed, most serial writers, was almost always finished, or nearly finished, a novel before it began serialization. His serials and their fixed instalments were therefore already in place when publication commenced for the majority of his serialized novels.

Hamer, in her valuable analysis of Trollope's diaries and his serial methodology, argues persuasively that the strictures of serial form positively affected the imaginative scope of Trollope's work, claiming, 'serial form with its diverse groupings and points of emphasis offered a structure inherently more appropriate to a complex fiction and that in consequence it freed Trollope to explore the ambiguities of his work and his imagination.'²⁹ Serializing in parts, then, offered Trollope a way to incorporate and interweave several subplots, which were a significant ingredient in

²⁸ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, pp. 271-72.

²⁹ Hamer, p. 59.

Trollope's rendering of an authentic reality. Ray, in his examination of the typically extensive scope of Trollope's novels, asserts that,

Instead of concentrating on a narrowly limited group of characters and a single narrative line, Trollope filled his vast canvases with several related sets of characters, all with their independent though intersecting narrative lines, thus conveying something like the movement of life itself. [...] He knew exactly how to assign each set of characters its proper part in the story, to time his shifts from one plot to another so as to obtain maximum emphasis, contrast, and change of pace, and to bring the whole to a smooth conclusion within the space allotted. Trollope, in fact, made himself a great master of the contrapuntal novel long before anyone had thought of the term. (322)

Richard Holt Hutton, a nineteenth-century critic for the *Spectator*, also remarked this aspect of Trollope's work, declaring that Trollope 'occupies himself with turning the social kaleidoscope in which the individual characters are always taking new relations to each other'.³⁰ As Ray posits, 'Not individual destiny but life in society was Trollope's primary subject. His aim was the faithful representation of a segment of the Victorian world, rather than the unwinding of a single human coil.'³¹ In *The Eustace Diamonds*, the oblique movement of the instalments reveals not only Lizzie Eustace's fixation with intrigue and mystery and her disregard for truth and fact, but also that of the fictional public, presenting not just the 'unwinding of a single human coil', but a broader depiction of society in general.

Moreover, when the narrative pattern of the serial is anatomized, it becomes clear that the serial structure supports the novel's privileging of the circulation of gossip and speculation surrounding Lizzie and the diamonds by reproducing the rhythmic, repetitive nature of gossip. As a result, the narrative scheme of *The Eustace Diamonds* refracts the sensational scandal surrounding the diamonds, turning the social kaleidoscope to illuminate the depravity of not only Lizzie's actions but also that of the general public.

³⁰ Quoted in Ray, p. 324.

³¹ Ray, p. 322.

The Eustace Diamonds, written between 4 December 1869 and 25 August 1870 and published from July 1871 through February 1873, was comprised of twenty instalments, each of which was divided into four chapters. Hamer observes,

The effect of isolating three or four chapters to present them as a serial number is to imply a strong internal structure. Juxtaposition invites the recognition of mutual relevance. So different story-lines within the same number are drawn into relationship, first subliminally, for the responsive author in the act of composing, later implicitly, for the reader.³²

In *The Eustace Diamonds*, the structure supplied Trollope the space to work laterally between his characters and their various perspectives on Lizzie and the mystery of the diamonds, while continuously supplying the reader with a barrage of gossip, rumours, lies, and facts about the mystery, Lizzie's actions, the public's opinion on Lizzie and the diamonds, and the official police investigation of the robberies. The self-proclaimed honest narrator intermittently interjects to clarify which of the information and rumours are true and which are false, essentially retelling events, but telling the truth rather than the exaggerated versions depicted by the speculative public. Consequently, the narrative pattern frequently criss-crosses itself in order to repudiate certain information that is afloat in the public realm. As a result, the sequence of events, rather than progressively moving forward, continuously retreat in upon themselves, slowly advancing the story but frequently superimposing events from different viewpoints. Kincaid, observing this trend, remarks, 'For all the emphasis on crime, detection, and punishment, *The Eustace Diamonds* is essentially static, demonstrating its nature in recurrence rather than cumulative development.'³³ The general prevalence of reoccurrence is highlighted by the fact that the two central events in the story are in fact the same event: the robbery of the diamonds. More specifically though, the pattern of recurrence can be seen in the serial structure of the

³² Hamer, p. 87.

³³ Kincaid, p. 202.

novel, in which many of the instalments, like gossip, often reiterate and regurgitate information repeatedly, portraying the information as it mutates and circulations and describing how the different characters respond to and manipulate certain rumours.

This pattern is evident in the June 1872 instalment, the instalment succeeding the first robbery. The instalment traces the news of the robbery as it circulates to the various groups that populate the novel. The reader, fully aware that the diamonds are still in Lizzie's possession, is shown how the facts surrounding the robbery are distorted and altered as the news travels. The instalment regurgitates the story of the robbery, and that of the lawsuit over the necklace, through the perspective of each group, offering few new pieces of information for the reader. The first chapter, 'The Journey to London', recaps the robbery and describes its aftermath from Lizzie's perspective as well as that of her travelling companions Mrs. Carbuncle and Lord George, both of whom wonder if Lizzie arranged to have the diamonds stolen in order to avoid the impending lawsuit. The details of the lawsuit, of which the reader is already aware, are recapitulated again when Lizzie and her companions give their statements concerning the robbery to the magistrate. Once back in London, Lizzie tells the story of the robbery, the publically known version, to her cousin Frank Greystock, which, again, the reader is already aware of. 'Lucy Morris in Brook Street', the second chapter, begins by updating the reader on the Lucy Morris storyline and then refocuses on the robbery when Lady Linlithgow, Lizzie's aunt, gives Lucy an account of the robbery. Expressing her own thoughts on the robbery, Lady Linthigow places the blame on Lizzie and her companions. Lizzie visits Lady Linlithgow and Lucy the following day and retells the story of the burglary yet again. As of yet, the reader is not informed of any information they were not already aware of, being, instead, inundated with the public's opinion of the robbery and conjecture

of who the thieves might have been, with many believing Lord George to have been behind the theft.

