

NO. 119

SPRING 2011

Victorians

A JOURNAL OF CULTURE AND LITERATURE

(formerly *The Victorian Newsletter*)

Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature publishes scholarly articles by many of the most prominent Victorian academics of the last half century. As such, *VCL* reflects the genesis and development of contemporary Victorian studies. *VCL* is a refereed publication featuring analyses of Victorian culture and literature. The editor welcomes book announcements, review copies, and book reviews, along with announcements of interest to the Victorian academic community.

Tables of Contents for *The Victorian Newsletter* from 1952 through 2011 and Full texts of issues 1 (1952) through 80 (1991) and Annotated indices are available at www.wku.edu/victorian

Editorial communications should be addressed to:

Dr. Deborah Logan, Editor deborah.logan@wku.edu
Department of English, Cherry Hall 106
Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd.
Bowling Green, KY 42101 victorian.newsletter@wku.edu

Manuscript submissions: MLA formatting and documentation sent as: one hard-copy and electronic e-mail attachment (MS Word doc or RTF).

Subscription Rates: United States, \$15.00 per year; foreign rates, including Canada, \$17.00 (USD) per year. Please address checks to *The Victorian Newsletter*.

Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature is sponsored for the Victorian Group of the Modern Language Association by Western Kentucky University and is published twice yearly.

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*A Journal of
Culture and Literature*

Number 119

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Deborah A. Logan
Editor

Emily Bullock
Assistant Editor

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Cover Illustration: Franz Winterhalter, *Queen Victoria* (1843; public domain)

Greetings from the Editor

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature!*

Formerly *The Victorian Newsletter*, our new name is the latest in a series of editorial alterations, beginning with the Fall 2007 change in format and continuing through a new emphasis on peer-reviewed articles and book reviews. Now in its sixtieth year, *The Victorian Newsletter* has evolved from the newsletter format that marked its inception in 1952 into a full-fledged scholarly Journal. The name change thus reflects its impressive literary history, its longevity, its remarkable list of authors and editors—a veritable Who's Who of Victorian scholars for over half a century—and its key role in serving the national and international Victorian studies community. We invite you to visit our website at www.wku.edu/victorian, where you will find full-text PDFs of all issues from 1952 through 1991, as well as Tables of Contents and annotated indices for cross-referencing. *Victorians / VCL* continues the numbering sequence established by *Victorian Newsletter*.

I am very pleased to present the Spring 2011, #119 issue, launched in fine style by Justin Jones's "Manufacturing Men: Boys as Commodities in Kipling's *Kim* and *Captains Courageous*." Scholars of colonialism and post-colonialism have found *Kim* a rich resource for analyses of British imperialism and its many socio-cultural, economic, and political implications. Jones's perspective departs from readings based on Kim's ostensibly irresponsible and thoughtless collusion in the life-and-death-issues wrought by the Great Game, instead arguing for "a careful analysis of the ominous side effects of such arduous, transformative training." In his focus on the blatant commodification of Kipling's young protagonists, Jones argues that these "stories of self-abnegation and alienation" involve boys who "must relinquish aspects of their basic humanity to become valuable commodities in their adopted trades." These *bildungsromans* reveal that the lenses of material worth were focused as relentlessly on the rising generation of (perhaps unwitting) imperialists as on the indigenous peoples and natural resources of Britain's colonial interests.

Dating from the same period is the short-lived New Woman—and, making an even briefer appearance, the New Man. Doug Kirshen's "The New Man in the Age of the New Woman: May 1894—February 1895" features a sharp, often hilarious discussion of the masculinized New Woman and the feminized New Man, both fueled by the lively periodical press that shaped public discourse during the Naughty Nineties. Confrontations between *Punch* and *Judy*, Ouida and Sarah Grand, Oscar Wilde and the Marquis of Queensbury fueled the period's homosexual panic. But despite the nearly universal ostracization of the most celebrated and notorious playwright in the West End, it was Oscar Wilde's contributions to literary history that largely defined the era.

Wilkie Collins challenged established socio-cultural and separate-spheres gender boundaries in some unexpected ways, as seen in Melissa Elston's "Playing *Hide and Seek*

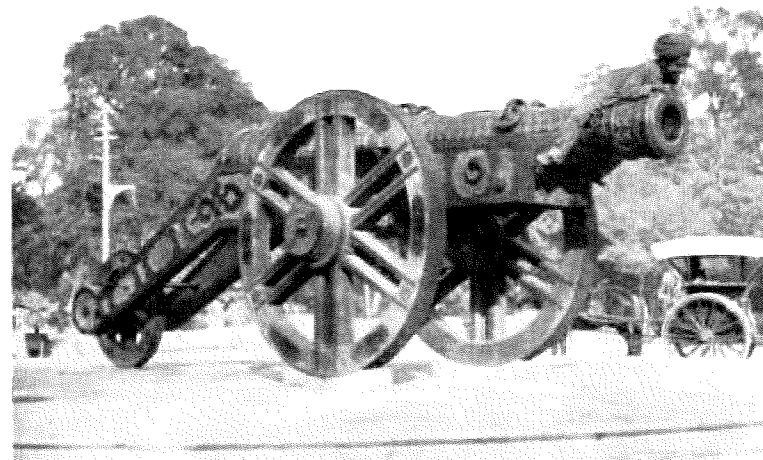
with Venus and Madonna: Collins's Early Experiment in Pre-Raphaelite Transgression." *Hide and Seek* features a protagonist "who would typically be stigmatized due to gender and disability." Madonna is a deaf and dumb orphan, discovered on display as a circus freak and adopted by the artist, Valentine Blyth; invested with "the attributes of not one, but two divine archetypes"—the Virgin Mary and Venus—Madonna unites sacred and secular: she is both an Angel-in-the-House and a sexually-aware young woman. A talented artist, Madonna's disabilities do not prevent her from accumulating a string of admirers, making her a character who defies gender limitations on several fronts.

Joyce Kelley's "Beating them to the *Punch*: Satirizing Sensation from the 1860s Comic Journal to Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife*" investigates Mary Elizabeth Braddon's determination to prove herself more than just a sensation-fiction author. While *The Doctor's Wife* aims to establish her credibility as a "serious" novelist, it does so by incorporating a character who writes sensation fiction and by parodying the sensation genre. While sensation authors and their novels were thoroughly satirized in the periodical press, from critical journals to the scandal sheets in which no one's reputation was spared, Kelley's analysis illustrates that Braddon's good-humored self-parody literally beat them all to the *Punch*—as she would say, pun intended.

Janice Law Trecker's "Transcendental Monsters" considers the extraordinary characteristics linking three of British literature's enduringly archetypal tales: *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*. Individually and collectively, these stories range "from contemporary, even quite localized troubles, to accounts of the human condition"; each presents "old religious ideas in secular dress," addressing *hubris*, concepts of the afterlife, and the limitations of human endeavors. By drawing from a range of myths and traditions, and adding a uniquely nineteenth-century coloring of modern science supported by technology and vexed by religious skepticism, all three tales had the unique distinction of achieving archetypal status in their own time. That they emerged from the same culture during the same century attests to their unique representation of a radically changing old order "yielding place for new."

The final feature in #119 is "Piercing the Public Sphere: Pompilia's Rupture of the Public/Private Divide in Browning's *The Ring and the Book*" by Elizabeth Coggin Womack. This analysis emphasizes the unique qualities characterizing Browning's 1868 poetical rendering of a 1698 Italian murder case. Here, the concept of "shifting ideas of 'public' over time" is illuminated by Jurgen Habermas' provocative theoretical frameworks, enabling an assessment of "Browning's collapse of multiple histories—Guido's feudal heritage, the late Italian Renaissance, the dawning of the Enlightenment, and the Victorian era." A more precise focus considers Pompilia's "spectacularly wounded" body as an evidential text; public scrutiny of this most private realm highlights the implications of religious confession and ecclesiastical prudence, of Papal concepts of purity, and of Pompilia's determination to survive long enough to tell her story.

On behalf of *Victorians. A Journal of Culture and Literature*, I thank Western Kentucky University Provost, Gordon Emslie; Potter College Dean, David Lee; English Department Head, Karen Schneider; and graduate editorial assistant, Emily Bullock. And very special thanks to Zack Adams for his technical expertise.



(Fig.1) Zam-Zammah, Lahore
National Geographic (1921; public domain)

Manufacturing Men: Boys as Commodities in Kipling's *Kim* and *Captains Courageous*

by Justin Jones
University of North Texas

During the course of his prolific literary career, few subjects interested Rudyard Kipling more than the forging of wise and able-bodied men out of the raw materials of boys and the environments of their youth. Doubtless, Kipling's own varied experiences at Lorne Lodge in Southsea and the Westward Ho! United Services College in Devon served to inform his tales of male maturation, just as his subsequent work as a journalist in northern India provided the foundation for much of his writing on the vocational training of young men. Indeed, Kipling repeatedly exalts the merits of hard work and earnest devotion to both professional and patriotic duty in his poetry and fiction, and this endorsement of what many contemporaries saw as an outdated High-Victorian ethos garnered him considerable criticism.¹ Although many modern readers still fault Kipling for his emphasis on work as the only means of "acquiring merit," most critics of Kipling's novels of empire, particularly *Kim* (1901), interpret his male protagonists as privileged servants who retain their "radical innocence" during their development into tough, resourceful men of the world (Kaul 427). Whereas ample evidence exists in Kipling's novels on boyhood to support such readings, few critics or readers have qualified their assertions of Kipling's sanction of cheerful, manly service with a careful

¹ An anonymous reviewer in the *Athenaeum* (Oct. 1899) suggests that the homily of both *Stalky & Co.* and *Captains Courageous*—"that of the good effects of a sound whacking on a boy's character"—is unnecessary and at least a little crude: "'Save he serve, no man may rule'—not perhaps, a very subtle lesson, nor particularly one that needs insisting on....Mr. Kipling evidently does not believe in what is known as appealing to a boy's higher feelings" (qtd. Green 227).

analysis of the ominous side effects of such arduous, transformative training on the narrative foci of his *bildungsromans*.

Due largely to the towering influence of Edward Said's treatment of *Kim* in his 1987 introduction to the novel and his later, more extended essay in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), the critical discourse on Kipling's *fin-de-siècle* fiction tends to produce various analyses of the author's either implicit or radically overt reinforcement of British imperialism and its consequent dehumanizing of the Oriental native as cultural Other. For example, Zohreh T. Sullivan's landmark study explores the bifurcated narratives of an unsteady colonial subject—a paradoxical reconciler of dissonant ideologies “who disavows difference from the native, yet knows otherwise” (177). Similarly, by denying *Kim*'s “perceived sympathy for the Indians,” Patrick Williams systematically refutes the claims offered by those readers who choose to see the novel as the exception to the rule of Orientalism—as a narrative that “offers the representation free of stereotypes” (411–13). Many conventional readings present *Kim* particularly, and Kipling's novels of male development generally, as little more than political allegories on a colonial stage. In contrast, I shall examine two of Kipling's male protagonists—Kimball O'Hara and Harvey Cheyne—in their roles as commodities ripe for consumption by the economic interests (both political and financial) of their respective vocational associations, namely the imperial espionage of the Great Game and the venture capitalism of Harvey Cheyne, Sr.² In performing such an examination, I hope to show that Kipling's novels neither present wholly idealized rites of passage into manhood—wherein the male protagonists retain an uninhibited, playful innocence during their masculine training—nor blindly reinforce the ideological constructs of imperialism or capitalism.³ Rather, *Kim* and *Captains Courageous* (1896) are stories of self-abnegation and alienation, wherein the

² My economic terminology relies loosely on Marx's 1867 definition: “A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another” (*Capital* 303). I apply this definition analogously to the objectification and alienation of Kim and Harvey brought about by their training into commercial usefulness. See also Peter Hopkirk, *Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling's Great Game* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), an indispensable resource for details on the historical realities that inform the novel, particularly concerning the Great Game.

³ Edward Said insists that Kim retains his boyish innocence and playfulness throughout the novel: “Kim himself, although he ages in the novel from thirteen until he is sixteen or seventeen, remains a boy, with a boy's passion for tricks, pranks, clever wordplay, resourcefulness” (137). Whereas I readily concur with Said's assertion about the pervasiveness of pleasure, particularly “boyish enjoyment,” in *Kim*, I disagree that such pleasure remains uniformly consistent during Kim's development and appropriation into the Great Game, as this discussion illustrates.

young males at the centers of the narratives must relinquish aspects of their basic humanity to become valuable commodities in their adopted trades.

Appropriating the Commodified Boy: Taming the “Colt” and Fishing for “Supercargo”

During his introduction of the ostensible hero of his novel, Kipling describes the young Kim in perspicuously economic terminology, foreshadowing his inevitable commercial potential as an ethnological curiosity and contrasting the simple beauty of the boy's total lack of vocation or material wealth. The native-born white boy astride “Zam-Zammah” (Fig. 1)—an artifact denoting power that has been exchanged between cultures like the currency of political dominance—assumes his initial identity in an arena of contented commerce, “consort[ing] on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazar” (1).⁴ Interestingly, immediately after Kim's racial identification as “white,” Kipling communicates Kim's socioeconomic status to be “a poor white of the very poorest.” Here, Kipling predominantly highlights not Kim's racial superiority—the cannon he straddles was not originally a British cannon: it belonged to the eighteenth-century Mahratta confederacy—but rather his unique worth as a cultural commodity, distinct from any mere monetary value he might possess. In focusing so early on the relative poverty of his main character, Kipling insists Kim's real value lies in his rarity and potential usefulness as a streetwise ethnic ambiguity rather than in his material possessions. Kim is the quintessential “diamond in the rough,” a rare commodity that would naturally appeal to cultural connoisseurs like Colonel Creighton and Lurgan Sahib.⁵ Kim's potential thus remains both the source of his youthful happiness and the impetus for his sadly inevitable appropriation into the Great Game.

Like his early insistence on Kim's material worthlessness, Kipling assures his readers of Kim's utter lack of serious vocation in Lahore, but even the language used to

⁴ To substantiate my suggestion that the “Zam-Zammah” represents a form of political currency, it is perhaps important to note the monetary language used to describe the gun in Kipling's opening lines: “the great green-bronze piece is always first of the conqueror's loot” (1).

⁵ Kim's initial worth in the novel equates to what Marx terms “use-value,” the unrealized potential in raw materials deemed useful for some commercial purpose: “A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful.... Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth” (*Capital* 303). Additionally, Lurgan Sahib compares Kim to a “jewel” in Ch. IX, an overt reference to his status as a valuable commodity: “No, that was not magic. It was only to see if there was—a flaw in the jewel. Sometimes very fine jewels will fly all to pieces if a man holds them in his hand, and knows the proper way. That is why one must be careful before one sets them” (Kipling, *Kim* 154).

describe his days of doing nothing anticipates the skills and abilities that will make him so attractive to the white men later on. Kipling's description of the carefree boy's daily life reads almost like an indictment of those mostly white local officials overly concerned with "what [Kim] did": "For Kim did nothing with an immense success . . . he lived in a life wild as that of the Arabian Nights, but missionaries and secretaries of charitable societies could not see the beauty of it" (3). Arguably a lament for Kim's imminent loss of innocence, this passage notes the foreigners' inability to "see the beauty" of Kim's India, at least divorced from the restrictive paternalistic perspective of the ruling race. Kim does apparently "execut[e] commissions" for fashionable young men in Lahore, which phrase would imply a modest payment of some kind, but his interest in such employment is purely experiential: "but what he loved was the game for its own sake—the stealthy prow through the dark gullies and lanes, the crawl up the water-pipe, the sights and sounds of the women's world on the flat roofs, and the headlong flight from housetop to housetop under cover of the hot dark." Again, Kipling conveys Kim's potential utility, this time through qualities of physical prowess that would be particularly beneficial for anyone engaged in activities of espionage: stealth, observance, speed, and efficiency.⁶ Kim loves the lower-case 'g' "game" for the thrill it gives him in playing it, not for any higher purpose or in accordance with any political or racial bias—his nickname is, after all, "Little Friend of All the World." When the lower-case 'g' "game" gives way to the upper-case 'G' "Great Game," however, Kim's former indifference to "intrigue" and love of the game "for its own sake" cannot survive the hegemonic influence of his trainers in the community of spies.