The third chapter explores the gossip and thoughts circulating in the upper-class set of the Pallisers. The chapter reveals that ‘everybody in London had heard of the great robbery [...] and most people had heard also that there was something very peculiar in the matter’.³⁴ The chapter also goes on to note that ‘Various rumours were afloat’ and documents the mass of letters, telegrams, and newspaper articles that are circulating, all of which are spreading an assortment of truth, gossip, and assumptions about the missing diamonds. The chapter begins, though, by reiterating the details of the lawsuit over the diamonds, but then, finally, reveals some new information for the reader. In a letter from Barrington Erle, a political pundit who ‘had been specially told off by the [Liberal] party to watch [the Eustace diamond] investigation’, to Lady Glencora, Erle relates that Lord George and Lizzie have been asked to have their possessions searched by the police and both have refused.³⁵

In the final chapter of the instalment, ‘Lizzie’s Condition’, the narrator intrudes and repeats Erle’s story about the police asking to search Lizzie’s things, disclosing that the diamonds are locked in Lizzie’s desk. The narrator also clarifies the truth and falseness of a few of the other rumours flying about and informs the reader of Lizzie’s torment leading up to the detective Bunfit’s request in trying to figure out what to do with the diamonds. The chapter culminates in Lizzie being asked by Bunfit to have her room searched. The chapter, like most of the others in the instalment, is basically stagnant; gradually moving the story forward, but more frequently recapping previous events. In fact, the chapter ends just as it began: the

³⁴ Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds*, *Fortnightly Review*, 11(June 1872), 705-31 (p. 720). Further references to *The Eustace Diamonds* will refer to the serial version of the novel and will denote date and page number.

³⁵ (August 1872), p. 202.

chapter opens with the narrator's recap of the story of Bunfit asking to search Lizzie's room and ends with the detective, in real time, actually asking Lizzie. The instalment thus reiterates the story of the robbery and the lawsuit repeatedly, moving laterally to the different characters to capture their reaction to the story rather than moving the narrative forward. The pattern, particularly after such a key event as the first robbery, subverts the typically linear impulse of most sensation narratives.

This pattern is also perceptible in the instalment following Lizzie's engagement to Lord Fawn. The September 1871 instalment portrays the news of the engagement from the perspective of Lord Fawn's mother and sisters in the first chapter; from Lizzie in the second; from Lord Fawn in the third; and concludes with a fourth chapter that unites all these persons and attitudes together in Lizzie's awkward and ill-fated visit to Fawn Court, the Fawn family home. Here, as in the June 1872 instalment, the serial pauses to register the affect and reaction of the various characters to important news, like that of Lizzie and Fawn's engagement. As with the story of the robbery, the news of the engagement is depicted from different perspectives and consequently repeated continually. The narrative even transcribes a number of letters Lizzie dispatches to relatives telling them of her impending marriage. Though the letters have a few small differences, they are basically the same. Lizzie writes the letters in order to publicize the news of the engagement, thereby preventing Fawn from withdrawing from the engagement when he finds out about the legal dispute over the diamonds. The letters are also meant to illustrate how Lizzie manipulates the specifics of the news – for instance, in one letter emphasizing Lord Fawn's elevated position in society – depending on the person receiving the letter, further highlighting her deviousness. That point, however, does not negate the fact

that the reader is forced to read the news of the engagement over and over and over again; the information only changing according to how Lizzie chooses to spin it.

Not every instalment follows the pattern of pausing and recapitulating, as the story would, in that case, never progress. However, it is prevalent enough to beget comment, particularly when viewed in conjunction with the text's emphasis on the transmission of gossip and hearsay. Gossip is basically one story told again and again, mutating as it circulates, which is exactly what the June 1872 and September 1871 instalments do: they re-tell events over and over, registering the alterations to the story as it circulates. The rhythmic pattern produced by this configuration and its mimicking of the repetitive quality of gossip and rumour essentially counteracts the forward-moving force of detection and revelation so integral in popular sensation novels. Further, the following section reveals how gossip not only displaces verifiable fact, but also the figure of the detective.

Detecting the Rumour

Ayelet Ben-Yishai diagnoses *The Eustace Diamonds* in part by analysing its preoccupation with gossip and rumour, noting that, 'Through consensus, rumour becomes fact, not the rumour of a fact, but the fact of a rumour.'³⁶ In demonstrating how rumour becomes fact, Ben-Yishai describes two types of facts in Trollope's novel: 'one is empirical, and the other is determined communally' (94). *The Eustace Diamonds*'s narrator makes it clear that more often than not it is the communal that gains precedence over the empirical fact, stating,

The general belief which often seizes upon the world in regard to some special falsehood is very surprising. Everybody on a sudden adopts an idea that some particular man is over head and ears in debt, so that he can hardly leave his

³⁶ Ayelet Ben-Yishai, 'The Fact of a Rumor: Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 62:1 (June 2007), 88-120 (p. 93).

house for fear of the bailiffs; – or that some ill-fated woman is cruelly-used by her husband; – or that some eldest son has ruined his father; whereas the man doesn't owe a shilling, the woman never hears a harsh word from her lord, and the eldest son in question has never succeeded in obtaining a shilling beyond his allowance.³⁷

The communal facts in the text, which are most often established through speculation and rumour, then, often pre-empt empirical truth.

The ability of a rumour to instil itself in the collective conscious of society is so powerful that even in the face of demonstrable fact the ingrained idea of the rumour is difficult to disregard. The detective Gager is so sure that Lord George was part of the two robberies, an idea that had 'become the general opinion of the world at large', that even after Patience Crabstick tells Gager the true story of the robberies he cannot reconcile himself to Lord George's innocence:

Let him press his beloved Patience as closely as he might with questions, there was one point on which he could not get from her what he believed to be the truth. She persisted that Lord George de Bruce Carruthers had had no hand in either robbery, and Gager had so firmly committed himself to a belief on this matter, that he could not throw the idea away from him, even on the testimony of Patience Crabstick.³⁸

The ability of gossip to permeate the mindset and opinions of the fictional public, inflecting their own thoughts almost subconsciously, augments gossip's power as a persuasive form of information in the text.

The novel also illuminates how gossip's ability to plant ideas in listener's minds derives largely from the source of the rumour. Indeed, gossip becomes particularly influential if the informant is a trusted confidant. Ben-Yishai claims that 'the determination of fact and truth resides less in the statement than in the quality and quantity of those individuals who state it'.³⁹ When Lady Fawn, Lord Fawn's mother, informs her daughter, Mrs. Hittaway, who 'heard much more about things that were

³⁷ (November 1871), p. 599.

³⁸ (September 1872), p. 339; (September 1872), p. 350.