As Kipling critic Joseph Bristow points out, Kim's skill-set becomes a perfect model for the ideals of the Boy Scout movement, spearheaded by Robert Baden-Powell in the early twentieth century. In its early years, this movement often capitalized on the familiar forms of play exercised by its intended audience, presenting elements of intrigue and adventure in the light of schoolyard antics and fictional romance. However, as Bristow

⁶ Suvir Kaul affirms Kim's early potential for masculine development in the novel, stating that "Kim's adventures are largely adult in their form and significance, and the roles he is called upon to play, and the competencies he must develop, are ordinarily those of men, particularly those intrepid sorts who would master the Great Game" (427). From the beginning, Kim's individuality matters less than his potentially useful skills, and any identity he may possess outside of his proclivity for the trafficking of information known as the "Great Game" becomes less important as he learns the "competencies" needed to play the game effectively.

also notes, Kim's engagement in the aptly designated Great Game has a darker side: it compromises his ability to retain his basic identity:

Baden-Powell's [summarization of] Kim, of course, is a strategic adaptation, a story foregrounding a multiplicity of features central to Scouting....But Baden-Powell's interpretation, making Kim a Scout before his time, shows how a particular image of boyhood could convert every disadvantage to a winning position....Yet this quality [Kim's acts of mimicry], so admired in *Scouting for Boys*, leads to a complication in Kipling's narrative. *Kim cannot be himself*.⁷ (205–06)

As Bristow implies, the ostensibly free play of "boyhood" can become another means of professional training and appropriation, just as Kim's valuable skills develop during his regular hijinks around Lahore. Arguably, the vocational teleology and arrogated experiences of such "play" can lead to the loss of individual agency or identity in its participants. Accordingly, throughout the novel, Kipling continues to stress Kim's aptitudes in observation, language, and creative adaptability; but when Kim is made to employ these skills in the service of the Great Game, they quickly become tedious and restrictive.⁸ Indeed, one of the primary reasons for Kim's initial interest in the lama involves the old wanderer's inviolate freedom and total lack of vocational association: the lama "was nearly six feet high, dressed in fold upon fold of dingy stuff like horse-blanketing, and not one fold of it could Kim refer to any known trade or profession" (4). However, as Kim's involvement in the spiritual quest of the lama wanes, he accumulates more use value by becoming involved in the affairs of the Great Game, and he begins to lose his aimless, almost vatic personality and disinterested love of India. In brief, Kim increasingly assumes the role of a self-denying, objectified commodity in Kipling's narrative.

⁷ Bristow continues his basic argument that Baden-Powell's Scouting organization contributed to the Edwardian conceptualization of masculinity and helped promote the importance of social and cultural hybridity.

⁸ See, for example, the account of one of Kim's first surveying missions in Chapter X, wherein the narrator explicitly notes Kim's displeasure at having to work and contrasts the harsh landscape of this assignment with the seductively beautiful environments of other parts of India described earlier in the book: "Next holidays he was out with Mahbub, and here, by the way, he nearly died of thirst, plodding through the sand on a camel to the mysterious city of Bikineer....It was not an amusing trip from Kim's point of view, because—in defiance of the contract—the Colonel ordered him to make a map of that wild, walled city" (169–70).

Kim's inherent marketability as a storehouse and covert carrier of cultural information pervades Mahbub Ali and Colonel Creighton's discussion in Chapter VI, and the language used to describe the boy both reduces his worth to a question of bare economics and dehumanizes him by associating him with a tradable beast. When Mahbub Ali prevents Kim's escape from the military encampment, he begins his introduction of the boy to Creighton like a man of his trade discussing livestock: "I have some young stuff coming on made by Heaven for the delicate and difficult polo-game. He has no equal" (108). Here, Kim assumes the raw materiality of "stuff," a rough and undeveloped mass that can be fashioned into something of particular value with time and effort, but only if he is salvaged from the military barracks before he loses his valuable knowledge and skills—before he "forget[s] all he knows" (109). His divinely appointed *raison d'être* is the performance of the Game since he was "made by Heaven" expressly for that purpose, an echo of Mahbub's earlier thought that "Kim had dropped on him, sent from heaven" for the purpose of delivering his secret message about the white stallion (23). Excepting the lama, Kim's relationships with older men posit him as nothing but an instrument of convenience—a handy and ready tool for use in the Game, like a reliable horse. Additionally, Mahbub masks the very real dangers of street-level espionage behind euphemistic references to a "polo-game," which further prevents Kim's full understanding of his future occupation. Any profession presented as a "delicate and difficult" game appeals far more to a young boy than the standard official positions within government service. Kipling highlights this distinction when Kim remains silent after Mahbub's deliberately insulting comments about his usefulness as a "soldier" or "an orderly at least." Again, the horse-trader refers to the boy under discussion as though he were a high-quality animal: "'My horse is well trained,' said the dealer, 'Others would have kicked, Sahib'" (109). As awkward and unsettling as this equation of Kim with an animal commodity may be for the reader, Kipling continues to reveal the disturbing aspects of Kim's appropriation in the conversations between the new-bought "colt" and Colonel Creighton.⁹

Creighton's interest in Kim never transcends the politically pragmatic. He feels no profound affection or pity for the boy, nor does he seem motivated to help Kim out of any

⁹ For other examples of the ubiquitous Kim / horse motif in the novel, see 127, 167, and 172.

moral obligation or sense of duty. Initially, Creighton ruminates on Kim's qualities like an avid art collector examining a rare painting, musing to himself about the necessity of making something profitable of the child: "That boy mustn't be wasted if he is as advertised" (110). Significantly, the Colonel does not secure an education for the boy out of any racial or fraternal solidarity with Kim's late father; indeed, the fact that he is a Mason and has a duty to protect the boy through that affiliation appears only as an afterthought, when Father Victor reminds him of the fact: "'That's an additional reason,' said the Colonel absently" (111). And Creighton outlines the process of transporting Kim to Lucknow in strictly economic terms, emphasizing how the boy can travel free of charge as a "soldier's orphan" and how the "Lodge will be saved the expense of his education" due to the lama's generosity (112).¹⁰ Creighton also ignores Kim's frequent protests and complaints, commanding his new acquisition to obey and threatening him with the power of his knowledge: "Remember—much has been told me which I do not forget" (114). Later in the novel, when Mahbub Ali reprimands Kim for running away from St. Xavier's for his "holiday," Kim admits to his awareness that the Colonel did not harbor any real affection for him. He knows that Creighton's investment in his welfare is one of political expediency—as Mahbub says, Creighton spends the rupees required for Kim's expenses "for a purpose, not in any way for love of thee," to which Kim poignantly replies, "That...I knew a very long time ago" (132). Along with his awareness of Creighton's personal indifference, Kim also becomes increasingly aware of his isolation from the carefree India he knew in Lahore; his knowledge of his native land ceases to be enjoyed for its own sake—or as a means to assist or protect the lama—and begins to be utilized for the political purposes of the Great Game.¹¹ However, I shall first demonstrate the similarities between Kim's compulsory appropriation into the world of

¹⁰ At this point in the text, Kipling appears to anticipate and check his readers' developing affection for Colonel Creighton. Father Victor asserts that Creighton is a "good man," to which Creighton replies, "Not in the least. Don't make that mistake" (112–13). Though his involvement in Kim's life seems harmless enough—even partially beneficent—I would argue that the exchange between Creighton and Father Victor in Chapter VI represents Kipling's critique of those ethnologists who capitalized on the consumption of Indian culture. See also the long passage on Creighton's professional ambitions in Chapter X (174–75).

¹¹ Sullivan notes Kim's increased sense of alienation and grief over his position as an exploiter of his cultural affiliations and specialized knowledge; but he dismisses these responses as a "grief and loss outside this plot, a grief without a specific object, one perhaps repressed and denied by the author that returns to haunt the narrative repeatedly with no change regardless of the situation or context" (174). My contention remains that Kipling uses these moments of doubt and lamentation to intentionally emphasize the painful displacement and self-loathing of the appropriated commodity.

government service and Harvey Cheyne's virtually instantaneous transformation from a privileged, aristocratic heir into a useful hand aboard an undermanned fishing schooner.

Whereas *Kim* begins with the description of a poor, racially ambiguous vagabond who must learn to use his knowledge and cultural malleability for the benefit of the Survey of India and its ulterior functions, *Captains Courageous* opens with an accident at sea—one that strips its victim of all social affiliations and identities in order to cultivate his usefulness as a man of industry. Just as Kim must leave the carefree world of Lahore to pursue his trade and become a man, so Harvey must abandon his social position and family to receive the proper training required to make him useful and productive. From the outset, Harvey's character contains some inherent value; one of the passengers on board the ocean liner announces that "there's a heap of good in the boy if you could get at it" (4). But in order to "get at" that essential goodness and turn it to some profitable enterprise, Harvey must undergo a series of self-effacing erasures, beginning with his wealth, clothes, and pride and culminating in the total obliteration of his initial character from the narrative. The obnoxious Harvey Cheyne—who ambles into the smoking-room in the first chapter of the novel, falls overboard, and receives a jarring punch in the face from Captain Disko Troop of the *We're Here*—disappears from the narrative. As Harvey's mother will later lament, it seems the original Harvey died at sea and was replaced by someone entirely different—"a keen-faced youth, abnormally silent, who addressed most of his conversation to his father" (144).¹² The men on the schooner christen Harvey their "supercargo," and young Dan Troop, the captain's son, predicts his appreciation in exchange-value, complete with an approximation of how many lesser men Harvey will soon be worth: "'His name's Harvey,' said Dan... 'an' he'll be worth five of any Sou' Boston clam-digger fore long'" (24).¹³ And as Harvey Cheyne, Sr. posits near the novel's conclusion, his son's transformation can only be seen as an economic turn for the better. During one of their walks around Gloucester in the days following Harvey's

¹² "[Harvey] has shed his old identity as he has his wad of money, and must take on new habits, new behavior, and a new perspective on his place in society, playing the part of a man in a man's world, subject to the common code that ensures the survival of the floating community" (Scott 56).

¹³ According to Marx, "the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange-value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value. The progress of our investigation will show that exchange-value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed" (*Capital* 304–05). Thus, Harvey's only value lies in his acquired skills aboard the *We're Here*; outside of that, he "[isn't] much of anything," as his father says.

return, Mr. Cheyne informs his rescued son of his virtual worthlessness prior to the accident on the ocean liner: "but if you want the truth, you haven't been much of anything up to date, have you?" (139). On the other hand, the newly forged Harvey appears to be a smart investment for his entrepreneurial father, a promising young commodity who rejects his offer of an indolent life of leisure and expresses his interest in the "control of his father's newly-purchased sailing-ships" (144). Like Kim, Harvey begins to take his identity solely from his economic, or professional, usefulness, which eradicates his personality and makes him a human commodity to be employed in his father's business.

Selling Oneself: Exchanging the Capital of Experiences and Relationships for Profit

Once the potentially useful boy has been spotted and marked for production, the qualities that made him stand out must be redirected toward practical ends, inevitably resulting in some guilt and confusion on the part of the appropriated boy. Thus, Kim's original ability to blend in effortlessly with his surroundings becomes codified during the ritual of the charm in Chapter X, when his skin color is semi-permanently altered with "a colour that catches" to obscure his whiteness (178). Similarly, his vast knowledge of dialects and disguises serves as the means for rescuing agent E. 23, wounded and pursued by the authorities; subsequently, Kim's tremendous observational skills turn to the careful memorization of landscapes for the use of making maps and charts.¹⁴ Even his most sacred bond with the lama assumes a covert, professional purpose when Hurree Babu encourages Kim to use his influence to convince the lama to travel north so they can investigate the two foreign agents: "If you have no pressing engagement with your old man—perhaps you might divert him; perhaps I can seduce his fancies—I should like you to keep in Departmental touch with me till I find those sporting coves" (223). Thereafter, Kim's quest for the River of Healing as the lama's faithful *chela* (disciple) becomes a front for a reconnaissance mission into the Himalayas. Appropriately, the lama christens them both "instruments" when he decides to follow Kim's advice and head north,

¹⁴ It is perhaps worthwhile to note that Kim's salary as an agent in the Great Game most likely depends upon the meticulous detail of these maps and the other sundry survey information he gathers, which means that his observational skills now have a definite exchange-value. Creighton seems to hint at this when he tells the young Kim that those "boys newly entered into the service of the Government who feigned not to understand the talk or the customs of black men" had their "pay...cut for ignorance" (119).

inadvertently revealing their status as tools in the Great Game (229). Scattered throughout the novel are such instances where Kim's intimate knowledge of the land and his love of its beautiful variety serve as the vehicle for accomplishing the work of the Great Game. In these instances, Kim's initial reaction to his role in the Game is not an unmitigated joy over his good fortune but more often a resistance or a complex expression of fear and confusion.

Kim repeatedly tests his boundaries within the confines of his induction into the Great Game and even reveals an admirable understanding of the stifling effects of resigning oneself wholly to the economy of the Game. He runs away from the British *madrissah* (school) of St. Xavier's chiefly to delve back into the carefree India of his youth, and when Mahbub Ali admonishes him to return to the school to complete his education, he replies with a *quid pro quo* involving his freedom to go where he pleases while the school is not in session:

The Colonel is a servant of the Government. He is sent hither and yon at a word, and must consider his own advancement. (See how much I have already learned at Nucklao! [Lucknow]).... So! To the *madrissah* I will go. At the *madrissah* I will learn. In the *madrissah* I will be a Sahib. But when the *madrissah* is shut, then must I be free and go among my people. Otherwise I die! (135)

At this relatively early stage in his development, Kim does not see his position in the Great Game as being analogous with Colonel Creighton's—that is, one of blind servitude and competitive ambition—and his instinct tells him to avoid total acquiescence to the demands of the Game. He limits his educational and racial compliance to the arena of the school, but he insists on an occasional hiatus, free from the constrictive obligations of his training, as an essential component of his survival. Such a declaration as “Otherwise I die!” hardly indicates Kim's playful willingness to engage in any and all aspects of the exciting life of the Great Game at the expense of his emotional connections to the India he identifies as “my people.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Some critics suggest that Kim's only reaction to the Great Game is one of supreme excitement and alacrity, but Kim's own comments contradict such a reductive reading. According to Said, “the exigencies of the Secret Service demand from Kim an exciting and precise discipline, which he willingly accepts....But for Kim the Great Game cannot be perceived in all its complex patterns, although it can be fully enjoyed as a sort of extended prank” (137). See also Kim's response to Mahbub Ali's equivocal question, “And who are thy people, Friend of

Kim's reverential observations of and adventures within the Indian cultural kaleidoscope—through which he feels his strongest sense of connection and belonging—finally dissipate when confronted with the practical demands of his trade in the intelligence industry. Kim, as equal member of the Indian multitude, cannot coexist with Kim as professional spy for the British Raj, and this disconnect between the appropriated boy-as-commodity and his natural state inevitably leads to a sense of alienation and ambiguous identity. Once Kim dons the various accoutrements of an agent in the Great Game, which includes a “nickel-plated revolver” along with the tools of his “survey” work, he is no longer the little native-boy from Lahore (184). His easy associations with the myriad people of the *bazar*, the *te-rain*, and the Great Trunk Road are gone, and in their place is Hurree Babu's coded language and “test-sentence[s]” about *tarkeean* (vegetable curry), the means to turn the beautiful North Indian landscape into a drawing on paper for use in his reports, and a nickel-plated symbol of violence and brute force. Thus Kipling's account of Kim's “natural reaction” after his transformation into the “Son of the Charm”—the mental breakdown at the outset of Chapter XI—hardly seems surprising or insignificant. This anxious monologue denotes Kim's awareness of what Joseph Bristow calls his “dislocated sense of self” (208)¹⁶—not an awareness of his inescapable whiteness in a land of non-whites, and not an awareness of his inability to reconcile his spiritual love of the lama with his need for immersion in the material, but an awareness of his irrevocable status as a human commodity: “‘Now I am alone—all alone,’ he thought. ‘In all India is no one so alone as I! If I die to-day, who shall bring the news—and to whom? If I live and God is good, there will be a price upon my head, for I am a Son of the Charm—I, Kim....Who is Kim—Kim—Kim?’” (185). Kim's place in human society seems dubious; he has been singled out of “all India” for appropriation into the Great Game and has had his knowledge and skills put to productive use. Again, Kipling uses economic language to emphasize the objectifying monetary valuation in Kim's new profession, indicating that Kim's life has been reduced to a simple matter of exchange-value, of “a price upon [his] head.”

all the World?": “‘This great and beautiful land,’ said Kim, waving his paw round the little clay-walled room where the oil lamp in its niche burned heavily through the tobacco smoke” (Kipling, *Kim* 136).

¹⁶ See Bristow: “Yet it proves impossible to find a place for Kim. Time and again, Kim is discovered alone trying to comprehend his dislocated sense of self....There is no definitive answer to Kim's repeated inquiries into what or who he really is” (208).

On the other side of the globe, Harvey Cheyne succumbs to the same sense of alienation and dislocated identity after returning to Gloucester and awaiting his father's imminent arrival, and some of his fellow fishermen fall under Harvey Cheyne, Sr.'s calculating eye. During his time aboard the *We're Here*, Harvey operates as an equal amongst the men of the fishing community, and he knows his return to land will signal an extrication from the community—a removal from the forum where his skills as a fisherman were appreciated for their own sake, into one where Harvey's father will utilize those same skills for financial gain.¹⁷ On the homeward voyage, Harvey becomes aware of the oppressive feeling of the land with its promise of personal alienation and appropriation: "Over and above the darkness and the mystery of the procession, Harvey could feel the land close round him once more, with all its thousands of people asleep . . . and all those things made his heart beat and his throat dry up as he stood by the foresheet" (113). Significantly, Harvey never cries or laments his accidental fall from the ocean liner until he returns to port, whereupon he "sat down by the wheel, and sobbed and sobbed as though his heart would break." For Harvey, returning to port means the inescapable necessity of putting his acquired skills into lucrative practice in a sphere far removed from those fishermen he's come to love as individuals. Thereafter, Kipling highlights Harvey's impending sense of alienation: "Harvey Cheyne was perhaps the loneliest boy in America" (114). And indeed, Harvey's implicit anxieties are not unreasonable, for upon arriving in Massachusetts after his mad, headlong dash across the country by train, his father immediately acquires Dan Troop for work on one of his tea-clippers. But the appropriation does not stop there: the ship's black cook leaves his employ under Captain Troop to work as Harvey's "body-servant" (137), and Mrs. Cheyne appears anxious to purchase the Portuguese fisherman Manuel to "have for a butler" (133).