³⁹ Ben-Yishai, p. 117.

going on' than Lady Fawn, of Lord Fawn's engagement to Lizzie, Mrs. Hittaway instantly revolts against the idea, declaring that Lizzie is 'the greatest vixen in all London' and a 'liar'.⁴⁰ Mrs. Hittaway, who has heard various rumours about Lizzie and the Eustace diamonds, tells her mother that she's 'heard quite enough about Lady Eustace to feel certain that Frederic [Lord Fawn] would live to repent [the engagement]'.⁴¹ Mrs. Hittaway's opinion affects Lady Fawn's perception of Lizzie and when she afterward visits Lizzie, Lady Fawn immediately detects her falseness: 'No suspicion, however, of [Lizzie's pretence] would have touched Lady Fawn had she come to Mount Street without calling in Warwick Square on the way. But those horrible words of her daughter were ringing in her ears.'⁴² Twice the narrative notes that Lady Fawn 'believed' in Mrs. Hittaway, making Mrs. Hittaway a compelling informant and reliable source of information for Lady Fawn.

Besides trusted confidants, communal truth in *The Eustace Diamonds* also originates from powerful social leaders like Lady Glencora Palliser. Lady Glencora, married to the future Duke of Omnium, Plantagenet Palliser, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is the acknowledged social leader of the Liberal party. The narrator tells the reader that Lady Glencora was 'apt to have opinions of her own, and to take certain flights in which she chose that the others of the party should follow her'.⁴³ After the initial robbery of the diamonds Lady Glencora endeavours to defend Lizzie due to 'generosity rather than from any real belief', but, at this stage, 'even Lady Glencora was forced to abandon her generosity'.⁴⁴ At this point, the conjecture against Lizzie and her involvement in the theft is too much for even Lady Glencora to overturn. However, when, after the second robbery, Lady Glencora 'took it into her

⁴⁰ (September 1871), p. 284

⁴¹ (September 1871), p. 285.

⁴² (September 1871), p. 285.

⁴³ (August 1872), p. 202.

⁴⁴ (June 1872), p. 721.

head to make a diversion of our heroine's fate', deciding that Lizzie was a victim and not a culprit and that Lord Fawn should be made to re-establish their engagement, 'others were obliged to say so too' for Lady Glencora 'was powerful'.⁴⁵ Lady Glencora's power is evinced by the extent of her influence:

It had hitherto been a matter of faith with all the liberal party that Lady Eustace had had something to do with stealing her own diamonds. [...] But Lady Glencora now expressed the opinion that Lady Eustace was a victim, and all the Mrs. Bonteens, with some even of the Mr. Bonteens, found themselves compelled to agree with her.⁴⁶

Lady Glencora has no information to back her assumption, except 'that for the last week past [...] the police had expressed no fresh suspicions in regard to Lizzie Eustace', nor does she want or require any. Lady Glencora's position alone allows her to alter the tone of the gossip. Through Lady Glencora, the society she dominates moves from one that positions Lizzie as 'a very wicked young woman' to one that defends Lizzie as a victim.⁴⁷ Consequently, though Lady Glencora is a secondary character in the novel, she plays a pivotal role in manipulating society's thinking about the robberies, Lizzie's role in the disappearance of the diamonds, and Lizzie's marital prospects.

Though much of the gossip in the novel emanates from social elites like Lady Glencora and Barrington Erle, or trusted confidantes such as Mrs. Hittaway, gossip is often non-verifiable and untraceable. However, as Finch and Bowen note, the unsubstantiated origin of gossip is itself a source of power: 'Itself never identifiably authorized – who, after all, is ever the originator of a rumour? – gossip functions as a powerful form of authority because its source is nowhere and everywhere at once.'⁴⁸

⁴⁵ (August 1872), p. 202.

⁴⁶ (August 1872), p. 202.

⁴⁷ (June 1872), p. 721.

⁴⁸ Casey Finch and Peter Bowen, ' "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury": Gossip and the Free Indirect Style in *Emma*', *Representations*, 31 (Summer 1990), 1-18 (p. 2).

Regardless of if gossip is traceable or not, it is still pervasiveness enough to instil confidence in its information, infusing it with an almost inexorable fund of influence.

Overall, gossip's metamorphosis from rumour to communally accepted fact in *The Eustace Diamonds* situates it as a useful means of gaining and distributing information. Maryann Ayim has analysed what she calls 'investigative gossip', gossip employed in the eliciting of information, professing,

Investigative gossip is not dissimilar to science as depicted by Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce describes science as 'the pursuit of those who are devoured by a desire to find things out', and this is very much the sense in which I have experienced investigative gossip operating.⁴⁹

In thinking about how gossip functions in *The Eustace Diamonds*, Ayim's comparison of science and investigative gossip can be further applied to the resemblance between gossipers and detectives and how each works to ferret out, deduce, and expose pieces of information. The two main investigative gossipers in the novel, Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway, mimic many of the methodologies employed by the two main detectives, Bunfit and Gager, including questioning suspects, employing surveillance, finding witnesses, and acquiring first-hand testimony. Unlike official detectives though, Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway are biased investigators and both have distinct intentions of their own: in Lady Glencora's case, to defend Lizzie of any involvement in the disappearance of the diamonds as a bit of fun, and, in Mrs. Hittaway's, to defame Lizzie and expose her iniquity so that Lord Fawn can withdraw honourably from his engagement to her. As a result, the investigations of Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway expand beyond inquiry into the disappearance of the diamonds or any legal misdoings by Lizzie and include prying into the personal

⁴⁹ Maryann Ayim, 'Knowledge Through the Grapevine: Gossip as Inquiry', in *Good Gossip*, ed. by Robert F. Goodman and Aaron Ben-Ze'ev (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), pp. 85-99 (p. 87).

aspects of her life, such as her engagement to Lord Fawn and her relationship with Frank Greystock.

Moreover, Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway are uninterested in the truth of the information they uncover and circulate. They believe most of the rumours they hear and disseminate it as widely as possible as long as it suits their interests. Bunfit, on the other hand, makes it clear that a detective never believes anything. In speaking to Lord George, Bunfit tells him, ‘A man in my situation, my lord, never believes anything. We has to suspect, but we never believes.’⁵⁰ And though both Bunfit and Gager articulate their own personal theories concerning the robberies, they only discuss their assumptions with one another, acting as covertly as possible in their investigations. The narrator, though, comments that the detectives take their discretion too far, observing,

To be discreet is a fine thing, – especially for a policeman; but when discretion is carried to such a length [...] as to produce a belief that no aid is wanted for the achievement of great results, it will often militate against all achievement.⁵¹

The narrator, encouraging more communication between the police officers, remarks, ‘Had Scotland Yard been less discreet and more confidential, the mystery might, perhaps, have been sooner unraveled.’⁵² The narrator’s advocacy of less concealment and more communication among the police seems to suggest the power of idle chitchat in uncovering secrets and mysteries, lending authority to gossip as a means of discovery and adding credibility to Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway’s tactics.

Moreover, in the case of white-collar crime in the Victorian novel, gossip may actually have the upper-hand over the official police, who, by their very public

⁵⁰ (June 1872), p. 722.

⁵¹ (September 1872), p. 341.

⁵² (September 1872), p. 341.

position, are distanced from the independent and protected world of the higher classes. Ayim asserts that,

for acquiring knowledge of personal intimate details of people's lives, gossip may well be the only form of inquiry that could possibly work. Information of such a highly personal nature is not likely to be accessible to the modes of inquiry more standardly perceived as legitimate.⁵³

Bunfit and Gager blame their incapacity on discovering the thieves or the whereabouts of the diamonds on the fact that the crime is outside their normal domain of commonplace thieves:

There was always this excuse on their lips, – that had it been an affair simply of thieves, such as thieves ordinarily are, everything would have been discovered long since; – but when lords and ladies with titles come to be mixed up with such an affair, – folk in whose house a policeman can't have his will at searching and brow-beating; – how is a detective to detect anything?⁵⁴

However, while Bunfit and Gager are unable to search Lizzie's house or question her, Lady Glencora is admitted to Lizzie's room without a problem:

[Lady Glencora] was told by the servant that Lady Eustace was in bed; but, with her usual persistence, she asked questions, and when she found that Lizzie received visitors in her room, she sent up her card. The compliment was one much too great to be refused.⁵⁵

Lady Glencora's money, rank, and position allow her admittance into the inner sanctum of Lizzie's room as a thing of course, and she gains entry where the detective has failed. And though Lady Glencora may not search Lizzie's belongings or brow-beat her for information, through her idle chatting she procures information that she then uses to manipulate the public's opinion of Lizzie.

Mrs. Hittaway also succeeds in gaining information through gossip, finding out 'something very like truth' about Lizzie and her past escapades, and, unlike Bunfit and Gager, purposely disseminates the derogatory information as widely as possible:

⁵³ Ayim, p. 97.

⁵⁴ (September 1872), p. 339.

⁵⁵ (August 1872), p. 204.

Mrs. Hittaway had been hard at work, and had found out something very like truth in regard to the whole transaction with Mr. Benjamin. Perhaps Mrs. Hittaway had found out more than was quite true as to poor Lizzie's former sins; but what she did find out she used with all her skill, communicating her facts to her mother, to Mr. Camperdown, and to her brother'.⁵⁶

Mrs. Hittaway and Lady Glencora, though, do not rely just on word of mouth for their investigations. When whispers of a disagreement between Lizzie and Lord Fawn, caused by the lawsuit over the diamonds and Lizzie's refusal to give them up, begin to emerge, Lady Glencora uses surveillance as a means of discovering information about their relationship, inviting both Lizzie and Lord Fawn to a party in order to watch their interactions. By observing how Lizzie and Fawn act toward one another, Lady Chiltern suspects that 'there can't be any quarrel at all'.⁵⁷ The perceptive Lady Glencora, though, replies, 'I'm not sure of that. [...] They are not so very loving'.⁵⁸

At Lady Glencora's party, Lord Fawn is acutely aware of the public's gaze, recognizing 'that he was observed'.⁵⁹ Indeed, both he and Lizzie felt the 'slight ferment' when she arrives at the party wearing the diamond necklace.⁶⁰ Lizzie, though, 'bore [the scrutiny] very well'.⁶¹ She has a much more difficult time, however, at the thought of the police watching her after the first robbery. The narrative notes that she was constantly afraid that 'some horrid policeman would be on her track' watching her every movement. Lord George is also paranoid at the thought of being watched by the police, explaining to Lizzie that he was sure that some detective was 'looking at [him] with a magnifying glass from the window'.⁶² However, the public's gaze, represented in the figure of the gossip, though seemingly harmless, is just as intense and harmful as that of police. Indeed, the

⁵⁶ (November 1871), p. 606.

⁵⁷ (November 1871), p. 605.

⁵⁸ (November 1871), p. 605.

⁵⁹ (November 1871), p. 605.

⁶⁰ (November 1871), p. 605.

⁶¹ (November 1871), p. 605.

⁶² (June 1872), p. 730; (July 1872), p. 102.

second robbery is predicated on Lizzie being watched: her maid, Patience Crabstick, sees Lizzie hide the diamonds in her desk, and, with the help Benjamin and Smiler, orchestrates the second robbery. Surveillance and observation, then, are just as useful in the hands of a gossip as they are tools for the detective.

Lady Glencora, while willing to watch from a distance, is also adamant to get a personal interview with Lizzie, as seen above when she succeeds and the detective fails to enter Lizzie's room. Mrs. Hittaway, on the other hand, uses a different tactic and meets with Andy Gowran, an old Eustace employee at Portray Castle, the home left to Lizzie by Sir Florian, in order to find out information about Lizzie's activities. Gowran tells Mrs. Hittaway that he has seen Lizzie kissing her cousin Frank during her engagement to Lord Fawn. Always clever in disseminating her information, Mrs. Hittaway conveys this information to her sister rather than to her mother since in that way

Mrs. Hittaway was sure that she was communicating her ideas to at least two persons at Fawn Court, and that therefore there would be discussion. Had she written to her mother, her mother might probably have held her peace, and done nothing.⁶³

Embracing the rhetoric of a detective, Mrs. Hittaway mentions in her letter that she can 'prove' her information and that it is her 'duty' to disclose to Lord Fawn what she has learnt.⁶⁴ When, after the second robbery, this information fails to overturn the public's shifting opinion of Lizzie as a heroine and victim rather than a culprit, Mrs. Hittaway abandons gossip as a form of substantiation and purchases a first-hand, eye-witness account of Lizzie's indiscretion with Frank. Mrs. Hittaway brings Gowran, the 'great witness' to London to tell his story directly to Lord Fawn.⁶⁵

⁶³ (February 1872), p. 242.

⁶⁴ (February 1872), p. 242.

⁶⁵ (September 1872), p. 354.