As Harvey's appreciation and potential become evident, his father formulates a plan to secure Harvey's position in his capitalist empire—a position that will utilize his son's unique skills as a seaman to maximum profit. Harvey's father then begins appraising the

¹⁷ Kipling describes Harvey Cheyne, Sr.'s plans for his son: "There had always lain a pleasant notion at the back of his head that, some day, when he had rounded off everything and the boy had left college, he would take his son to his heart and lead him into his possessions. Then that boy, he argued, as busy fathers do, would instantly become his companion, partner, and ally, and there would follow splendid years of great works carried out together—the old head backing the young fire" (*Captains Courageous* 116).

Gloucester fishing industry by inquiring into its affairs and operations, and his discussion with Harvey about the boy's future prospects reveals that Harvey has even come to think of himself in terms of economic value, asking his father how much his upbringing had cost and comparing it to his use-value in explicitly financial language: "Harvey whistled, but at heart he was rather pleased to think that his upbringing had cost so much. 'And all that's sunk capital, isn't it?'" (140). Mr. Cheyne's response reflects his economic machinations for Harvey's future as a productive employee in his empire: "Invested, Harve. Invested, I hope." And Harvey's further remark indicates his inability to think of himself in any way but as a commodity, a "catch," that represents a relatively poor return on investment: "Making it only thirty thousand, the thirty I've earned is about ten cents on the hundred. That's a mighty poor catch." Undoubtedly, Harvey's subsequent appropriation into his father's business seems less forced than Kim's entry into the convolutions of the Great Game, but both boys experience a sense of loss and objectification, and as the next section demonstrates, both also undergo what Karl Marx termed "the depreciation of capital [and] degradation of the labourer, and a most strained exhaustion of his vital powers" (*Grundrisse* 291) in their literal collapses near the ends of their respective narratives.

Exhausting the Human Commodity: Understanding Kim's and Harvey's Collapse

As Kim accumulates more knowledge in his narrative, he begins to lose the boundless energy and self-confidence that characterized his youthful days in the street-markets of Lahore. To signify these moments of deterioration—or depreciation—in the novel, Kipling employs moments of sharp contrast between the dreamy, aesthetically charged descriptions of landscape and the curt orders of Kim's mentors in the Great Game. For example, once Kim leaves the restrictive environment of the English *madrissah* and journeys to Simla for his training under Lurgan Sahib, Kipling offers another of his sweeping views of Indian culture and natural beauty that appear sporadically throughout the book.¹⁸ Such lucid descriptions indulge the reader's

¹⁸ Kipling attributed much of *Kim's* staying power to its "good deal of beauty"—a sentiment his father echoed in praise of the novel by quoting from Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi": "If you get simple beauty and naught else, You get about the best thing God invents" (Kipling, *Something of Myself* 83–84).

imagination and emphasize Kim's sincere appreciation for new sensual experiences of India:

But it was all pure delight—the wandering road, climbing, dipping, and sweeping about the growing spurs; the flush of the morning laid along the distant snows...the evening conferences by the halting-places, when camels and bullocks chewed solemnly together and the stolid drivers told the news of the Road—all these things lifted Kim's heart to song within him. (145–46)

But Kim's heartsong is to be rather short-lived, as it turns out. Mahbub, guiding the propitious future spy to his next round of training, cuts off the reverie abruptly with a prosaic reminder of what happens when the men of "business" intrude on such an idyllic scene: "But, when the singing and dancing is done," said Mahbub Ali, "comes the Colonel Sahibs, and that is not so sweet" (146). Kim's days of "pure delight" and "wandering" have come to an emphatic end on the road to Simla, where the easygoing if self-interested Mahbub transfers his young commodity over to one who is "to be obeyed to the last wink of his eyelashes"—a grave Sahib who will transform Kim's beautiful India into a systematic taxonomy of its dialects, customs, modes of dress, and most importantly, its relative values.¹⁹ Thus Kim's professional knowledge expands at the expense of his genuine love for his native country, and the stage is set for his physical and psychological collapse.

In Marxist terminology, if Kim represents a commodity high in use-value with an increasing amount of invested capital—as opposed to the intrinsic capital of his natural skills and abilities—in the form of the practical knowledge gained from his extensive training, then a collapse will likely ensue upon a sudden increase in wealth. In this economic analogy, the foreign surveyors' letters and other documents that Kim obtains in Chapter XIII represent such an increase in wealth. According to Marx, any member of the proletariat classified as "organic labor" experiences a "strained exhaustion of his vital powers" when the "highest development of productive power together with the greatest expansion of existing wealth" combine to cause a "depreciation of capital" (*Grundrisse*

¹⁹ For the full account of Kim's education with Lurgan Sahib, see *Kim* (158–61). Of particular interest is the exchange between master and student on the relative value of Hurree Babu's "head."

291). To paraphrase in terms of the novel, Kim's acquisition of the bounteous intelligence inside the foreigners' *kilta* (basket) increases his portion of the Great Game's wealth of information exponentially—Kim himself calls it "a fine haul"—but at the expense of his strength and liberty to follow the lama without design, which results in what Marx calls a "momentaneous [sic] suspension of labour." In short, the harder Kim works to acquire information, the less strength and freedom he has and the less he wants to continue working. Immediately after appraising the value of his acquired intelligence, Kim again utters his familiar phrase, "And I am all alone!"—which reiterates his fragile mental state and limited physical endurance (254). Indeed, as Kim descends from the Himalayan foothills, carrying the wounded lama on his *dooli* (litter), his condition progressively worsens; Kipling indicates that at least part of that deterioration is due to the millstone of intelligence that "weighs heavy" in his pack: "Kim thought of the oilskin packet and the books in the food-bag. If some one duly authorized would only take delivery of them the Great Game might play itself for aught he then cared. He was tired and hot in his head, and a cough that came from his stomach worried him" (271). Kim's increased productivity in procuring the information requires an immense amount of energy, leaving him exhausted and leading to the depreciation of both his intrinsic value and the invested capital of his training. Tired and oppressed with "the weight beyond his years," Kim no longer cares about the affairs of the Game, and he even begins to long for liberation from the trade altogether.

Ultimately, the *kilta's* contents and the trappings of Kim's profession become too heavy for him to recover his health, and he must lock them away in a trunk during his convalescence in the Kulu woman's house—a representation of what Marx calls the "annihilation of a great portion of capital . . . to the point where [wage labour] can go on" (*Grundrisse* 291). Repeatedly, Kipling connects the tangible profits of Kim's venture in the Hills as "a burden incommunicable" for the young man, an irritating reminder of his capitalistic enterprise expressed again in explicitly economic terms: "[Kim] held out the key impatiently; for the present need on his soul was to get rid of the loot" (278). Subsequently, the novel's last moment of identity crisis for its protagonist occurs because, temporarily, Kim can no longer see the landscape economically, as he has so carefully been taught to do in preparation for the Great Game: "[he] looked with strange

eyes unable to take up the size and proportion and use of things" (282). For a moment during this crucial transition, the sights and sounds of India have no affect on Kim—they "hit on dead ears"—but soon Kim reevaluates the scene before him in simple terms of use-value, and the economic cycle begins again at appropriation: "roads were meant to be walked on, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to." The purely aesthetic enjoyment of India has passed away for Kim; he will now continue the economic process of appropriation and production utilized in his own recruitment into the serious business of the Great Game.²⁰

Whereas Kim's collapse comes about from overwork and an excess of valuable information, Harvey's fainting spell occurs due to his removal from the "organic social body" of fishermen who embody the economic "property" of the fishing industry (Marx, *Grundrisse* 293). Once Harvey reunites with his father and assumes his former place outside of the labor community from whom he acquired his potential value as a man of industry, he can no longer view that community *en masse* as an objectified source of social labor, although his derisive description of Gloucester Memorial Day smacks of his father's dismissive superiority: "*this* business is a sort of song-and-dance act, whacked up for the summer boarders" (*Captains Courageous* 145). Nevertheless, Kipling's account of the Memorial Day ceremony indicates a potential ambivalence about Harvey Cheyne, Sr.'s perspective. In the first chapter of *Captains Courageous*, the young Harvey quips that the ocean liner's running down a lowly fishing boat might be "great," but the more mature Harvey has experienced such a traumatic event firsthand aboard the *We're Here*. He cannot dissociate the "fishing industry" from the individual men who make up that body of labor. Thus, when the official at the ceremony reads aloud the name of Otto—the boy who was washed overboard before Harvey joined the *We're Here's* crew—Harvey faints in a "darkness spotted with fiery wheels" (154). Harvey's individual knowledge of the sea as a member of that commodified community of workers prevents him from maintaining the bourgeois perspective of his father, who looks on these people more as the means of production than as individual human beings. Nevertheless, Kipling follows

²⁰ According to Marx, this cycle of production, collapse, and recuperation will continue on a "higher scale" until the entire capitalistic system experiences "its violent overthrow" (*Grundrisse* 291–92). Coinciding with my own assertions, John McBratney argues that Kim's adjusted vision of the landscape does indeed represent his decision to re-engage in the activities of the Great Game: "The 'roads' Kim will walk on will be the paths of the Game. The 'men and women to be talked to' will be his informants" (123–24).

up his account of Harvey's collapse with a flash-forward depicting the young tycoon's alacritous desire to join "the business for keeps next fall," suggesting that the economic process has cycled back to appropriation on a higher level for Harvey Cheyne. Indeed, Harvey's promise to his erstwhile companion Dan Troop indicates his intention to utilize his old friend for economic purposes: "You just wait till I get my knife into you, Dan. I'm going to make the old line lie down and cry when I take hold" (156). Although they are delivered in the context of jocular camaraderie, such comments call to mind the similar expressions of Cheyne, Sr., during his panegyric to Machiavellian pragmatism in Chapter X: "I can break them to little pieces—yes—but I can't get back at 'em to hurt 'em where they live . . . I guess you won't find our property shrunk any when you're ready to take hold" (143–44). When combined with Dan's use of the heretofore pecuniary word "heap" to describe his personal obligation to the *We're Here*—a sentiment that Harvey echoes with ironic understatement—Harvey's final comments on "tak[ing] hold" resonate with financial concerns that undermine his personal connections to the fishing industry at the novel's end, leaving the future magnate's attitude toward his now copious workforce ambiguous.²¹

Thus, both of these novels end with their male protagonists' ostensible acquiescence to the economic system that turned them into commodities in the first place. Kim never explicitly declares his intention to keep playing the Great Game, but the implications of the novel's conclusion seem to support the widely held critical opinion that he will indeed continue spying for the Government.²² And Harvey will unequivocally enter into his father's capitalist empire as departmental manager of his shipping interests, where he will fulfill the *We're Here's* cook's adamant prophecy and become Dan's master.

Undoubtedly, these two novels do not subvert the economic systems in which their main characters move in any overt, confrontational way, but I hope to have uncovered Kipling's subtle critique of human commodification as it is expressed in the books'

²¹ See, for example, Dan's appraisal of Harvey's father's sailing vessels in Chapter III: "'I forgot your dad's a millionaire. You don't act millionaire any, naow. But a dory an' craft an' gear'—Dan spoke as though she were a whaleboat—costs a heap. Think your dad 'ud give you one fer—fer a pet like?'" (*Captains Courageous* 34).

²² For an example of this typical reading, see Said: "But no, Kipling never forgets that Kim is an irrefragable part of British India: the Great Game does go on, with Kim a part of it, no matter how many parables the lama fashions" (144–45). See also Sullivan: "Although Kim has been transformed from a youthful, reckless, happy adventurer into a cog in the imperialist wheel, the ending blesses and sacramentalizes this change by investing it with the displaced glow of the lama's transformation" (176).

pervasively dehumanizing economic terminology, the frequent instances of alienation and confusion over identity, and the ultimate collapse of both young protagonists as the final climactic narrative event. Arguably, Kipling actively chose to end these two novels with an ambivalence toward the systems that transformed Kim and Harvey into productive components of their respective economies—the Great Game’s “political economy of control” that benefits from Kim’s abilities to amass information, and Harvey Cheyne, Sr.’s capitalist corporation that profits from Harvey, Jr.’s accidental education at sea (Said 137). That is, Kim’s physical collapse, his hurried surrender of the *kilta* and the dreaded business it represents, and his subsequent absence during the lama’s spiritual awakening and near-death experience casts the boy’s inevitable future involvement in the Great Game in an ambiguous light at best. Similarly, Harvey’s blackout during the Memorial Day ceremony jars against the ostensibly sanguine pragmatism of his final conversation with Dan, leaving the reader to wonder at the precise nature of the knowledge he acquired aboard the *We’re Here*, as well as how he will put such knowledge to use as head of his father’s company. Perhaps this ambivalence on Kipling’s part, at the very least, indicates some latent reservations about the rough, often traumatizing maturation process for boys of the late nineteenth century that he depicted so often in his fiction. Such a supposition adds a touch of much-needed complexity to the critical conversation on Kipling, an author who has much more to offer than a monotonous advocacy of the British imperial project and simple jingoism.

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The New Man
in the Age of the New Woman:
May 1894—February 1895

by Doug Kirshen
Brandeis University

Discussions of the New Woman in literary criticism have been concerned mainly with novels and novelists of the late nineteenth century, but the operation of the term is no less significant in the theatre. New research on *fin-de-siècle* drama demonstrates that the term was in circulation at least five years earlier than previously thought, at the time of the first London production of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in 1889. The phrase "New Woman" originates in print no later than the 1 July 1889 issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette*—not at the later date proposed by Ellen Jordan in her 1983 article, "The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894." Jordan misassigns the origin of the term to articles by novelists Sarah Grand and Ouida in the March and May 1894 issues of the *North American Review*, an attribution that supports the critical focus on the novel as a locus of gender negotiation in the 1890s.¹ But she nonetheless identifies a crucial point in the evolution of "New Woman" as a term in antifeminist rhetoric—the moment when it first appears in *Punch* (Jordan 20–21). The item she cites in the 26 May 1894 issue is the first of a flood of parodies published through the end of that year and in the first quarter of the next in *Punch* and other newspapers that target the "New Woman" as a scapegoat for a range of social anxieties. During this sustained campaign of satirical repudiation, the

¹ Leading scholars of New Woman fiction including Ann L. Ardis and Sally Ledger have relied on Jordan's analysis as a starting point for their studies of feminist novels as literature and as manifestations of a social movement (Ardis 11; Ledger 9). While I do not dispute David Rubinstein's claim that "never before had literature and fiction contributed so much to the feminist movement as it did at the *fin de siècle*" (qtd. Ledger 9), I maintain that the retrospective use of "New Woman" to define a genre of feminist novels has overshadowed the historical function of the phrase as a derisive epithet deployed mainly in the press and on stage in 1894–95.

New Woman is caricatured along with male signifiers of gender instability in the press as well as in two major comedies in the West End, where the preeminent treatment of female emancipation had been in a serious-minded drama, Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, which had debuted a year earlier.

Although May 1894 is not the origin of the "New Woman," it is the starting point of an important but much less studied corollary, the "New Man." This term first appears in a literary column by H. D. Traill in the 19 May 1894 issue of the *Graphic*, a week before "New Woman" and "New Man" first appear in *Punch*. As a satirically posited figure, the New Man takes shape in the reactionary press as the inevitably feminized counterpart of the allegedly masculine New Woman. This description sticks until February 1895, when the New Man is identified with both *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism and male homosexuality. As reported in the 20 February issue of *Judy* (a self-styled counterpart of *Punch*), the first public sighting of the hitherto theoretical New Man occurs on 14 February 1895 at the St. James's Theatre, where a "litter" of men attending the début of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* are perceived as both effeminate and homosexual.²

Jordan cites an article by Ouida entitled "The New Woman" in the May 1894 issue of the *North American Review* as the first to use "New Woman" to name a feminist "ideal of womanhood" (19). The anti-feminist Ouida "selected out" the phrase from "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," a feminist essay by Grand published two months earlier in the same journal, and "supplied the all-important capital letters" (20). As Ann L. Ardis explains, "Naming the New Woman in this manner . . . furnished *Punch* and the *Pall*

² Although "effeminacy" was well established as a "slur . . . invariably raised in England and America against men who loved men" (Dowling, *Hellenism* 130), a description of a man as effeminate did not *per se* allege homosexuality at this time. Effeminacy had been attacked as a social ill long before "homosexual" was first defined as a category of persons in 1870 (Foucault 1:43). As Linda Dowling has shown, eighteenth century "classical republican discourse" defines the "*effeminatus*" not sexually but politically, deeming effeminacy a "corruption" from excessive "luxury" that renders men "unsuitable to or incapable of discharging the martial obligation to the polis" (5, 8). When the New Man was invented in 1894, vestiges of this older critique of effeminacy as a "civic incapacity" were "being discursively reconfigured as 'homosexuality.'" Dowling argues that the convergence of these discourses of the "*effeminatus*" and the "homosexual" is evident in the prosecution of Oscar Wilde in April–May 1895, not only for private sexual practices that were deemed immoral but also as a perceived threat to public order. Wilde was characterized by prosecutors as a leading proponent of a *fin-de-siècle* "corruption" that was perceived as threatening the late-Victorian "polity . . . with utter ruin" (152).