The interaction between Lord Fawn and Gowran is depicted very much like a court trial, with Lord Fawn asking questions and Gowran, afraid that he may say something ‘which the lord might choose to call perjury’, answering in short, succinct phrases.⁶⁶ Lord Fawn, though, cannot countenance the interview and leaves before hearing any vital information. Mrs. Hittaway is able to persuade Lady Fawn to listen to Gowran’s story, but Mrs. Hittaway realizes the futility of the testimony: ‘When [Gowran] was gone, Mrs. Hittaway opened her mind to her mother altogether: “The truth is, mamma, that Frederic will be made to marry [Lizzie]”’.⁶⁷ Mrs. Hittaway tells her mother of Lady Glencora’s interference in the matter on the side of Lizzie and voices her irritation at Lady Glencora’s ability to undo her work: ‘I call it quite wicked in that woman’s interfering. I do, indeed! She’s a nasty, insolent, impertinent creature; – that’s what she is! After all the trouble I’ve taken, she comes and undoes it all with one word.’⁶⁸ Here, personal, first-hand testimony, the fundamental backbone of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, is superseded for second-hand hearsay. Interestingly, the chapter in which the interview between Gowran and Fawn occurs directly succeeds the one in which Gager questions his great witness, Patience Crabstick, in the September 1872 instalment. The juxtaposition of the scenes draws attention to the similar trajectory of the investigative gossip and the detective. Gager, though, succeeds in his quest for information and secures the cooperation of Patience to prosecute Benjamin and Smiler. However, both scenes, suffused with a satirical, comic atmosphere, ultimately mock the validity of testimony: Gowran’s testimony is negated by Lady Glencora’s more powerful gossip and Patience’s testimony is only obtained after Gager promises to marry her, imbuing the testimony with a sense of the ridiculous.

⁶⁶ (September 1872), p. 355.

⁶⁷ (September 1872), p. 359.

⁶⁸ (September 1872), p. 360.

Mrs. Hittaway's frustration at her failure stems from the supremacy of Lady Glencora's word over hers, recognizing that Lady Glencora's social pressure has more potency than even Gowran's direct evidence. Mrs. Hittaway, the impecunious wife of a Chairman of the Board of Civic Appeals, and Andy Gowran, an insolent worker, cannot compete with the influence of the popular and wealthy Lady Glencora. Thus, no 'facts' or information Mrs. Hittaway uncovers about Lizzie can persuade Lord Fawn to jilt her in face of the disapproving Lady Glencora. In the only direct interaction between Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway, Lady Glencora easily subdues Mrs. Hittaway when she suggests that Fawn and Lizzie's engagement must be stopped. Lady Glencora, who, as the text notes 'could hardly be called one of [Mrs. Hittaway's] intimate friends', replies, 'I don't see it at all [...] I think Lady Eustace is very nice. And why shouldn't she marry Lord Fawn if she's engaged to him?'⁶⁹ When Mrs. Hittaway tries to use the lawsuit over the diamonds as an excuse, Lady Glencora brushes it aside, saying, 'I wish anybody would come to me and try and get my diamonds! They should hear what I would say.'⁷⁰ Mrs. Hittaway's investigation, though she discovers many actual truths about Lizzie's conduct, is, like her own argument with the duke's wife, ultimately invalidated by the superiority of Lady Glencora.

Finch and Bowen assert that a fundamental mechanism of gossip 'concerns the establishment of a "naturally" enforced hierarchy, within its circle of inclusion, by which certain citizens are privileged over others'.⁷¹ This dynamic, embedded in a class hierarchy in *The Eustace Diamonds*, is particularly clear in the illustration of Lady Glencora's influence. In the quote above, which delineates the extend of Lady Glencora's authority, it is noted that 'all the Mrs. Bonteens, with some even of the

⁶⁹ (February 1872), p. 240.

⁷⁰ (February 1872), p. 240.

⁷¹ Finch and Bowen, pp. 7-8.

Mr. Bonteens, found themselves compelled to agree with her'.⁷² Lady Glencora's ability to sway the Mrs. Bonteens, who are figured as the women of her social group, but also the Mr. Bonteens – Mr. Bonteen being a low-level government official – demonstrates the reach of her authority. As does her relationship with Lord Fawn, who is portrayed as the epitome of social susceptibility in the novel. Lord Fawn's entire character and actions are founded on his aspiration to avoid the disapproval of society: 'To have his hands quite clean, to be above all evil report, to be respectable, as it were, all round, was Lord Fawn's special ambition.'⁷³ Lord Fawn quails beneath the dictate of Lady Glencora when she takes up Lizzie's cause, realizing that, 'If Lady Glencora was determined to take up the cudgels for the woman he had rejected, the comfort and peace of his life would be over. He knew well enough how strong was Lady Glencora.'⁷⁴ Fawn's vulnerability to public opinion, combined with the power of Lady Glencora, overcomes his dislike and distrust of Lizzie and he begins to believe he must go through with the marriage. Not until Lizzie's deceit in regards to the diamonds is publically revealed does Fawn absolutely withdraw from the engagement.

The social hierarchy within the novel, exemplified in the relationship between Fawn and Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway and Lady Glencora evokes the 'double plot' articulated by D. A. Miller in *The Novel and the Police*, in which an informal social control and an authorized policing system act disjointedly to police and monitor middle- and upper-class society. Miller posits that, ultimately, in many Victorian novels 'regulation is secured in a minor way along the lines of an official police force, and in a major way in the working-through of an amateur supplement'.⁷⁵ In Trollope's

⁷² (August 1872), p. 202.

⁷³ (September 1871), p. 293.

⁷⁴ (August 1872), p. 210.

⁷⁵ D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 11.

text, gossip acts as the ‘amateur supplant’, regulating the social realm within the novel. As Finch and Bowen note,

Gossip marks an oblique mode of control, a socio-discursive practice that both defines the community of its participants – solidifying, as Patricia Spacks has it, ‘a group's sense of itself by heightening consciousness of “outside” [...] and “inside” ’ – and regulates the community from within by insinuation, rumour, threat of ostracism, and covert pressure.⁷⁶

Lady Glencora’s and Mrs. Hittaway’s manipulation of gossip illustrates how gossip works as a kind of social surveillance, or social control as it is described by Miller. The two women can, in fact, be seen as social guardians, protecting their class and sphere from unworthy interlopers. When Lady Glencora deems Lizzie worthy of support, she tries to coerce Lord Fawn into marrying Lizzie, which would give Lizzie a prominent place in the social and political party in which Lady Glencora reigns. For Mrs. Hittaway, if Lord Fawn marries Lizzie, she becomes family and is automatically instilled in the Fawn sphere, which Mrs. Hittaway is determined not to let happen. Gossip in *The Eustace Diamonds* thus acts as both an impediment to disreputable persons such as Lizzie from entering a certain community and a means of coercing others in that community into letting someone like Lizzie into their social group. The novel, though, shows how precarious such discriminations are as Lizzie, guilty through and through, is taken up by Lady Glencora out of mere impulse, not based on Lizzie’s character or honour, but on her value as a source of entertainment and on Lady Glencora’s enjoyment in wielding her power as a social elite. Trollope, though, insists that no matter how influential gossip and the gossipers may be, the most powerful members of the upper class, in this case Lady Glencora, ultimately determine the fate of those within their social community. Trollope makes this point clear by concluding the novel with the chapter ‘What was said about it all at

⁷⁶ Finch and Bowen, p. 2.

Matching'. By ending the novel with a discussion between Lady Glencora and her friends over Lizzie and the diamonds, Trollope highlights the significance of their opinions over that of the other characters, giving them the final word on the subject.

P. D. Edwards has commented on the underlying importance of the Pallisers and their friends in the novel, observing,

The Eustace Diamonds, though it offers glimpses of other worlds, is essentially a satire on the *haut monde* of London. [...] Lizzie Eustace, after all, entertains her world without greatly damaging its moral or material well-being; her career shows up society's existing corruption but hardly deepens or extends it.⁷⁷

Brantlinger expands on this idea, linking Lizzie's lies to those of society, claiming,

Lizzie is a liar, but there is also a general domain of lying that is indistinguishable from public opinion. [...] The 'lies' about Lizzie and the diamonds, [...] ranging from club-room gossip to Lady Glencora Palliser's hyperbolic version of events, are no different in kind from Lizzie's own fabrications.⁷⁸

Such disingenuousness in the moral code of society and its pre-occupation with exciting hearsay shines a spotlight not only on Lizzie's indiscretions but on society's as a whole. Indeed, for Lady Glencora and others of her set, the scandal surrounding Lizzie and the diamonds is likened to a form of entertainment, a 'play' or a 'plot', in which truth is secondary to excitement and scandal.⁷⁹ Barrington Erle, whose epistles are an important part of the circulation of gossip that dominates the text, does not hesitate to combine a mixture of truth, invention, and pure speculation in his letters, feeding the sensational frenzy of interest surrounding the diamonds and Lizzie. What is most interesting, though, is that the narrator approves of Erle's embellishments, declaring, 'We may say, indeed, that perfect accuracy would be detrimental rather than otherwise, and would tend to disperse that feeling of mystery which is so

⁷⁷ P. D. Edwards, *Anthony Trollope: His Art and Scope* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), p. 170.

⁷⁸ Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 138.

⁷⁹ (June 1872), p. 727.

gratifying.’⁸⁰ A statement such as this from a narrator who ‘has scorned to have a secret between himself and his readers’ is quite paradoxical, causing Edwards to comment that the self-proclaimed honest narrator and his confidential asides may not be as sincere as the narrator declares them to be.⁸¹ Edwards notes that,

Characteristically, however, all of these confidences leave the most important questions unanswered. If Lizzie was not responsible for the theft of the strong-box, then who was? Suspicion seems to point to her escort, Lord George, but nothing is done to dispel it until the next serial instalment. Similarly, after the successful robbery, we learn that the diamonds are in Mr. Benjamin’s safe, but not how they got there.⁸²

Edwards sees the underhanded machinations of the narrator as attributable to Trollope’s coy infusion of sensational tropes: ‘Trollope, then, is not altogether sincere in professing to reject sensational methods. But by the very act of openly referring to them he is softening their potential impact’ (70). Edwards instead believes that ‘There are [...] two streams running through Trollope’s work. One is the stream of common life, [...] the other the “sensational” stream’ (6). Trollope made it clear in his autobiography, though, that he believed there was a place in literature for both sensational and realist ‘streams’ as Edwards describes it. Trollope, in a well-known assertion, declared that the critical division made between realism and sensation fiction was ‘a mistake’, and that ‘A good novel should be both, and both in the highest degree’.⁸³ Disapproving of the distinction made between literary genres, Trollope looked to dilute such boundaries, something he believed he did in his depiction of Lady Mason’s confession in *Orley Farm* (March 1861-October 1862), and something I believe he does to an even further extent in *The Eustace Diamonds*.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ (June 1872), p. 727.

⁸¹ (June 1872), p. 729.

⁸² Edwards, p. 172.

⁸³ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 227.

⁸⁴ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 226.

Depicting Truth

In his autobiography, Trollope states that if there is ‘truth of description, truth of character, human truth as to men and women’ then he did not ‘know that a novel [could] be too sensational’.⁸⁵ However, Trollope qualifies such truthful representations by insisting that the reader be able to ‘sympathise with the characters whose names he finds on the page’ (*Autobiography*, 228). In *The Eustace Diamonds*, the narrator’s constant description of Lizzie as ‘poor Lizzie’ and the portrayal of the inner turmoil she endures because of her actions certainly promotes a sense of sympathy towards her, particularly as her schemes and lies don’t really harm anyone but herself. In one of the narrator’s most sympathetic addresses he asserts,

Poor Lizzie! The world, in judging of people who are false and bad and selfish and prosperous to outward appearances, is apt to be hard upon them, and to forget the punishments which generally accompany such faults. Lizzie Eustace was very false and bad and selfish, [...] but in the midst of all she was thoroughly uncomfortable. She was never at ease. There was no green spot in her life with which she could be contented.⁸⁶

The description of Lizzie, and many others of this kind, animates her into a ‘flesh and blood’ character that Trollope deems as a necessary prerequisite to the inclusion of sensational events in literature (*Autobiography*, 228). Lizzie is certainly not one of the ‘wooden blocks, who cannot make themselves known to the reader as men and women’ that Trollope disparages in both his memoirs and in *The Eustace Diamonds* (*Autobiography*, 228).

Indeed, the novel devotes almost an entire chapter of the March 1872 instalment to lamenting the untrue depictions of men and women in literature, specifically defending the unheroic hero Frank Greystock’s wavering between his duty to Lucy and his fascination with Lizzie. The narrator explains that, ‘the reading

⁸⁵ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 229.

⁸⁶ (December 1871), p. 669.

world [has] taught itself to like best the characters of all but divine men and women', but yet such images are untrue as 'We cannot have heroes to dine with us. There are none'.⁸⁷ In the first instalment of the serial, the narrator protests that Lizzie will not be the heroine of the story and states that he will not 'take it upon himself to assert' if there is to be a heroine in the story at all.⁸⁸ The narrator believes instead that, 'The true picture of life as it is, if it could be adequately painted, would show men what they are, and how they might rise, not, indeed, to perfection, but one step first, and then another on the ladder.'⁸⁹ In order to tell a true-to-life story, then, Trollope incorporates what he deems genuine portraits of his characters, none of which are perfect, and some of which are extremely flawed.⁹⁰

Wagner describes how through the rewriting of sensational conventions within domestic realism the concept of a central secret 'can no longer work as the driving force of the narrative. Instead, individual accountability and responsibility outweigh the excitement of detective work'.⁹¹ Miller argues that Lizzie, though not legally indicted for her role in the first robbery or her multiple instances of perjury, is instead socially prosecuted by the informal social control of society, stating, 'Lizzie may fear the legal consequences of her perjury at Carlisle, but what she actually suffers is the social humiliation of its being publicly known.'⁹² However, once Lizzie's part in the disappearance of the diamonds is revealed, the police and society are baffled by how to treat or what to do with the upper-class criminal. Lizzie is not indicted for perjury and she is spared the embarrassment of testifying at the trial of Benjamin and Smiler, lying in order to avoid appearing. As a result, she only has to endure the informal

⁸⁷ (March 1872), p. 347.