Mall Gazette with both a target for attack and a way to release anxiety about changes in the Victorian social order" (11). *Punch*'s first mention of the "New Woman" on 26 May 1894 cites Ouida and Grand, and it was from this point that the term accelerated to high prominence in the London press, intensifying the ridicule of the feminist movement already underway with a new round of satires and caricatures.

But "New Woman" (with capitals) had previously appeared in print in a theatrical context: the London première of *A Doll's House* in 1889 marking the beginning of the Ibsen controversy of the 1890s. The 1 July 1889 issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* records "snatches" of post-performance discussion concerning the heroine's shocking final decision to leave her husband and their children:

"Ought she to have gone?" "You don't really sympathise with her, do you?" "Why, what harm had the poor man done to her?" "He was a great deal too good to her, that's what I say." "She is the New Woman, don't you see?" "She wanted a good shaking, she did." ("To-day's Tittle Tattle" 6)

Although this transcription cannot represent the *invention* of the term ("She is the New Woman, don't you see?" implies a preexisting movement and nomenclature), it is the earliest known occurrence of "New Woman" in the London press. As such, it correlates with Max Beerbohm's oft-quoted quip that "the New Woman sprang 'full-armed from the brain of Ibsen'" (Ardis 30).

The ridicule of Ibsen and of the women's movement went hand in hand in the 1890s, perhaps because the assertive female seemed less threatening when confined to the definable space of the theatre and a foreign playwright's imagination. A derisive poem titled "A 'New' Woman" published in *Funny Folks* on 20 May 1893—still a year before the phrase first appears in *Punch*—is doing this work of containment, dismissing the progressive gender values of a young Englishwoman as a naïve susceptibility to alien theatrical models:

A "NEW" WOMAN.

I know a pretty girl who's read
Her Ibsen through and through,
Which possibly has turned her head,
And made her "new."

In ancient paths she scorns to jog,
As other damsels do:
She's Hilda Wangel in a fog,
But oh, she's "new."

She's Nora Helmer slightly mixed,
But "viewiness" of view
Has left her on resolve that's fixed—
To still be "new."

To "realize herself" she strives,
And 'tis her constant cue
To sneer at maidens and at wives
Who are not "new."

Men listen to her in amaze,
But don't attempt to woo:
They fear to spend their wedded days
With one so "new."

I rather fancy—do not *you*
The same opinion hold?—
That she'll regret that she was "new"
When she is *old!* (356)

The satirist names the heroines of *The Master Builder* and *A Doll's House*, both of which had played in London that season, and he might have added the title character of a third play by Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*, that was performed two years earlier and was about to be revived on 29 May 1893 (Wearing 1:113, 289, 292, 313).

These early printed references to the New Woman connected to Ibsen indicate that the term was in circulation well before May 1894¹ and likely established in conversation before it became commonplace in the press. Since the epithet is applicable to Hilda Wangel, Nora Helmer, and presumably Hedda Gabler, it was likely applied also to the title character of Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, which premièred on 27 May 1893 (Wearing 1:312). In this play, a British answer to Ibsen, punishment inexorably ensues from the unconventional marriage of a gentleman and a "fallen woman." But even as the *Funny Folks* poem attempts to confine the New Woman within a proscenium frame, the interruption of the young suitors' attraction to female beauty—they "fear" and "don't attempt to woo" a "pretty girl who's read / Her Ibsen through and through"—hints at a less containable fear: the homophobia that would be latent in definitions and portrayals of the New Man. While the nomenclature of the "New Woman" rendered assertive females, on stage and off, convenient objects of ideological abuse, the "New Man" initially names an as-yet-unseen phenomenon: the projected effect of feminism on normative masculinity. When it is first coined by antifeminists in May 1894, the term refers to the

¹ Michelle Elizabeth Tusan notes that the term "New Woman" also appears prior to May 1894 in a feminist newspaper, the *Woman's Herald*, on 17 August 1893 (169–70, 181n5–6).

presumed male counterpart of the New Woman in a future feminist utopia, supposedly as Sarah Grand would envision it. By mid-July, the satirical image sharpens: the New Man becomes the inevitably feminized consort of the supposedly masculine New Woman, an extension of the canard that the ambition of feminists was to confer male attributes upon females. This remains the core definition of the New Man throughout 1894, but it is neither static nor uncontested. As he evolves in theatrical and newspaper satires, the New Man increasingly resembles a contemporary figure, the *fin-de-siècle* aesthete often identified with Oscar Wilde. Ultimately, in February 1895, the New Man and Wilde converge: the effeminate, nominally heterosexual New Man of the future is outed as the homosexual man of the present, just at the time when Wilde, at the height of his popularity, nears the precipice of the scandal that would destroy him. The interlaced development of the “New Woman” and “New Man,” codependent targets of ridicule up to this point, indicates the challenge the New Woman was perceived as posing not only to normative femininity but to masculinity as well, and thereby to the patriarchal infrastructure of Victorian society. The separation of the New Man from his role as consort to the New Woman and his increasingly obvious convergence with Wildean aesthetics imply a deeper level of anxiety: the homosexual panic that would trigger a far more brutally repressive regime than ridicule alone could accomplish.

The New Man as the feminized, subordinated “helpmeet of the New Woman” (Traill, “New” 14 July: 5), as he is defined in antifeminist rhetoric during the spring and summer of 1894, is a gross distortion of Sarah Grand’s precepts and a perverse application of her rhetoric. Grand no more advocates effeminacy in men than she does masculinity in women; on the contrary, she argues in “The Man of the Moment” that “men [who] are manly and chivalrous enough” to respect women would begrudge them neither equal education nor the opportunity to earn their own living (620-21). Grand attempts to stigmatize as weak, infantile, and unmanly not the man of the future but the contemporary “man of the moment” who refuses to countenance female emancipation. Her example is a “threatening old gentleman...who turns purple at his club, shakes his stick at the whole sex through the window, and bawls that ‘Women had better let men alone!’” This is typical, according to Grand, of the “dear-old-lady-men of all ages” who are “full of fears” at the prospect of “altering the position of women, or educating them better.” She promises in “A New Aspect of the Woman Question” that “[the men] of the

future will be better”—not querulous and defensive like the “old-lady-men” but stronger and more nobly masculine—as a result of women becoming “stronger and wiser,” an ambition that entails neither the appropriation of male attributes nor the shedding of all female domestic functions:

It is the woman’s place and pride and pleasure to teach the child, and man morally is in his infancy. There have been times when there was a doubt as to whether he was to be raised or woman was to be lowered, but we have turned that corner at last; and now woman holds out a strong hand to the child-man, and insists, but with infinite tenderness and pity, upon helping him up. (“New Aspect” 272-73)

In the peroration of “The Man of the Moment,” Grand combines her ridicule of “child-man” and “dear-old-lady-men of all ages,” concluding that “if there is no hope for the present generation, [women] can spank proper principles into the next in the nursery” (627).

The New Man was invented in response to this rhetoric by antifeminists who transfer the effeminacy Grand ascribes to the Man of the Moment onto a theoretical man of the future. Two articles published in the *Graphic* on 19 May 1894 begin this process. After reporting that “Ouida . . . regards the New Woman as an unmitigated bore,” the paper’s “Topics of the Week” column invokes the spurious charge that Grand advocates a masculinized version of womanhood (“Topics” 578). Declaring, “It is a nice question whether a womanish man is worse than a mannish woman, or *vice versa*,” this columnist (presumably the editor of the paper) denounces the latter as “a hybrid,” “a mongrel,” and therefore “somewhat in the nature of a monstrosity.” He says nothing more about “womanish man,” but his summary of Grand is vague enough to suggest that she advocates this “hybrid” also, although in fact she invokes the “dear-old-lady” type to stigmatize her male opponents. In the “World of Letters” column in the same issue, H. D. Traill—a satirist and leading political writer of the *Daily Telegraph* (Low)—reinforces the false impression of Grand as he turns to her after critiquing a novel by another feminist author:

But now who will give us the New Man? One of the patentees of that other novelty [the New Woman] has already given us a sketch .

. . . of the wretched makeshift and apology for male humanity whom the N. M., when he comes, will supersede. The “Man of the Moment”—so called because “he cannot continue unchanged on into the brighter and the better day which we are approaching”—has been pourtrayed [sic] in all his imbecile deformity by the relentless brush of Sarah Grand. Let us, then, assume that he has “gone under,” like an evil genius of pantomime amid the red fire of Madame Sarah’s eloquence. Will she not now wave her wand—in a three-volume novel—and let the New Man—that fairy prince of our social future—appear? He will not have to . . . kiss the once Sleeping Beauty in this improved version of the legend. She is wide awake. (“World of Letters” 587)

This taunting rejoinder, containing the earliest-known imprint of the “New Man,” belittles Grand as a lady-novelist who presumes to intervene in civic discourse—represented here by the theatre, a public space still dominated in 1894 by paternalistic actor-managers. It is in this masculine medium, in which Victorian femininity was contained and displayed, that Traill invites Grand to “wave” a “three-volume novel”—her stereotypically feminine, domestic literary form—as a magical “wand” in a traditional Christmas “pantomime.” She is to conjure the New Man as a replacement for the “Man of the Moment” whom Traill facetiously likens to a fairy-tale villain. Although he could hardly have expected Grand to accept his sarcastic invitation, Traill’s call to the theatre would nonetheless prove prescient, for in the fall of 1894 the ridicule of the New Woman and New Man would become popular sport on the West End stage. Taken together, the two articles in the 19 May *Graphic* point toward the definition of the New Man that would soon take hold. The “womanish man” of the first article is conflated with the “New Man” of the second, the “fairy prince” who is *not* expected to make love to the lovely princess. As Traill implies, Grand had done little to define the man of the future beyond his compatibility with the New Woman—and into this vacuum the attribute of effeminacy soon runs.

The same issue of the *Graphic* also serves as a previously unknown intermediary between Ouida’s article “The New Woman” and *Punch*’s adoption of the term (in addition to articles cited by Jordan in the *Observer* and *Pall Mall Gazette*). Jordan credits

the 26 May issue of *Punch* with “link[ing] the three things which made the ‘New Woman’ label stick—the line of antifeminist jokes it had been developing since 1890, the interest aroused by Sarah Grand’s [most recent] article, and the label ‘New Woman’ suggested by Ouida” (20). She reproduces this item, comprised of four lines of verse following the customary prologue:

THE NEW WOMAN.

(A New Nursery Rhyme. For Child-men.)

[“OUIDA” says “the New Woman” is an unmitigated bore. “SARAH GRAND” declares that Man, morally, “is in his infancy,” and that “now Woman holds out a strong hand to the Child-man, and insists upon helping him up” by “spanking proper principles into him in the nursery.”]

THERE is a New Woman, and what do you think?

She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!

But though Foolscap and Ink are the whole of her diet

This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!

(“The New Woman” 252)

The prologue (enclosed in square brackets) quotes both of Grand’s recent articles and repeats the quotation of Ouida—the “New Woman” as “unmitigated bore” (Ouida 610)—that had been published a week earlier in the *Graphic*.

There are further indications of an ongoing conversation between the *Graphic* and *Punch* when the subject resumes in the *Graphic* on 21 July. An item headed “The New Man” in that issue’s “Topics of the Week” begins by repeating the first clause of the *Punch* quatrain:

There is a New Woman. Madame Sarah Grand and her disciples have undertaken to see to that. Consequently, the eternal fitness of things demands the New Man. He is, in fact, a logical, social, and physiological necessity. For, clearly, the New Woman will never—no, never—consent to marry that unregenerate animal the Old Man. On the other hand, [she] will—or we are much mistaken—want to marry somebody. Therefore, we must have the New Man. (“The New Man,” *Graphic* 58)

The writer then references a definition propounded by Traill in "The 'New' Man," a satirical short story published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 and 16 July in which the effeminacy of the New Man is clearly established. The columnist praises Traill's story, which imagines the future results of Grand's call for spanking, as "very excellent fooling—with a solid bed-rock of common sense." He "cordially commend[s]" the comically gender-reversed "New Boy" and "New Girl" in Traill's satire

to any parents who may be tempted to be fools enough to attempt to follow the fashion of the hour as laid down by the lady-novelists, and to bring up their boys to be something else than boyish, and their girls to be revolted daughters.

This round of rhetoric suggests that Grand—the leading lady-novelist whose views are distorted and trivialized here as "the fashion of the hour"—may have erred in deploying "dear-old-lady-men" as a ridiculing epithet in her recent essay. The antifeminists' version of the "womanish man" fits much more comfortably in *their* argument, where the New Man's femininity mirrors the supposed masculinity of the New Woman.

Punch's versions of the New Man portray him as a figure of resistance to this projected feminization. The "Unregenerate Male" speaker of "A Ballade of the New Manhood," published 26 May 1894, bemoans the fate of the rising generation of boys to have "All the foibles of man" "spanked" out of them, and declines on behalf of all adults of his sex the reformatory "programme of grave Madame GRAND" ("Ballade" 249). This lighthearted response to Grand's threat of spanking is succeeded on at least one occasion in *Punch* by a threat of preemptive violence. On 13 October 1894, the writer of a mock letter from a self-styled "New Man," who signs himself "Master of his own House," reports chaining his wife to a bedpost without food or water at her first sign of New Womanhood—a refusal to hand over the morning paper ("Matrimonial Obedience" 179). This brutality is reminiscent of Grand's stick-wielding old gentleman and the 1889 theatre-goer who declares that Nora Helmer "needs a good shaking," among others who respond to advocates of gender reform not with humor but with frustration and violence.²

² Dowling notes that, in 1894–95, "*Punch* devoted a good deal of space to the eugenic dangers raised by contemporary male effeminacy and female mannishness; the New Woman 'made further development in generations to come quite impossible' (21 July 1894, p. 27), while the 'New Man' was, in a word, 'Woman' (24 Nov. 1894, p. 249)" (Dowling, "The Decadent" 445).

In lieu of *Punch*, the job of lampooning the New Man as effeminate fell to the theatre, as anticipated by theatrical references in Traill's literary column and short story (the latter begins with a future performance of *The New Boy* at the fictitious "Intensity Theatre"). By the time of *Punch's* disciplinary "Master of his own House," the effeminate New Man had been portrayed for weeks in two prominent West End comedies. When the first of these was announced in August, the London correspondents of two provincial papers identified "the New Man" as a character to be played by Fred Terry in Sidney Grundy's forthcoming comedy, *The New Woman* ("London Letter" 4; "The Stage" 3). The term is not used in the play itself, which ran from 1 September 1894 to 5 February 1895 (Wearing 1:424), but it befits the character of Gerald Cazenove, a temporarily derailed Casanova who has become effeminate under the influence of New Women. This hero is restored to normative masculinity by the love of a simple country girl whose naïve femininity contrasts with the self-important urbanity of the play's feminists. One of the latter promulgates the idea that to achieve the future equality of the sexes, "girls should be [raised as] boys, and maids should be [as] young men." In response, the play's antifeminist *raisonneur* asks:

Why can't a woman be content to be a woman? What does she want to make a beastly man of herself for? . . . A woman, who *is* a woman, doesn't want to be anything else. These people are a sex of their own . . . They have invented a new gender. And to think my nephew's one of them! (Grundy 9)

The alleged feminizing effect of the New Woman is also evident in an effete minor character, Percy Bysshe Pettigrew, a columnist for a women's newspaper, who is said to have done great things "for the Advancement of Women" by "making a public exhibition of the Decay of Man" (Grundy 12). When he appears, Percy claims to have discovered "pure art" and "the true Greek spirit" in a female music hall performer who others consider "Somewhat *risqué*" (74). But there is little more to the character than these allusions to Oscar Wilde as poet, journalist, essayist and novelist.³ This unrepentant "'new' man," as *The Times* calls him, is "but an outline," typical of the "types" in the play who "wear a somewhat unfinished air" ("Comedy Theatre" 2). This criticism applies

³ The references are to Wilde as editor of *Woman's World* and author of "The Grave of Shelley," "The Decay of Lying," and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Percy's fixation on a showgirl parodies Dorian's discovery of Sibyl Vane in the latter.

also to the caricatured feminists who periodically fill the stage with “shrill pseudo-scientific cackle”; they are little more than trendy window dressing on what otherwise amounts to an ordinary love story. But if the play’s *raison d’être* was indeed less ideological than mercenary—to cash in on the current vogue of the New Woman while the term was still in fashion—its success in doing so demonstrates the acuity with which Grundy read the cultural moment.