⁸⁸ (July 1871), p. 14.

⁸⁹ (March 1872), p. 348.

⁹⁰ See Walter Kendrick, 'The Eustace Diamonds: The Truth of Trollope's Fiction', *ELH*, 46:1 (Spring 1979), 136-57 for a discussion of Trollope's truthful depiction of Lizzie.

⁹¹ Wagner, p. 115.

⁹² Miller, p. 14.

ceremony of giving evidence before the magistrates. As for society, the public, portrayed primarily by Lady Glencora and her set at Matching Priory, are not interested in punishing or deriding Lizzie; indeed, ‘poor little Lizzie Eustace’ is pitied for her marriage to Emilius and defended by Lady Glencora in the final chapter of the novel.⁹³ Thus, although official institutions – the law and the police – and the social realm acknowledge Lizzie’s mendacity, both forums treat her rather well and wish nothing more than to be rid of Lizzie Eustace. Lord Chiltern speaks for society when he says, ‘I never was so sick of anything in my life as I am of Lady Eustace.’⁹⁴ As for the police and the lawyers, ‘The affair was over, and men were glad to avoid the necessity of troubling themselves further with the business.’⁹⁵ Overall, ‘nothing was done, and Lizzie triumphed in her success’.⁹⁶ Therefore, though Wagner believes that the adoption of sensation fiction’s interest in secrecy and exposure ‘became transferred into an impetus for moral catharsis when rewritten in domestic fiction’, in *The Eustace Diamonds* Trollope disposes of any such purification process, upsetting the moral catharsis typical in both domestic realism and sensation fiction. Indeed, Trollope’s failure to punish Lizzie or to morally redeem her marks her as the blurred figure in the text that both invokes and undermines sensational and realist orthodoxies. Lizzie Eustace is not the faultless or reformed heroine characteristically found in realist fiction, nor the bigamist or murderess villainess who is customarily deported or killed off in sensation novels, she is the by-product of a morally vacant society, and to expect a complete moral and spiritual conversion would seem unbecoming in the shady social landscape of *The Eustace Diamonds*. Lizzie, unlike Lucy Morris, who, as the symbol of truth in the novel, is often described as a

⁹³ (February 1873), p. 274.

⁹⁴ (February 1873), p. 275

⁹⁵ (February 1873), p. 264.

⁹⁶ (February 1873), p. 264.

‘diamond’ and ‘treasure’, is likened to a paste version of a diamond; to instantaneously transform her would be, for Trollope, as artificial as Lizzie herself.⁹⁷ By omitting any moral catharsis on the part of Lizzie, and thus the notion of perfect heroine or hero, Trollope aims to provide an alternative to conventional paradigms in both sensation fiction and realism, seeming to suggest a more blended, and therefore truthful, depiction of society.

Moreover, by revealing Lizzie’s secret at the outset, Trollope is also able to externalize Lizzie’s internal drama, unlike many other sensational texts whose villains’ internal struggles are typically hidden in order to keep the central mystery a secret. Take, for instance, *Aurora Floyd*. The reader is aware she is hiding a secret, but, unaware of what that secret is, the reader, as discussed in Chapter Two, is often denied access to her internal thoughts. Her emotions are instead shown through her physical responses, which act as clues to the mystery of the novel. In contrast, *The Eustace Diamond*’s narrative allows readers access to Lizzie’s emotional struggles as well as her external crimes. After Lizzie lies about losing her diamonds in the first robbery there is an entire chapter entitled ‘Lizzie’s Condition’ that outlines the ‘terrible anxiety’ Lizzie endures in keeping her secret and notes that, though ‘the burthen had to be borne’, it was ‘increasing every hour in weight, and the poor creature’s back was not broad enough to bear it’.⁹⁸ The description of Lizzie’s frantic thoughts and fear of being constantly watched counter her initial delight at her furtive actions when the idea of tricking everyone ‘had in itself a certain charm for Lizzie Eustace’.⁹⁹ The multidimensional representation provides readers with insight into the depth of Lizzie’s mind, creating a psychological profile that is often times lacking in sensation fiction’s transgressive figures. In comparing Lizzie Eustace to Aurora Floyd

⁹⁷ (November 1872), p. 597.

⁹⁸ (June 1872), p. 730.

⁹⁹ (June 1871), p. 705.

I do not wish to situate Aurora as a wooden block, but to demonstrate how Trollope's narrative strategy allows him to maintain a high standard of character development, so essential to realism, and yet assimilate sensation fiction's fixation with transgressive femininity and secrecy. The narrative strategy allows Lizzie to be both a compelling villain and an interesting, if not respectable, protagonist; even if the narrator insists that she is not a heroine.

Further, as *The Eustace Diamonds* is part of the Palliser series, Lizzie's story is not over at the end of the novel. The narrator of *The Eustace Diamonds* foretells the continuation of Lizzie's history, remarking, 'The writer of the present story may, however, declare that the fate of this lady shall not be left altogether in obscurity.'¹⁰⁰ And the prediction of the Duke of Omnium that Lizzie 'hasn't what I call a good time before her', comes to fruition in *Phineas Redux*, the subsequent instalment in the Palliser series, when her husband Emilius is discovered to be a bigamist and murderer.¹⁰¹ *Phineas Redux* also features a female amateur detective in Madame Goesler, who, rather than relying on investigative gossip like Lady Glencora and Mrs. Hittaway, transforms into a full-fledged sleuth, though she does pick up many of her clues from gossip. Lizzie Eustace's story, though, continues even beyond *Phineas Redux* into the fifth novel of the Palliser series, *The Prime Minister*, where Lizzie is seen 'free from all marital persecution, and was very much run after by a certain set in society'.¹⁰²

The social world Trollope creates in the Palliser series allows Lizzie, unlike the repentant Isabel Vane, the transformed Aurora Floyd, or the confined Rachel Hilyard, to continue to exist and, indeed, thrive. Rather than eliminate or eradicate the sensational then, as was done by Wood, Braddon, and Oliphant in the previous novels

¹⁰⁰ (February 1873), p. 271.

¹⁰¹ (February 1873), p. 275.