In his review of Henry Arthur Jones’s *The Case of the Rebellious Susan*, a comedy that ran almost concurrently with *The New Woman* from 3 October 1894 to 23 March 1895 (Wearing 1:431), the *Times* reporter again identifies the “New Man” (now capitalized) and “New Woman” in the *dramatis personae* (“Criterion Theatre” 6). Neither epithet is mentioned in the script, but the types were obviously applicable to the affianced and then newlywed couple of the play’s secondary plot line, identified by the trade paper the *Stage* as a clear “amalgam of effeminate masculinity and mannish womanhood” (“The Criterion” 12). Fergusson Pybus, who is called by the same critic “an aesthete of artistic desires,” is dedicated to the New Woman’s program of social reform (as Gerald Cazenove initially is in Grundy’s play). His eagerness to abase himself before Elaine Shrimpton exceeds the most ardent Victorian pedestal-building:

Woman is to me . . . something so priceless, so perfect, so rare, so intolerably superior in every way to man, that I instinctively fall upon my knees before her. (Jones 22)

The two are not perfectly matched, however; the New Man is a homebody “whose idea of marriage is that a charming and angelic partner should surround him with ‘all that is sweet and dainty and graceful and beautiful’” (“Criterion Theatre” 6), whereas his partner is a public activist, a feminist agitator who wants no part of conventional domesticity. When bidden to go home and make her husband “a nice comfortable dinner,” she declares: “No man shall receive dinner from me while the present inequalities between the sexes remain unredressed” (Jones 100). In response, Jones’s *raisonneur* dismisses the ambitions of the New Woman in almost exactly the same terms as Grundy’s:

What is it that you ladies want? You are evidently dissatisfied with being women. You cannot wish to be anything so brutal and disgusting as a man. And unfortunately there is no neuter sex in the human species.

The suggestion that the New Woman is bent on creating one—a new sex or gender in which both maleness and femaleness can be subsumed—defines her relationship to the New Man in both plays. Whether the New Woman is political or “pseudo-scientific,” the New Man is seen as Monster to her Frankenstein—an image traceable to the 19 May 1894 *Graphic* in which “womanish man” is a “monstrosity” and “New Man” is a mythical prince to be conjured by the “wand” of Sarah Grand. So long as the New Man is the creature of the New Woman—her Bride of Frankenstein—his effeminacy can be dismissed as an imaginary byproduct of a ludicrous aberration, as the New Woman was considered to be. Where he is a prominent character, as in *The Case of the Rebellious Susan*, it was crucial to maintain the New Man’s connection to the New Woman to create at least the semblance of a heterosexual relationship.

Several factors explain why “New Man” never became as prevalent as “New Woman,” although the terms were in vogue almost simultaneously in 1894–95. “New Man” was the far more stigmatizing epithet, applicable to male transvestites such as “Walter Schultz, an artist” arrested in October 1894 after loitering late at night on London streets. Found to be “dressed from head to foot as a woman,” this New Man in “black dress,” flowered bonnet, “female underclothing, corsets and ‘padding’” was considered absurd but also criminal; he was remanded with calls for “the fullest inquiry” and stringent police action against similar transgressors (“Extraordinary Conduct of Artists” 8). While cross-dressing men were thus taken as signs of social degeneracy, the “mannish” attributes of the New Woman were more often considered merely ludicrous, as in a pair of *Punch* caricatures in January and February 1895 that depict her in leg-freeing bicycle costume (Figs. 1, 2).⁴ Unlike his female counterpart, the New Man was almost never depicted by cartoonists, and never (so far as I can determine) in attire considered proper to the opposite sex. And while feminists such as Grand could be labeled New Women, no journalist risked applying “New Man” to a real person, aside from marginalized figures such as Schultz. Even as Jones’s and Grundy’s plays were staged in the fall of 1894, there was an idea in circulation that the New Man had not yet arrived on the scene and was not yet fully defined, although there was a sense of his

⁴ For other examples of the New Man as transvestite, see “The Ways of Women.” *Western Mail* (24 Nov. 1895), sec. Ladies’ Own Supplement: 1.



(Fig. 1) "Gertrude and Jessie"

impending approach. On 4 October, for example, a correspondent of the *Liverpool Mercury* assures readers that "no trace of him has been discovered in society circles" but also predicts that by the end of the London season, the New Man would "be introduced to the notice of the public" ("Our London Letter" 5).

In its issue for 8 December 1894, the *Speaker* comes close to providing that introduction with a particularly vivid description of the New Man, still as the consort of the New Woman, and still nominally deferred to the future, but evoking in taste and appearance the *fin-de-siècle* aesthete. The satirical story, a short sketch entitled "The New Man," depicts a future gynocracy as the outcome of a successful women's movement in which "as woman grew masculine, man became feminine" ("The New Man," *Speaker* 621). This is illustrated by a husband and wife meeting in the former's "exquisitely appointed boudoir":

A young man of pallid aspect was stretched on luxurious cushions of a delicate mauve tint, with one emaciated hand limply holding a blue pencil, while the other was stretched ever and anon in quest of a gold vinaigrette, which he applied to his diaphanous nostrils. He was writing with the aid of a blotting-pad daintily perfumed and richly lacquered.

Overwrought by the latest vicissitude in men's fashion, he "utter[s] broken exclamations in a very high-pitched voice," comparing his despair that "The nursery-pin is not likely to be worn this winter with the red Norfolk scarf" to that of "the vulgar Spartan boy, with the fox eating at his vitals." In contrast, his "muscular" wife, a Cabinet Minister, arrives home in "bicycle costume" with an "air of decision as of one who bears the heritage of a ruling sex." After a stern lecture, she consoles him by consenting to a shopping trip—"I'll stand you a new hat, and as many gloves as you like"—and the sketch concludes with him gratefully "laying his head on her manly shoulder" (622). This portrait of the New Man and Woman as a gender-reversed couple could have been read as a satire of *normative* gender types drawn into relief by deftly reallocated signifiers. The dainty, child-like husband, emotionally and financially dependent on his spouse, takes on the stereotypical attributes of the naïve Victorian housewife, while the New Woman is recast

A VALENTYNE.

(And a Remonstrance.)

This day to yow, dere ladye, wol I schowe
Myn hertes wissche—*cum privilegio.*

Of alle seintes nis ther more benigne
To man and mayden noon thanne Valentyne;
Sith everych year on that swete seintes day
Man can to mayden al his herte displaie
(Bye Cupid arwes smit in sory plighte—
One grote al pleyn, and twayn ypeinted
bryghte).

Then wol I mak my playnte, so maist ye
knowe

Yon whele, dere ladye, don me mochel wo.
Algates I greve, whanne that scorchours I
mete

That riden reccheles adoun the strete:
I praie, bethynke yow, swiche diversiou
Ben weel for mayde of mene condicioun,
But ladye fayre in brekes al ydighte
Certes meseems ne verray semelye sighte.
Swiche gere, yolept "racionale," parde,
Righte sone wol be the dethe of chivalrye;
And we schal heren, whanne that it be dede,
The verдите, "Dethe by—Newe Womman-
hede."

Heede then theeffect and end of my prayere,
Uppeve thy whele, ne mannische brekes
were,

Contente in graces maydenlye to schyne,
So mote ye be myn owen Valentyne.

"Just the weather for receiving a sharp
retort," observed our laughing Philosopher,
with his snow-boots on. Naturally his friend
wished to know why. "Because," replied
Dr. CHUCKLER, "with the temperature below
zero, no one can object to having a *wrap over*
the knuckles." Then away he went merrily
over the unartificial ice on the Serpentine.

(Fig. 2) "A Valentyne and a Remonstrance"

as the overindulgent Torvald to his excessively sheltered Nora. But as a man, the prissy husband's absurdly exacting sensibility in matters of clothing and décor more likely evoked contemporary caricatures of the dandy or aesthete that dovetail with the exaggerated effeminacy of the New Man. Translated to the 1890s, an era without female parliamentarians, the New Man / aesthete would lose his female consort and the semblance of heterosexuality she confers. In lieu of the New Woman, this contemporary New Man "laying his head" upon a "manly shoulder" would be exposed to the charge of homosexuality that would soon be leveled at Wilde.

Two months later, the title "New Man" is at last directly bestowed upon a group of contemporary men at a glittering society event: the début of *The Importance of Being*

Earnest at the St. James's Theatre. The targets are observed and the epithet applied by "The Call Boy," the theatrical columnist of *Judy*, who reports that "my time was so completely taken up in feeling astonished at the things I saw in the audience that I had no opportunity of feeling amused at the things on the other side of the footlights" (27 Feb. 1895).⁵ Thus, instead of reviewing the play in his first column after the opening, he describes the playgoers who so occupied his attention on the evening of 14 February 1895:

The gentleman sitting in the stalls close by is one of many more of the same litter at the St. James's Theatre on the night of the production of Mr. Oscar Wilde's newest comedy. This "New Man," like his friends (*very like!*) regarded so seriously *The Importance of Being Earnest* that he never smiled even once, but looked severely earnest all through the piece. When it was over, and an attendant tapped him on the shoulder and informed him of the fact, he rose in a most lady-like way, and said, with soft but distinct emphasis, "Thanks. I somehow *knew* I should hear of it's [sic] being over if I sat here long enough." In the vestibule he met one of his litter, who was fastening a really charming silk wrapper round his delicate neck with a most elegant diamond brooch, and to this same kindred spirit he suddenly gushed, with pretty *abandon*, "I'm awfully glad Oscar made it a serious comedy for trivial people. I would never have gone if he hadn't, because my corsets hurt me so when I laugh. Besides, Trixie, dear boy, violent laughter reddens the face so and makes one look such a shocking fright." Then they slapped each other playfully, the one saying that the other was a naughty fellow for thinking so much about appearances, and the specimen thus giddily admonished replying that it was *too* unkind of him to say so, although he would forgive him on account of the lovely box of

⁵ Readers in 1895 would have understood the pseudonym "Call Boy" as referring to a backstage functionary; it thus indicates access to behind-the-scenes gossip. According to the OED, neither "call boy" nor "rent boy" was yet established as a colloquial term for prostitute—although a similar, perhaps precursor term, "telegraph boy," was applied to a group of young men accused of prostitution during the Cleveland Street brothel scandal of 1889–90. They were employed by day as telegraph messengers (Cohen 122).

chocolates he sent him on St. Valentine's Day. ("The Call Boy," 20 Feb. 1895)

The item is illustrated by a rare drawing of the New Man. He is seated in his stall in evening dress with legs crossed and waist tightly cinched, displaying a boot with raised heel and pointed toe (Fig. 3).

"The Call Boy's" eyewitness account of love-play among men in the "vestibule" of the St. James's Theatre—with no New Women in sight—signals a new stage in the development of the New Man and his frankest association to date with contemporary homosexuality. Although as a contributor to a humor publication "The Call Boy" could have employed a degree of exaggeration that is difficult to quantify, he usually delivered factual information, albeit in a humorous and deprecating style. Here his quasi-scientific observation of an effeminate "specimen"⁶ connects a catalogue of feminine attributes—from "lady-like" elegance to girlish gushing—to new indications of homosexuality. These include the tactile, same-sex flirtation of "slapp[ing] each other playfully," the Valentine's Day gift of chocolates from one New Man to another, and the theme of inversion, evident in the first man's solemn response to Wilde's comedy and in his misquotation of the subtitle.⁷ Effeminacy, an openly discussed topic in 1895, had been associated with the New Man almost from the beginning but always deferred to a satirical future.⁸ In the absence of that conceptual distance, the feminine signifiers seem more immediate and revelatory, and in "The Call Boy's" prose they proceed seamlessly to the homoerotic attributes. These are fewer, more ambiguous, and by necessity described in terms that skirt the boundaries of a taboo subject; but the pairing with the New Woman is

⁶ The word "specimen" resonates with Foucault's account of the medicalization of sex in the late nineteenth century and the creation of the new "psychological, psychiatric . . . category of the homosexual" (1:43). Although ostensibly humorous, "The Call Boy's" observation of the New Man participates in this regulatory process of classification.

⁷ That is, "A Serious Comedy for Trivial People," the New Man's inversion of Wilde's "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People." These inversions, as reported and perhaps embellished by "The Call Boy," insinuate and belittle the "invert" as defined by the theory then current of "sexual inversion" (Krafft-Ebing 319).

⁸ After Henry James's *Guy Domville* foundered on its first night at the St. James's Theatre in January, the play and its author were openly charged with "effeminacy" and "feminine" attributes ("The London Theatres" 11). Known as the author of Christopher Newman (the hero of his one previously produced play, *The American*), James was considered a "new man" in senses other than the one I am discussing here. The well-known novelist was deemed a new man in the theatre, and he was championed by advocates of a literary "New Drama" (Chothia 29). Since the phrase "new man" was strongly associated with effeminacy at this moment, it is likely that James was victimized by a conflation of "new" terminologies. The failure of *Guy Domville* created an early vacancy at the St. James's that was filled by the debut of *The Importance of Being Earnest* six weeks later.



"A SERIOUS COMEDY FOR TRIVIAL PEOPLE."

(Fig. 3) "A Serious Comedy for Trivial People"

now unmistakably broken. In contrast with the gender-reversed couple of the *Speaker* sketch, the New Man's romantic interaction is now clearly with another man.

By contemporizing and spotlighting the New Man in this way, "The Call Boy" does for him much as Ouida had done for the New Woman—points him out for censure and control. Ostensibly, his purpose is merely comic; as a representative of *Judy*, he seizes an opportunity to invert the caricature of the New Woman that was then a staple of *Punch*, ridiculing male effeminacy as the other paper ridicules female masculinity. "The Call Boy," a *nom de plume* referring to a backstage functionary who summons actors from their dressing rooms to the stage, does something like this to the men he observes at the St. James's. The New Men function for him as performers of an alternate spectacle,

diverting his attention from the play with scenes of their own, with the dialogue and action that he records. In theory, his account of the New Man's long-awaited arrival in London society could expose his "specimen[s]" to criminal investigation. Although he witnesses no illegal act and names no names—aside from the insinuating nickname "Trixie"—his stance toward the New Men parallels that of Wilde's nemesis, the Marquis of Queensbury, who was barred from the St. James's on the opening night of *Earnest* for threatening to disrupt the performance. Queensbury reportedly once said to Wilde, "I do not say that you are it, but you look it" (Ellmann 430, 447). "The Call Boy" effectively says the same of the New Men—not with the same consciousness of malice but with something of the same viciousness in the epithet "litter," which casts the persons referenced either as trash irresponsibly disposed or as the recent offspring of bestial reproduction. In the latter sense, the word extends the regulatory reach of his column beyond the persons described, for it begs the question of who or what may have spawned them.

By calling out the New Men at *Earnest* on a night when Queensbury was prevented from doing the same to Wilde, "The Call Boy" associates the playwright with an unacceptable social development—the public emergence of a hitherto clandestine subculture at one of London's most fashionable theatres. By styling themselves devotees if not intimates of "Oscar," the New Men imply that it was the playwright's achievement of mainstream success—in spite of his long-rumored homosexuality—that had drawn them into the open. Although Wilde had survived far closer insinuations in the past, this imputation from a friendly critic⁹ might have warned him that his phenomenal popularity—at a moment when it seemed that "the whole of society [was] engaged in inventing Oscar Wildeisms" (Scott 35)—was about to be redefined as a dangerous, even hypnotic influence (Thurschwell 50). Four days after the attack on opening night was deflected to the "vestibule" of the theatre, Queensbury left his card with its infamously misspelled address, "To Oscar Wilde, posing Somdomite" at Wilde's club, where the latter received it ten days later (Ellmann 438). If in the meantime Wilde had taken note of "The Call Boy's" 20 February column—as he probably did not amidst the rush of

⁹ Since 1892, "The Call Boy" praised Wilde's work while subjecting him to a generous dose of teasing, at one point even depicting him in drag as "A Woman of No Importance" (Fig. 4). The review of *Earnest* is full of praise, ironically declaring "Bunbury"—a name now read as an allusion to anal sex and homosexual escape from patriarchal responsibility (Fineman 89, Craft 27)—"an invention for which Oscar ought to be knighted at least" (27 Feb. 1895).

acclaim for *Earnest*—he might have been warned of the backlash to come, not merely from one man's personal vendetta but from an entire culture poised to strike him down as the personification of *fin-de-siècle* decadence.

By late-Victorian standards of propriety, the evolution of the New Man from antifeminist to homophobic discourse is a shift from the deplorable to the unspeakable—a turn closely paralleled by the fall of Wilde, which dates almost precisely from the outing of the New Men at the St. James's.¹⁰ So far as is known, "The Call Boy" was the first to use the phrase "New Man" to point out contemporary homosexuals, yet it was immediately recognizable as doing so at a time when every other synonym was interdicted. From this moment, when the term shifted from theoretical effeminacy to contemporary homosexuality, the New Man became unmentionable. He disappeared from the newspapers just as the name of Oscar Wilde was disappearing from the theatrical gossip columns and from the advertisements and marquees of the theatres presenting his plays (Ellmann 458). The ridicule of the New Woman also waned, at least for the present—perhaps indicating that the obliteration of her male counterpart took some of the fun out of making fun of her. As gender parodies, the homophobia sublimated in the New Man was the subtext of the New Woman too; both were expressions of doubt in heteronormative masculinity and the patriarchal order in the final decade of the nineteenth century, in the twilight of the reign of Victoria and the Victorian gentleman.¹¹

¹⁰ Seth Koven reports that "New Man" was still viable as a verbal insult in 1896: slum priest James Adderley "was frequently taunted with the cry, 'The New Woman! The New Woman!' Sometimes he was even called, 'The New Man!' Far from objecting to the epithets, Adderley reflected that the phrase 'New Man' aptly expressed 'just what I am trying to be!'" (Koven 273, quoting Adderley from Stevens 29).