¹⁰² Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister*, ed. by David Skilton (London: Penguin, 1996 [1876]), p. 79.

studied in this project, the sensationalism Lizzie invokes and represents in *The Eustace Diamonds* is allowed to continue as she and her story remain part of the Trollopian universe. In this sense, Trollope's text may be the most sensational of all the novels examined in this study.

The Eustace Diamonds's inversion of sensational ethos, taken in conjunction with its attack on the delinquency of authenticity in literary depictions, positions it as a unique critique of the epistemological nature of literary genres in the early 1870s, a period in which authors began fusing and rewriting generic literacy conventions. The novel thus provides an illustrative example of the ways in which sensation fiction's characteristic features were reworked and rearticulated within a range of fiction as the sensational sixties progressed. Indeed, Trollope's novel provides an indicative example of how, as Pykett described it, the 'tentacles' of sensation fiction developed, transformed, and extend throughout the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Conceptualizing the Victorian Periodical

Nineteenth-century periodicals, once charted for the way in which they reflected nineteenth-century society, have since become a valuable source of understanding the engagement between Victorian literature and culture.¹ Rather than merely echoing cultural and social trends, recent scholars have argued for the periodical as an active cultural force. For instance, many scholars have explored the inherent dialogism of Victorian journals.² Such research has revealed that nineteenth-century periodicals were not comprised of just one voice, but many, from that between the journals' content, between editors, contributors, and readers, and between different periodicals. As Deborah Wynne posits,

Like the internet today, where different voices compete for attention within an expanding media which defies boundaries and definitions, the Victorian periodical press was forever in a state of flux and transition as various discourses and genres established themselves (or sank into oblivion) through its pages.³

Many of the latest studies have drawn on a variety of cultural and literary theories in order to engage with and explore the dialogic form of the Victorian periodical press, applying the paradigms of theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva.⁴ In applying the concept of intertextuality in 'Serializing Sensation',

¹ Michael Wolff, 'Charting the Golden Stream: Thoughts on a Directory of Victorian Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), 23-38 discusses the value of Victorian periodicals in terms of the ways in which they mirrored nineteenth-century society.

² See for example the articles in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (*The Victorian Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), particularly Louis James, 'The Trouble with Betsy,' pp. 349-66.

³ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), p. 167.

⁴ For example Wynne; Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000); Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *Victorian Publishing and Mrs. Gaskell's Work* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

then, I have chosen one theoretical model out of many with which to bring into sharper focus the periodicals' multiple and varied voices. Approaching the periodicals and the serials intertextually has provided a means of reading the journals and the texts in relation to one another, but also in the context of other periodicals, other texts, and within the broader popular culture of the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, in applying the concept of intertextuality, I have attempted to show how a fuller understanding of the relationship between texts and their periodical placement provides a more in-depth understanding of not only the serial and periodical, but also of the atmosphere in which the text was created and subsequently interacted. In doing so, I have tried to produce as inclusive a picture as possible of the popular literary and social climate of the 1860s and early 1870s.

In looking at one type of periodical (the middle-class monthly magazine) and one literary genre (the sensation novel) during a specific period of the Victorian era (the 1860s), 'Serializing Sensation' has tried to demonstrate how a literary genre like sensation fiction engaged with the popular cultural issues of the day. Specifically, in examining topics such as the debates over masculinity/femininity, questions of the legitimacy of certain forms of evidence, changes to space and population demographics, religious reform, and literary evolutions, 'Serializing Sensation' has aimed to capture the transitional nature of the mid-nineteenth century, and how such transitions were represented in the literature of the day. By approaching the novels via their periodical locations, I have endeavoured to highlight how publication format affected and influenced first readings of the novels. I have also striven to state a case for modern literary scholars to think outside the context of Victorian three-decker novels and current-day book editions to consider the original material framework in which many nineteenth-century novels first emerged. Further, though evaluating but a

small sliver of nineteenth-century periodicals and novels, I have hoped to illuminate the vast field that lies open to scholars interested in studying, whether conjointly or separately, Victorian periodicals and the sensation novel.

Looking Forward

The development of a number of digital and electronic resources for Victorian periodicals within the last ten years marks this as an especially interesting time in periodical studies, when scholars have easy access to a wide variety of newspapers, journals, and other print media that have previously been accessible in only a few libraries. Databases such as *British Periodicals Online* and the *Periodical Archive* consequently provide access to a number of literary serials once assumed to be lost in their ephemeral form. Moreover, websites like *At the Circulating Library: A Database of Victorian Fiction*, a site hosted by the Victorian Research Web, tidily organizes biographical and bibliographical information for a vast quantity of nineteenth-century British fiction.⁵ The site allows researchers to search for titles by author and year, and, significantly for students of periodical literature, by journal, which then conveniently lists all the serials published in a given journal during its publication history, presenting a clear picture of the literary and periodical terrain of the nineteenth century.

For sensation fiction, a genre so embedded in the periodical press, such tools will undoubtedly assist the field in continuing to develop and expand, allowing researchers valuable and accessible means of discovering lost or forgotten authors and offering diverse perspectives from which to study the rise the sensation novel, the progressions of the genre, and the influence and effects of sensation fiction on the

⁵ *At the Circulating Library: A Database of Victorian Fiction*,
<<http://victorianresearch.org/atcl/index.php>>

culture in which it proliferated. As the fields of periodical studies and sensation fiction studies continue to mature, the intersections between the two areas is also likely to continue to be cultivated. One of the most recent indications of scholarly interest in this relationship was The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals' naming of their 2012 conference: 'Sentiment and Sensation in Victorian Periodicals'.

In returning to Mark Knight's article 'Figuring out the Fascination', Knight states that his intention is to 'figure out why the [sensation] genre possesses such a powerful hold on our thinking', ultimately declaring that 'there is something about individual sensation novels that lies beneath the surface, frustrating our best efforts at playing the detective and figuring it all out'.⁶ Knight's survey of recent trends in sensation fiction studies is certainly informative and provides a useful map of the critical landscape of sensation fiction research, one that has been valuable in situating the current study within the latest developments in the field. However, Knight's article also points to the academic misgivings that continue to surround sensation fiction, as if the persistent and, indeed, increased interest in the sensation novel requires justification. Perhaps, then, sensation fiction has not quite shaken off its scandalous roots as fully as the deluge of recent studies on the sensation novel would indicate. If not, the field is certainly on its way, and perhaps someday in the near future scholarly interest in the sensation novel will not need to be figured out at all.

⁶ Mark Knight, 'Figuring out the Fascination: Recent Trends in Trends in Criticism on Victorian Sensation and Crime Fiction', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37 (2009), 323-33(p. 323 and p. 331).

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