¹¹ Image credits: Figs. 1 and 2, retrieved from HathiTrust Digital Library are in the public domain. Figs. 3 and 4 are published with permission of ProQuest as part of *British Periodicals*.



A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

I must postpone until next week the registration in these columns of my opinions concerning the Wilde *Woman of No Importance*, produced at the Haymarket on Wednesday last. There are so many things of importance to speak about just now, that it would be distinctly unfair of me to give the space to the other kind. In the meantime, let me call your attention to the above little sketch, which cannot be said, I think, to have nothing whatever to do with the latest production at the Haymarket.

(Fig. 4) "A Woman of No Importance"

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Playing *Hide and Seek* with Venus and Madonna: Collins's Early Experiment in Pre-Raphaelite Transgression

by M. Melissa Elston

Texas A&M University

The Goddess of Love was no stranger to Victorian art galleries or bookshelves. As Joseph Kestner remarks in *Mythology and Misogyny*, images of Venus/Aphrodite commonly reinforced "with classical models the negative image of women found in Christianity, whether one were a believer or not" (19). The images also elevated the idea of a beautiful woman as passive aesthetic object (acted upon by men and defined in terms of male desire), rather than active sexual subject (who could, by contrast, act upon men based on female desire) (182). By the time he attempted his first mystery novel at age twenty-nine, Wilkie Collins was aware of this classical archetype and its contemporary aesthetic deployment, having grown up in the household of a well-known painter.¹ His additional exposure to the art world as an adult—both through personal contact with his brother Charles and other Pre-Raphaelite associates, and while on an extended tour of Italy in 1853 with Charles Dickens and Augustus Egg while penning *Hide and Seek*—only deepened his expertise. Collins is believed to have authored a series of articles on Italian art which were eventually printed in the *Art Journal* during this time, despite their initial rejection by *Bentley's Miscellany* (Clarke 19).² With this experience fresh on his mind, Collins returned to England and published *Hide and Seek* the following year.

¹ Collins's father was the famed nineteenth century landscape artist and Royal Academician William Collins. Shortly after his father's death, Collins published his first book, an 1848 biography entitled *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A.* Wilkie's brother, Charles Allston Collins, also became a painter; critical appraisals of his canvas *Convent Thoughts* (1850–51) earned him contemporary notoriety as a Pre-Raphaelite follower.

² Several scholars point to a series of letters as evidence supporting Collins's authorship of the unsigned articles. The first was an 1854 query to George Bentley in which Collins proposed a series of articles on art and his travels to Italy. Bentley rejected the offer, as he was already running a similar series. The second letter, dated

In some ways, *Hide and Seek* seems like an unlikely novel in which to stage early experimentations with ekphrasis or serious social commentary on gender and disability. At first glance, the book is steeped in such sentimentality that it appears to defy the social and psychological realism—or, to borrow their own phrasing, the “truth to nature”—favored by Collins’s Pre-Raphaelite friends.³ Yet the novel marks an early attempt to wrestle with the sort of mimesis the Pre-Raphaelites endorsed. After poring over an autobiographical account (“Dr. Kitto’s delightful little book, ‘The Lost Senses,’” Collins enthused, “which contains the author’s interesting and touching narrative of his own sensations under the total loss of the sense of hearing”), Collins painstakingly began to build his new character “as literally as possible *according to nature*,” rather than relying on imagination alone (355; emphasis added).⁴ Subtitled “The Mystery of Mary Grice,” his resulting story revolves around the fate of Madonna, a hearing- and speech-impaired adoptee whose mother’s tragic, early death has left her own origins shrouded in mystery.

The realism with which Collins attempted to portray Madonna’s experiences with disability signals an early interest in Pre-Raphaelite philosophies of representation. Even more intriguingly, his literary portrait of the young heroine is also complicated (and arguably enriched) by his ekphrastic descriptions of her face—which alternately allude to historic images of Venus and the Virgin Mary. By constructing Madonna as an amalgamation of virginal and carnal archetypes, *Hide and Seek* challenges contemporary representations of women, instead offering the reader a heroine who denies binary categorization. This echoes the Pre-Raphaelite visual intermingling of the sacred and the profane, and stands as further early evidence of Collins’s emerging literary Pre-Raphaelitism, a phenomenon already noted by Sophia Andres in her work on the relationship between Collins’s later mystery novel *The Woman in White* and Pre-Raphaelite art.⁵ Additionally, while “deaf-mute” heroine Madonna’s speech is silenced—

almost six months later, was addressed to the editor of the *Art Journal*, asking that a copy of the current issue be sent to “the writer of the Article [sic] on the ‘Studios of Rome,’” and signed W. Wilkie Collins. Echoing Jeremy Maas’s assertions, William M. Clarke suggests that Collins may have approached the *Art Journal* with the rejected series and published them anonymously there—although he notes this conclusion, while reasonable, does involve a degree of conjecture (20, 23).

³ Biographers Graham Law and Andrew Maunder certainly support this reading (25).

⁴ This comment is not part of the narrative but an appended author’s note to Chapter 7 in *Hide and Seek*.

⁵ Andres notes numerous narrative reconfigurations of images from well-known Pre-Raphaelite paintings, including Millais’s *Mariana* and Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World*, in *The Woman in White*. She argues that Collins, like the Pre-Raphaelites, engages in a coded critique of Victorian gender constructs via unorthodox contextual shifts in his reimagined scenes.

an attribute which grants her further affinity with the silent subjects of archetypal paintings—her writing slate and artistic output serve as dialogic stand-ins, illustrating the text’s attempt to give disabled women a voice in an otherwise stifling, patriarchal culture.

Throughout the novel, Madonna is portrayed as attractive, communicative, and highly sought after by would-be suitors, despite her enigmatic origins and the social marginalization often directed toward those with disabilities in Victorian England. When her maternal uncle, the rough-mannered traveling woodsman Matthew Grice (or Mat, as he prefers to be called), appears in town to seek out the fate of his lost sister, a series of coincidences lead him to Madonna and her adoptive home with the artist Valentine Blyth and his family; this, in turn, results in a series of dramatic revelations—including the fact that a young love interest, the engagingly rebellious Zack Thorpe, is actually her half-brother. In an era and social setting where authors “increasingly aligned the ills of England’s social body with the ills of individual bodies,” Collins’s decision to build a narrative around a disabled—and physically desirable—heroine is notable (Lacom 547). Yet the book contains other, less obvious references to ongoing cultural debates. As Aoife Leahy has observed, *Hide and Seek* mischievously echoes several of John Ruskin’s recent condemnations of Raphael, through a series of “in-jokes that were probably only evident to Collins’s artistic friends”—friends who by this time included the controversial young artists John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt (19).

Collins’s brother Charles had befriended Millais and Hunt during his studies at the Royal Academy schools, and the two were frequent guests in the family home. They were also members of the infamous Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a fraternity they co-founded with fellow art student Dante Gabriel Rossetti in defiance of the English Royal Academy of Arts and its conventions of taste and beauty. The group opted instead to imitate the style of “primitive” art before Raphael and the Italian High Renaissance. Elizabeth Prettejohn notes that the Pre-Raphaelites’ familiarity with pre-1500 paintings was actually somewhat limited and, as a result, their pictures “resemble[d] those made in the period before 1500 only in limited ways” (19). Nevertheless, public reaction to the Brotherhood’s earliest exhibited paintings in 1849 and 1850—all signed with the cryptic moniker “PRB”—was swift and furious (in Collins’s words, “an immense stir”), and garnered attacks in the public press for their “regressive” medievalism and apparent endorsements of secularism and naturalism in an age already rife with religious tension

and doubt (Law and Maunder 22–23). What's more, as many contemporary reviewers complained, Pre-Raphaelite women were "ugly" by conventional standards. This was much more threatening than present-day readers may realize. After all, calling Victorian notions of beauty into question also meant calling Victorian morality into question, due to the widely held belief that beautiful souls inhabit correspondingly "beautiful" faces and bodies. As Andres dryly notes: "Aesthetics and gender politics were involved in the critical reception of Pre-Raphaelite art from its very beginning" (xxi).

Drawing, no doubt, from his avant-garde circle of artistic friends and their ongoing conversations about subverting Raphaelite beauty, Collins similarly began to toy with established aesthetic conventions and codes, albeit subtly. Leahy cites a passage describing Madonna—an angelic heroine who conforms to the delicate, blue-eyed Victorian beauty standard at first glance, until the narrator brings her face into finer focus:

Taken in detail, her features might be easily found fault with. Her eyes might be pronounced too large, her mouth too small, her nose not Grecian enough for some people's tastes. But the general effect of these features, the shape of her head and face, and especially her habitual expression, reminded all beholders at once and irresistibly of that image of softness, purity, and feminine gentleness, which has been engraved on all civilized memories by the "Madonnas" of Raphael. (Collins 35)

Collins's narrative dismantling of Madonna's conformity to the Raphaelite ideal takes on an additional layer of complexity when paired with the girl's ties to an even older—and far more carnal—archetype: Venus. While her appearance is initially *contrasted* with that of the Venus de Medici bust in Blyth's art studio, Madonna's role as the constant object of male visitors' gazes brings her into sharp alignment with the goddess shortly thereafter:

It is impossible to describe how deliciously soft, bright, fresh, pure, and delicate this young lady is, merely as an object to look at....Even her face alone—simply as a face—could not escape perpetual discussion; and that, too, among Valentine's friends, who all know her well, and loved her dearly. It was the oddest thing in

the world, but no one of them could ever agree with another...as to which of her personal attractions ought to be first selected for approval, or quoted as particularly asserting her claims to the admiration of all worshippers of beauty. (33–34; emphasis added)

With these sorts of associations in play, Madonna's presence within the text is as laden with paradox and challenges to conventional perspectives as a Pre-Raphaelite painting. But Collins's attempts to emulate the aesthetic rebellion of his brother and close friends should hardly be surprising to scholars: even contemporary reviewers, whether they were complimenting or condemning him in print, noticed Collins's tendency to replicate trends and techniques from the visual arts. An unsigned book review in the June 1854 *Leader* calls *Hide and Seek* "a good endeavor, but one in which [Collins] has not quite succeeded; and the reason . . . we take to be his substituting *portrait-painting* for development. The characters in this book are well conceived, *well-drawn*, but they are described; they do not move through the story, revealing themselves in it" ([Anon.] 57–58; emphasis added). Geraldine Jewsbury was slightly more complimentary in her assessment of Collins's literary portraiture: "Matthew Grice . . . is a most powerful character, and looks like a study from real life" (56).

It is important to note that *Hide and Seek* makes no overt references to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This is understandable, given the delicate tension between Collins's friendships within the Brotherhood and his artistic associations elsewhere. He frequently entertained older historical genre painters Edward Ward, Augustus Egg, and William Frith, as well as the writer Charles Dickens, whose notorious distaste for the Pre-Raphaelites was well-documented at the time. Dickens had, in fact, been among the PRB's most vehement and vocal detractors, suggesting that Millais's Mary in *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1849–50) was "so horrible in her ugliness" that she would stand out even "in the vilest cabaret in France" (Law and Maunder 21, 23). Yet the novel does contain playful moments of Pre-Raphaelite boundary transgression, as well as engage in contemporary debates about the nature of art itself—the "in-jokes" that Leahy references (19). For example, the early narrative exclamation, "Heaven and earth! Are no conventions held sacred by these painters of pictures?" is clearly a reference to the PRB's reputed bohemianism (Collins 54). Similarly, Valentine Blyth's exhortations to Zack—"[Y]ou must purify your taste by copying the glorious works of Greek sculpture—in

short, you must form yourself on the Antique”—following Zack’s resistance to Blyth’s instruction illustrates the tension between Royal Academy methods of instruction (copying other artists’ work in the studio) and emerging Pre-Raphaelite methods (venturing outdoors to emulate nature itself) (101).

While he asserts that *Hide and Seek* is “the first of many novels in which Collins mischievously undermines Raphael” and promotes Pre-Raphaelitism, Leahy overstates the subtlety of Collins’s allusions (19). *Hide and Seek*’s so-called “in jokes” may *not* have been completely lost on contemporary readers or reviewers. Interestingly, in her 1854 review, Jewsbury uses the Pre-Raphaelite motto to describe the novel’s progression of events which are “as *true to nature* as they are well managed” (56; emphasis added). This deliberate invoking of PRB artistic principles—without explicitly naming their source—reflects Collins’s own tactics within the novel. Blyth’s longwinded comments at an exhibition of his own paintings engage contemporary debates about representation and demonstrate the artist’s faulty attempts to somehow philosophically fuse the disparate schools of historic subject-painting and (we may assume, Pre-Raphaelite) naturalism. By setting up a character who is a clear lampoon of Academy methods and philosophies, Collins illustrates their flaws and, in doing so, undermines the case *against* Pre-Raphaelitism:

I take the liberty . . . of dividing all art into two great classes, the landscape subjects, and the figure subjects; and I venture to describe these classes, in their highest development, under the respective titles of Art Pastoral and Art Mystic . . . Art Mystic, I would briefly endeavor to define, as aiming at the illustration of fact on the highest imaginative principles. It takes a scene, for instance, from history, and represents that scene *as exactly and naturally* as possible.
(Collins 193; emphasis added)

Blyth’s rambling remarks contradict themselves throughout his address to the assembled art patrons. Art Mystic replicates a scene “exactly” and “naturally,” in his words, but also superimposes fantastic figures such as cherubs, demons, and dragons upon its landscapes in order clearly to indicate “the spirit of the age which produced the scene.” Blyth’s own confusion as to what constitutes naturalism is evident in his discussion of “Art Pastoral” as well, which is “a tolerably faithful transcript of mere nature” but also contains

elements of the ideal: “the elevating poetical view of ordinary objects, like cities, happy female peasants and thoughtful spectators” (192–93). At this point, the narrator notes, his speech breaks down in its attempts to establish a clear relationship between art and the natural world: “Thus nature is exalted; and thus Art Pastoral—no!—thus Art Pastoral exalts—no! I beg your pardon—thus Art Pastoral and Nature exalt each other, and—I beg your pardon again!” (193). The comedic effect of Blyth’s stammering is not lost on the reader. Lesser-informed patrons initially cheer him on with superlative cries: “Capital, Blyth! . . . Liberal, comprehensive, progressive, profound!” while a nearby art critic and sculptor mutter disparagingly. By the time Blyth has wrapped up his philosophical discussion of a painting several pages later, however, the entire audience has grown weary of his self-contradictions and longwinded explications of the artwork’s contrived visual symbols. The narrative displays Collins’s keen sense of humor: “Another pause. Nobody said a word, but everybody was relieved by the final departure of the mystic element” (195). With conventional modes of representation thus deflated and dismantled, Collins then silently appropriates and wields Pre-Raphaelite tactics (particularly destabilization of social hierarchies and replication of “truth to nature” in lieu of the ideal) within a free narrative/representative space. He also begins the tandem dismantling of the standard female archetypes (Venus and Madonna) perpetuated by Academicians and moralistic Victorian poets.

Under the Pre-Raphaelite brush—and Collins’s pen—the Goddess of Love looks decidedly different, as does the Virgin Mary. In discussing the Victorian virgin / whore dichotomy, Prettejohn remarks, “we cannot assume that [Pre-Raphaelite] images invariably represent male dominance, female submissiveness, or conventional heterosexual relationships,” characteristics which were the hallmarks of nineteenth-century British social order (210). Rather, she suggests, Pre-Raphaelite pictures evoke a far more complicated world than monolithic Victorian gender norms would suggest, “explor[ing] a variety of problems in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships without endorsing pat conclusions” (212). Prettejohn goes on to cite such images as Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Found* (1853), which complicates gendered notions of sexual knowledge and experience, and Hunt’s *Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus* (1851), which depicts Proteus as a submissive “fallen man,” kneeling in shame like the prototypical fallen woman of conventional Victorian artwork (211). Likewise, Collins’s

portrayals of gender possess a similar degree of complexity and ambiguity. Early on, Madonna exhibits characteristics of the Blessed Virgin, true to her name. Yet her Virginhood evokes shades of Rossetti rather than Raphael. In fact, Collins playfully reconfigures two early paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of them multiple times within the novel, even as he further complicates those images by aligning the Mother of God with the classic marble bust of Venus in Valentine Blyth's studio.

When she is first introduced to the reader, Madonna is wearing a simple, Quaker-grey gown, much like the gown in *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1849; Collins 33). Her hair—"a nice light brown colour"—and blue eyes further evoke Rossetti's young "Mary Virgin," as do the proportions of her features: large eyes, a small mouth, nose "not Grecian enough for some people's tastes" (35). In this moment, as well as others, she is depicted seated and working, yet another deliberate reference to the scene in the 1849 painting. Interestingly, however, her project is not a tapestry—as in Rossetti's original image—but a drawing of Venus, taken from the bust of the Venus de Medici in the studio. Despite the fact that she is initially observed as a "living contradiction" to the erotic figure she is drawing, her project slowly begins to blur the ontological delineation between artist and artwork. As Blyth observes to Zack, "Look there!—just what Madonna's doing now; she's forming herself on the Antique!" Later, as Zack compares the living, flesh-and-blood woman to the copy of Venus she has created, he transfers the full weight of eroticization away from the drawing and onto Madonna, destabilizing Madonna's adherence to the virginal archetype with which she was originally aligned: "Is it some riddle, Mrs. Blyth? Something about why is Madonna like the Venus de' Medici, eh? If it is, I object . . . because she's a deal prettier than any plaster face ever made" (121-22). He then addresses Madonna bluntly and brazenly: "Your face beats Venus's hollow."

Collins's destabilization of feminine stereotypes was something he apparently relished. In an unsigned contribution to Dickens's *Household Words*, he mocks the arbitrariness of literary conventions through the satirical voice of a "Romantic Old Gentleman":

I know that it is a rule that, when two sisters are presented in a novel, one must be tall and dark, and the other short and light. I know that five feet eight of female flesh and blood, when

accompanied by an olive complexion, black eyes, and raven hair, is synonymous with strong passions and an unfortunate destiny. I know that five feet nothing, golden ringlets, soft blue eyes, and a lily brow, cannot be associated by any well-constituted novelist, with anything but ringing laughter, arch innocence, and final matrimonial happiness. ("A Petition" 65)

Madonna's light brown hair—neither golden ringlets nor passionate raven locks, but something in between—visually signifies her lack of adherence to either stereotype. In addition, her blue eyes are frequently paired with the shrinking, awkward pose of the Virgin Mary in Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* (1849-50) rather than with "ringing laughter." When he first spots her at the circus, where she is on display as a curiosity, Blyth quickly sees that Madonna is trembling before the crowd. His artist's eyes discern her "delicate little shoulders" and "poor frail neck," as well as the "patient forlornness in the sad blue eyes" (Collins 45). When she finally smiles for the first—and only time—of the night, it is at him as she looks up and their gazes, significantly, meet. This is the only instance of reciprocal eye contact in Madonna's entire performance. The rest of the audience members perceive her as the mute, fearful object of their spectatorship: awkward, unsmiling, and haloed by a dingy spotlight rather than the golden circle of divinity.

Interestingly, while her quivering, shy manner during this initial encounter evokes Rossetti's Virgin, it is not until she is adopted by Blyth and enters his home that she discards the "tawdry mock jewelry and spangles" of her stage costume and puts on a more fittingly Marian white dress (Collins 55). Thereafter, she continues to exhibit the painting's downcast gaze in social situations before looking up at other characters in moments of extreme emotion. When Mrs. Blyth uncovers the finished drawing of the Venus de Medici bust—intended as a gift to a love interest—Madonna looks away from her handiwork, much like the awkward, teenaged Mary in *Ecce Ancilla Domini* gazing away from the finished embroidery on display near her bed: "The girl was sitting with her back half turned on the drawing; lancing at it quickly from time to time with a strange shyness and indecision, as if the work of her own hands had undergone some transformation which made her doubt whether she was any longer privileged to look at it" (115). Prettejohn and other critics have noted the sexual undertones of the Virgin's

bright-red tapestry in Rossetti's painting, as well as the "paradoxical deflowering" the Angel's visit represents (51). Likewise, the sexual undertones of Madonna's artwork are unmistakable; it is, after all, a picture of a naked goddess, intended as a present to Zack, who (perhaps not accidentally) resembles the Angel in Rossetti's painting, as well as the Angel's vague sexual threat. Later, upon the picture's presentation to Zack, she reverts to the awkward stance she displayed in front of her adoptive mother in the earlier scene, even as she remains standing: "The poor girl stood shrinking close to the couch . . . Her eyes followed Valentine listlessly to the bookcase, then turned toward Zack . . . again with that same look of patient sadness, of gentle resignation to sorrow" (Collins 123). They do not make direct eye contact for the remainder of the evening. Madonna's adolescent dejection is understandable; Zack has only given her painting a moment's notice, then abandoned it, face-down, on the end of the couch. However, the act symbolizes a deeper rejection. In neglecting the drawing, as well as its implications, Zack backs away from Madonna's budding sexuality. In other words, *he* is shrinking as well—away from his earlier recognition of her status as neither dichotomized Virgin nor Whore, but as a healthy, maturing young woman who possesses attributes of *both* archetypal figures.

Madonna's inability to speak audibly about her grievances with Zack further enriches this reading. As Jessica Cox writes:

Madonna's disability combined with her physical appearance creates a disturbing effect: the protagonist becomes a distorted ideal of Victorian femininity—beautiful but above all silent . . . Madonna's dumbness can be seen as a metaphor for the silencing of women's voices in Victorian society: her character epitomizes the idea that women should be seen and not heard. (151)

Judy Cornes paints Madonna's loss of speech and hearing in even more stark terms: as a stand-in for loss of self. The young girl is, in Cornes's words, a "nonperson," as was her unwed mother before her, something her disability ostensibly illustrates (99).⁶

Yet Madonna is not entirely silent within *Hide and Seek*'s pages, as these critics would suggest. She exists as more than a studio decoration in her adoptive family's

⁶ It is important to note alongside these readings that the use of disability as metaphor has come under critical interrogation by an increasing number of scholars. For a more explicit discussion of this phenomenon, see David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor."

home; Blyth is training Madonna to be an artist herself. In fact, her talent far exceeds Zack's, a gender disparity that would stand out to readers as unusual during an age when women were not allowed to study at the Royal Academy of Art. When Zack stops and scratches his head during a lesson because he struggles to draw a gladiator's nose, his friend and mentor Blyth directs him to Madonna's easel: "Come here first, and see how Madonna is striking in the figure; the front view of it, remember, which is the most difficult" (Collins 119). Madonna's emergent appropriation of both the artist's gaze (to appreciate images) and the artist's power (to create images) complicates her status as a silent, downcast-eyed subject elsewhere in the novel and signals her yet-untapped transgressive strength. Here, as elsewhere, she is cast as a model; yet, within the context of Blyth's studio lesson, she models not the feminine qualities of beauty and passivity but the masculine qualities of action and assertiveness.⁷

Certainly, Blyth's tutelage increases Madonna's artistic skill; but, as Kate Flint notes, her pre-existing, innate artistic sensibilities are essential to the equation: "Madonna's quivering alertness to natural beauty—'artless,' despite what proves to be her facility in drawing—is presented as a Ruskin-inflected attribute, making up—it would seem—for what she had lost" (159). She compares this compensatory mechanism to the blind Lucilla's heightened sense of touch in another Collins novel, *Poor Miss Finch*, and suggests that this character's disability "does not turn her into a victim, whether in the eyes of others, or in her own self-assessment" (161).⁸ Despite Valentine's initial sentimental reaction to Madonna's auditory and speech impairments when he discovered her at the circus ("Ah, woful sight!," the narrative voice exclaims, "so lovely, yet so piteous to look on!" [Collins 87]), by the time Madonna reaches young adulthood Flint's statement can be applied to her as well: like Lucilla, Madonna is far from helpless (44). She carries a slate to communicate, participates fully in household activities as well as more public functions (such as Blyth's exhibition), exercises a degree of financial freedom by saving and spending her own money, and takes great care to protect the vision she so heavily relies upon to navigate her world. "Remember," she asserts to new

⁷ As many critics have noted, Victorian attitudes linking femininity with passivity are exemplified by Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem "The Angel in the House," which idealizes a Victorian housewife who practices daily self-denial and submission for her husband's sake.

⁸ Like the use of disability as literary metaphor, the rhetoric surrounding the need for "compensatory" powers or effort by those with disabilities can also be viewed as highly problematic. See Mitchell and Snyder's discussion of narrative prosthesis; also, Simi Linton's "Reassigning Meaning" (Davis 161–72).

servants who wonder why she requires a constant light in her bedroom, "Remember that I am deaf *and blind too* in the darkness" (Collins 95). When this power is momentarily taken away from her, she raises her voice in protest, striking fear in the heart of an otherwise hardened household-intruder who has surreptitiously blown out her candle in order to avoid detection:

That low, ceaseless, dumb moaning, smote so painfully on his heart, roused up so fearfully the rude superstitious fancies lying in wait within him, in connection with the lost and dead Mary Grice, that the sweat broke out on his face, the coldness of sharp mental suffering seized on his limbs, the fever of unutterable expectation parched up in his throat, and mouth, and lips; and for the first time, perhaps, in his existence, he felt the chillness of mortal dread running through him to his very soul. (280)

Interestingly, it is the *male* figure in this passage, Mat, who is rendered speechless by Madonna's cry, destabilizing her conventionally marginal Victorian status due to her disability and gender. Despite other characters' perceptions of her hearing and speech impairments, Madonna's voice—when used—has power, as does her other expressive output, whether upon her writing slate or at her artist's easel. If her earlier silence can be read, as Cox argues, as an expression of silent, idealized femininity, then this moment—more than any other within the text—shatters that construction, reconfiguring both women and the disabled as humans with individual agency and multiple forms of voice, however "helpless" they might appear to Victorian audiences at first glance. Notably, after raising her voice, Madonna confronts her fear and finds her *own* way out of the room in the darkness, rather than floundering in self-pity or waiting for a household servant to come and assist her. Nevertheless, Mat repeats "I wish I hadn't frightened her so . . . I wish I hadn't frightened her so" to himself like a mantra as he slips away from the Blyth house in the dark, shaken by the encounter (281). From his manner and the obsessive repetition of his words, it is obvious that Mat is far more unsettled than Madonna, who has begun to calm herself by the time she reaches the staircase.

Certainly, Collins's decision to house his heroine within the body of a hearing- and speech-impaired girl is an unorthodox choice for a Victorian author. As Collins himself acknowledged in an appended note to chapter seven, "I do not know that any attempt has

yet been made in English fiction to draw the character of a 'Deaf Mute' simply and exactly after nature" (355). It is the last part of this statement that tellingly reveals Collins's project as a Pre-Raphaelite one. The Pre-Raphaelites sought to portray the world—and its inhabitants—as an egalitarian space by actively challenging and dismantling hierarchies within the pictorial space of their canvases. Prettejohn notes Pre-Raphaelite attempts to portray "social mixing in urban spaces" (92). What's more, she also points out John Everett Millais' complex visual commentaries on the intersection of disability and class issues in *The Blind Man* (1853) and *The Blind Girl* (1854)—which Collins would have likely seen sketches of while penning *Hide and Seek*, due to his friendship with the artist. Like Millais, rather than resort to standard Victorian depictions of the disabled as defective humans or simplistic objects of sympathy, Collins's aim in *Hide and Seek* is to produce a more complex, realistic character than contemporary stereotypes would allow. Whether he succeeded, of course, is open to debate. Some scholars deride Madonna as a standard Victorian "idealised angel" (Cox 155); some argue that "Collins determinedly draws out the full sentimental potential of Madonna's plight" (Flint 158). But both criticisms are problematic: Madonna's sexuality is not as latent as that of Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House," and the passage Flint quotes—"Shall she never hear kindly human voices, the song of birds, the pleasant murmur of the trees again?" (Collins 87)—voices Valentine Blyth's point of view, which shifts to an arguably less protective attitude as Madonna matures into a young woman.

Of course, it can be argued that Madonna's physical attractiveness aids in rescuing her from absolute marginality; as David G. Pritchard writes of hearing- and visually-impaired Victorians, "[T]heir appearance did not occasion the revulsion which the physically handicapped produced, nor their actions the scorn leveled at the feeble minded" (217). Certainly, her iconographic and mythological associations hinge upon her beauty, whether it is perceived as sexually innocent (Marian) or transgressive (Venus-like). Yet both figures are also associated with the idea of perfection—moral, in the Holy Virgin's case and physical, in that of Venus. What then, should a thoughtful reader make of Collins's decision to locate both archetypes within a body produced "imperfectly" by Victorian standards of propriety (the illegitimate "child of sin," as Madonna's aunt declares in a letter) and deemed imperfect by Victorian standards of physical normativity? This flies in the face of not only conventional representations but also some

Pre-Raphaelite ones, particularly Rossetti's later paintings. A devotee of the feminine form, Rossetti abandoned his previous literary representations of biblical and Arthurian legends in the 1870s in order to focus on increasingly sexualized images of women (however unconventional his models might have seemed to nineteenth-century viewers); of Rossetti, Christopher Wood observes, "[T]here has been no greater worshipper of female beauty in English painting" (96). Certainly, it can be argued that Rossetti's "dark women" challenged conventional notions of beauty, eventually reconfiguring them altogether; *Astarte Syriaca* (1877), for instance, casts heavy-browed Jane Morris as a sturdy-framed, broad-shouldered Goddess of Love—hardly a petite, wasp-waisted image. However, Collins's earlier experimentation, which combines beauty with physical disability, restructures the Venus archetype in a far more radical manner than Rossetti's dark-haired women. Certainly, Madonna bears some markers of conventional femininity, which form "an important touchstone" for readers, even as "they are also called into question" (Law and Maunder 86). Yet Collins's repositioning of a "deaf-mute" as a novel's potential romantic heroine presents a notable challenge to the hegemonic social order, which cast the disabled as recipients of sympathy, but not equal participants in the games of courtship and/or seduction. Martha Stoddard Holmes observes that the bulk of Victorian texts "produce the consistent message that disability, almost by definition, removes or diverts a young woman from the normative sexual economy. Whatever social status or significance she gains, these narratives assert, she will not gain it from marriage" (61). In contrast, Collins "radically replotted disabled women's sexual and reproductive 'place' in at least three of his novels, transgressing not only the barrier of marriage but also that of childbearing."

Madonna has yet to make that leap by *Hide and Seek's* conclusion, an ending that Cox criticizes as problematic: "[T]he revelation that Zack is related to her denies her the personal fulfillment that so many of his [Collins's] other heroines eventually find in marriage" (151). Yet this reading is severely limited: after all, Madonna's adoptive mother has enjoyed a long, affectionate marriage as a disabled woman, a precedent Madonna may well go on to follow.⁹ Plus, Collins's refusal to wrap Madonna's story up

⁹ By the time Valentine and Lavinia Blyth adopt Madonna as a young orphan, the couple has successfully coped with social and emotional challenges in the aftermath of Mrs. Blyth's reduced mobility—which Collins attributes to a progressive "spinal malady"—for some years. Collins's narrative decision to remove Madonna from her designated social station as a circus performer (itself evocative of the problematic historic relationship between

in the conventionally neat package of marriage and "happily ever after" may signal a *different* sort of fulfillment and empowerment. Flint notes the power that Madonna's heightened compensatory mechanisms in the face of hearing loss bequeath to the young girl: "[N]ot only can she follow a conversation well without hearing the actual words, but she also becomes a preternaturally gifted judge of character" (158). Obviously, this gives Madonna a valuable means of evaluating future suitors. Moreover, it can be argued that Madonna's character gains *additional* sexual and symbolic power, due to her Pre-Raphaelite reconfiguration as Rossetti's *Mary Virgin* and her simultaneous, binary-straddling association with the Venus de Medici. Tapping the prototypical male responses to both figures, she is at once revered *and* desired by the men she encounters. In fact, Madonna's potential suitors are so numerous that Zack, at first, mistakes Mat's interest in her for amorous desire: "Oh, by Jove," he declares, "I wouldn't have missed this for fifty pounds. Here's old Rough and Tough smitten with the tender passion, like all the rest of us!" (Collins 204). More importantly, she has demonstrated through her earlier pursuit of Zack (not knowing he is her half-brother) that, as desired as she is by men, she is also capable of directing her *own* desire. By the book's end, her childlike crush on Zack has been snuffed out by the pair's newly discovered consanguinity, yet Madonna's romantic and sexual options are far from exhausted. As Zack cheerfully advises Mat earlier in the novel, "We're all in love with her; you're rowing in the same boat with Bullivant, and Gimble, and me, and lots more; and you'll get used to it in time, like the rest of us" (206). The implications of such statements are clear: regardless of her hearing impairment and a failed first love, Madonna is still very much a part of the normative sexual economy; she is the object of *eros*, instead of merely receiving the Victorian *pathos* typically directed at disabled women (Holmes 66). What's more, Madonna has the power to choose from a wide selection of potential marriage partners—if marriage is, indeed, her ultimate goal as she matures. She has the goddess Venus's beauty, to be sure, but she also has a degree of Venus's agency, an attribute that is far more radical and liberating by contemporary standards.

Hide and Seek is a young novelist's early attempt at emulating Pre-Raphaelite style—one which was surely subdued at the time by the pressures of his friendships with

so-called "freak shows" and physical difference) and place her, along with Lavinia Blyth, at the heart of the Victorian domestic sphere can be read as an early argument for full social inclusion, as well as a repudiation of the popular tendency to treat disabled bodies as objects of spectacle, exploitation, and/or revulsion.

an older generation of painters and with Dickens, who was openly hostile to realism in paintings of divine figures (Andres 9). Yet without making direct reference to the Brotherhood, Collins still manages to infuse his work with the spirit and style of the movement, a skill that later reached full bloom with his narrative redrawing of William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* in the opening pages of the 1860 mystery novel *The Woman in White*.¹⁰ Unfortunately, to date, the brevity of *Hide and Seek*, paired with its relative obscurity and simplicity of plot, has resulted in little scholarly attention, especially when compared with critical emphases on *The Woman in White* and Collins's other enduringly well-known mystery, 1868's *The Moonstone*. Yet Collins's literary treatment of Madonna is somewhat more complicated than many scholars have recognized, as it echoes the Pre-Raphaelites' visual experimentation with alternative social perspectives. This is a narrative dynamic which merits further examination, even in its early, experimental form.

Just as the Pre-Raphaelites portrayed individuals in staggering and complex detail, daring to "apotheosize the stigmatized and the ostracized" (Andres 40), Collins creates a character in *Hide and Seek* who would typically be stigmatized due to gender and disability, and imbues her with the attributes of not one, but two divine archetypes—an apotheosis in its own right. Her artistic output, paired with her pursuit of Zack, confirms that she is not only the object of the (presumably male artist's/spectator's) gaze: she is also its appropriator and its agent. Because of her complicated mixture of conventional femininity and unconventional subjectivity—as well as the subversive challenges she presents to Victorian hierarchies of physical "wholeness" versus "helplessness"—Madonna is worth a second look. And, as future art and literary scholars should note, so is *Hide and Seek*.¹¹

¹⁰ Andres points out Anne Catherick's dramatic appearance to Walter Hartright, a scene "whose depiction follows the Pre-Raphaelite techniques of light and shade," as a reconfiguration of Christ's appearance to contemporary gallery viewers of Hunt's painting—one which similarly throws issues of gender, perception, and identity into question (80–81).

¹¹ The author wishes to thank Sophia Andres at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin and Qwo-Li Diskill and Stephanie Wheeler at Texas A&M University for their generous feedback and critiques during the writing and revision of this article.

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Beating them to the *Punch*: Satirizing
Sensation from the 1860s Comic Journal
to Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife*

by Joyce E. Kelley

Auburn University Montgomery

In 1864, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, already dominating the sensation scene with the wildly popular *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–62) and *Aurora Floyd* (1862–63), produced a new variety of fiction which the *Saturday Review*—pleased that Braddon's talents were being "applied in a . . . more wholesome direction"—termed "a novel of character" (qtd. in Wolff 166). Weary of the critics who "have pelted me with the word 'sensational,' and who will gird me so long as I write a line" (163), Braddon decided to try her hand at domestic realism. The resulting novel, *The Doctor's Wife*, depicts a beautiful young reader of romance, Isabel Sleaford, who is dangerously bored by married life. In a sly move to distance the text further from her previous genre, Braddon also introduces the character of Sam "Sigismund" Smith, a sensation author whom modern critics have described as both Braddon's "own mouthpiece" (126) and her "fictional *alter ego*" (Pykett, Introduction ix). Through Mr. Smith, Braddon exaggerates the characteristics of the sensation genre, good-naturedly parodying the very work which has brought her success.¹ While Smith's stories run counter to Braddon's realist plot, *The Doctor's Wife* is not straightforward realism; despite its lofty goals, the resulting novel—with its elements of suspense, concealed identity, forgery, murder, and all-but-adultery—still retains smudges of Braddon's sensational pen. While some of her critics believed this to reveal her unbreakable attachment to the genre, Braddon's plot functions as satire on a larger level. *The Doctor's Wife* thus proves crucial in two respects: it appears at an

¹ Mr. Smith's "character simultaneously satirizes and celebrates the sensation genre" (Pykett, Introduction x).

opportune moment in the history of sensation satire, and through it Braddon both reacts to and subversively anticipates satirization, her critics' sharpest and wittiest tool.

Although Catherine J. Golden recently has written on Braddon's "censoring" of sensation in *The Doctor's Wife*, and both Robert Lee Wolff and Lyn Pykett have taken considerable interest in Sigismund as a character, no one has yet explicitly connected Braddon's satiric portrayal with the satires of sensation fiction emerging in the comic journals of the day.² These humorous commentaries began with cartoons mocking the powerful influence of sensation novels on the imaginations of readers and quickly turned into full-fledged, serialized satires lampooning the perceived moral and literary shortcomings of the genre. These parodies formed part of a larger backlash in the press in the 1860s against the "new" and scandalous genre, popularly conceived to have begun with Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859–60).³ Characterized by "deranged heroes and (more especially) heroines" and labyrinthine plots of mystery, terror, and deception, these novels revealed the shocking secrets to be found in the lives of ordinary middle-class citizens (Pykett, *Sensation* 4). This alluring mixture of the lurid and the everyday earned the genre many enemies who feared that naïve young readers would mistake fiction for reality.

The "sensation debate" surfacing in mainstream periodicals and quarterlies soon developed into one of the most prominent discussions of the Victorian era.⁴ The genre's opponents attacked sensation from a number of angles. Its stimulating effect, heightened by serialized publication, provoked accusations of addiction and dependency. In an 1862 article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Margaret Oliphant remarks that "the stimulant has acted strongly, and . . . [the result] has been a significant and remarkable quickening of public interest" (565). Henry Mansel similarly professes in the *Quarterly Review* that these novels "stimulate the want which they supply" and strive "to act as the dram or dose, rather than as the solid food" (qtd. in Maunder 33, 35). The metaphor of

² To my knowledge, there are no explicit studies of sensation satire. Although inserting selections from comic periodicals into a volume of scholarly discussions of sensation fiction has become increasingly popular, these pieces, most often cartoons from *Punch*, are rarely discussed. See, for example, P. D. Edwards; Maunder, Appendix; and recent Broadview editions of Braddon's novels.

³ The term "sensation fiction" was neither popular nor derogatory until the early 1860s (Maunder, General Introduction xxxix N30). See also Maunder, Introduction which places the genre's inception in 1855 or earlier. Sigismund Smith wrote sensation in 1852: he's a "sensation author," though "[t]hat bitter term of reproach" had not yet been invented (*DW* 11).

⁴ Such modern critics as Maunder, Wolff, and Casey have recently taken an interest in the "sensation debate."

appetite also comes into play in the 1863 essay "Mrs. Wood and Miss Braddon" from *Littell's Living Age*: "If Mrs. Wood desires to run a race of popularity with Miss Braddon, there must be no baulking of the reader's appetite for bigamy and murder; there must be constant addition instead of diminution of the dose of cayenne in the literary curry" (100). In 1864, *The Times* similarly employed imagery of a heavily seasoned indulgence, remarking that "the acquired taste for exciting works of fiction has begotten a distaste for wholesome reading, as highly seasoned dishes spoil the appetite for simple food" ("Opinion" 8).

Other popular critiques focused on the "depravity" of the authors themselves. Richard Fantina and Kimberly Harrison note, "For Victorian reviewers, the authors' private lives provided fuel for their criticism of societal improprieties they found within the novels" (xiv–xv).⁵ Braddon particularly came under attack for leading a less than conventional lifestyle, first beginning her career as an actress and later living and having children with a man who was already married.⁶ The Reverend Paget proclaimed in 1868 that sensation writers "abused their power and prostituted their gifts" and would lure their readers into their own corrupt world (qtd. in Pykett, *Sensation* 40). To add insult to injury, many critics characterized the works not only as immoral but also as aesthetically bereft. Hastily written and hastily read, sensation was viewed as disposable fiction; some reviewers believed Braddon wrote well but should apply her talents more responsibly. In his 1863 *Quarterly Review* article, Henry Mansel called *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* "the works of an author of real power, who is capable of better things" (qtd. in Maunder 40). The press's critiques encouraged Braddon to rethink her literary agenda,⁷ eventually leading her to publish *The Doctor's Wife*. Braddon was not the only one determined to take the sensation genre in a new direction, however; at this crucial moment in Braddon's career, the comic journals were beginning to respond to sensation in their own way.

⁵ Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, for example, had children out of wedlock (Fantina and Harrison xv); but, according to Victorian society's sexual double standard, a woman author's misdeeds were far more scandalous.

⁶ Braddon was first attacked for immorality in her novels and later for depravity in her personal life by Mrs. Oliphant and others. See Wolff (188 and following).

⁷ The same month the 1863 *Quarterly Review* article appeared, Braddon wrote to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, "I fear I shall never write a *genial* novel." She admitted that serial writing encouraged her to produce "over-strained action to sustain the interest" and worried that her drive for artistry always would be overwhelmed by her desire to satisfy the public (qtd. in Wolff 155).

The Sensation Satire is Born

While the sensation debates raged in the comparatively scholarly forum of quarterly reviews, popular comic journals such as *Punch*, *The Tomahawk*, and *The Mask* reflected the discussion with humorous vigor. As early as April 1861, *Punch* published an illustration depicting a man reading Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* startled in the night by the "apparition" of his wife in a white nightgown (Fig. 1). The ghostly Mrs. Tomkins queries, "Pray, Mr. Tomkins, are you Never coming Up-stairs? How much longer are you going to Sit up with that 'Woman in White?'" ("Awful Apparition!" 140).



AWFUL APPARITION!

Mrs. T. (to T., who has been reading the popular novel). "PRAY, MR. TOMKINS, ARE YOU NEVER COMING UP-STAIRS? HOW MUCH LONGER ARE YOU GOING TO SIT UP WITH THAT 'WOMAN IN WHITE?'"

(Fig. 1) "Awful Apparition!"

The cartoon draws on characteristics highlighted in critical reviews: readers' inability to put down "the popular novel"; their failure to distinguish fantasy from reality; and the implication of virtual adultery (Mr. Tomkins strays from his marriage bed to "Sit up with that 'Woman in White'"). A similar cartoon in *Punch* (May 1863) shows two servants in

the kitchen discussing *Aurora Floyd*, pronounced "Aroorer" by the manservant. The young housemaid, her fears roused by the text, asks imploringly, "Oh, Jeames, you won't desert me for our young Missus, will you, dear?" ("Aurora" 179). By positing readers' confusion between fiction and reality, the cartoon casts the young woman as foolish and naïve and mocks those threatened by sensation novels' deviancy.⁸ While *Punch's* commentary was playful, its goal was comedy with a purpose. As Spielmann relates in *The History of Punch* (1895), "*Punch* has worked as a teacher as well as a jester" (1), drawing attention to current societal problems and hoping to rectify them while having fun. The comic journals alerted readers to their unhealthy sensation habits by drawing upon the very same issues raised in more "serious" periodicals; daring and clever, their rapier wit held remarkable power that struck far past the funny bone.

In May 1863, with the sensation debates heating to a full blaze, *Punch* published a "Prospectus of a New Journal"—*The Sensation Times, and Chronicle of Excitement*—which promised its readers a sensation novel containing "atrocities hitherto undreamed of [after] the Society for the Suppression of Vice" is sufficiently paid off (193). Modern critic P. D. Edwards accurately calls this satiric advertisement *Punch's* attempt "to restore sanity" to a society eagerly consuming the new sensation genre (5). Perhaps the most important publication of 1863 in *Punch*, however, was the emergence of "Mokeanna," a full-blown serialized sensation parody. The story, written by Francis Cowley Burnand and illustrated by five different *Punch* cartoonists spoofing their own illustration styles, contains a plot replete with arson, kidnapping, and murder, as well as "the Moke Anna," a sleep-walking donkey. Turning on hidden identities and past crimes, the story plays up all the sensation novel's key characteristics until, by the end, practically all of the characters are revealed to be bigamists. *Punch's* "Mokeanna" was one of the most significant comic publications of the period, due to the attention it attracted from well-known authors. M. H. Spielmann's *The History of "Punch"* notes that Charles Dickens adored the story (365), while Thackeray wished he had written it himself (90). The popular story was followed by parodies in other periodicals, including Thomas Hood's "Maurora Maudley; or, Bigamy and Buttons," a collection of illustrations and captions printed in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in December 1864. The events in popular sensation

⁸ Harrison and Fantina write, "Along with many other sensation novels, *Aurora Floyd* demonstrates that class difference is not immutable" (xx). See also Lillian Nayder (Harrison and Fantina 188–99) for a discussion of the *Aurora Floyd* character Conyers, who is alluded to by the young woman servant in this cartoon.

novels were already verging on the extreme in order to keep the reader enthralled; once such characteristics were exaggerated and highlighted in the short comic journal format, they became uproarious.

Indeed, *Punch* was on to something, for this type of parody could serve a complex critical function. Instead of taking aspects of the fiction's style and pointing out its patterns or deficiencies, the parodist must take the critique a step further by rewriting the original text in an exaggerated manner which indirectly highlights these aspects. As Margaret A. Rose explains in her work *Parody // Meta-Fiction*, "the work to be parodied is decoded by the parodist and offered again (encoded) in a 'distorted' form to another decoder, the reader, who—knowing and having previously decoded the original—is in a position to compare it to its new form in the parody" (26). Thus parody demands that both its writer and its readers be fluent in the original form: in this case, experts of the sensation genre. Donald J. Gray notes how the audience for the comic periodical must have been "conventionally educated" to be able to "laugh at the . . . parodies of literary texts," people who "read new books and attended new plays" (3). The parodist had the potential to take the immersed sensation reader and either transform his habits by revealing the flaws of his genre or over-satisfy the "appetite" for sensationalism in such a way that he would feel unpleasantly stuffed.

By the mid- to late-1860s, the comic periodicals had become adept at critiquing the cravings of sensation readers through narrative play, reflecting exactly those criticisms addressed by the quarterlies and monthly magazines. For example, the August 1867 issue of *The Tomahawk* plays on the popular analogy between sensation fiction and food by including it on its list of "Recipes for Authors." Under the headline "How to Write a Sensation Novel," we find instructions: "Take two breaches of the seventh commandment, and one breach of the eighth, and mix well together" (159). Besides mocking the genre's criminal tendencies, this "recipe" takes a stab at writers who compose their work according to a set pattern, making it all too easily produced and reproduced. Similar ridicule of sensation literature's production occurs in *The Tomahawk's* 1867 drama, "Fowl Play." When the author, "Miss Orderly," a thinly disguised version of Braddon, asks to produce a novel "without a crime if possible," her editor responds that "you would not be read, my dear" (219). Miss Orderly relents, but wants to "get it over at once." She envisions a dentist villain who plans to poison another

character with beef tea, sharply reminiscent of a character in Braddon's recently published *Birds of Prey* (1866); this reference is made explicit when he vows, "If I don't bring in, with Miss Orderly's kind assistance, Poison, Forgery, Bigamy, and Assassination, I am no Bird of Prey." The witty drama makes intriguing assumptions about the quick and dirty process of creating a sensation novel to satisfy readers' deviant sweet-tooths. The drama ends with the publisher telling Miss Orderly, "You'll have to cram the next three [volumes] with a double amount of jam; and if you don't break fifteen out of the ten commandments, you are not the woman I took you for."

Echoing the anxieties put forth by the mainstream press, a piece in the short-lived comic journal *The Mask* (Feb.–Dec. 1868) plays upon the assumption that a sensation author's life runs a course parallel to her work. The 1868 essay "Miss Braddon" begins by describing "what readers will expect us to tell" about her ("Mask's" 137). This is the story of how Braddon was found "attached by gold thread to the knocker of a convent in Mount Athos" and, echoing plot points from *Lady Audley's Secret*, was hidden "in a secret drawer till her growth rendered concealment impossible." Braddon then attended a ladies' school until a "modern mummy" appeared in the "kitchen-garden," and she would have been forced into "untimely trigony" if a noble duke, who had narrowly escaped death after his wife had "shut him up in a flue," had not rescued her just in time. The story continues in this vein but ultimately jolts the reader back to reality by concluding, "All this and much more, we might be expected to narrate had it happened." While this article plays merrily on the sensational themes of family secrets, concealment, murder, entrapment, and bigamy taken to the next degree, it also skillfully mocks the very critics who have been so eager to condemn Braddon for her lifestyle.

This example illustrates how the satirist's power may work in several directions; perhaps this writer's deftest maneuver is to have fun at the sensation fiction reader's expense: for what we expect is not what we get. Indeed, the comic periodicals generally reveal that it is just as much fun to play with the journal's real reader as to mock the hypothetical one. This is revealed in the full-fledged parodies appearing in the years following the success of "Mokeanna." One such work, *Punch's* serialized sensation story "Chikken Hazard," is announced in the March 7, 1868 issue as "The first novel by the Sensational Novel Company (Limited)," composed by the author of "Lady Disorderly's Secret" and nineteen others ("New" 105). *Punch* hinges its parody on both the process of

production and the structure of the text itself. Because the writers can never agree on anything disastrous results ensue, and we read all about their struggles in the hilarious footnotes. The work is commissioned to have “the most startling, most thrilling, most exciting plot” attainable. As a result, both plot and character are sacrificed to unexpected events and lurid, but often unrealized, crimes. The writers parody the common “cliffhanger” trick of narrative deferral with ridiculously truncated endings. For instance, chapter one mysteriously ends, “But not on the prostrate form of Job Friestlor fell the cold steel,” while chapter two mischievously adds, “For the form of Job Friestlor was not prostrate” (March 14: 112). In a similar vein, chapter two ends, “Leaping upwards, he—” (113) while one must wait for the next chapter to discover the sentence’s conclusion. The reader is never satisfied; every time the text hints at a shocking event about to occur, the event is left disappointingly unaccomplished.⁹

Following *Punch*’s lead, from January to March of 1869 *The Tomahawk* published the serialized story “Dropped Among the Prigs,” playing to a reader conditioned to the traits and twists of sensation. When the narrator reveals that a character “had not always been a Baronet,” we expect to hear of his secret past. When we are told instead that he had “not always been a Baronet” because “he had once been a baby,” we feel more than a little silly (Jan. 23: 39). Similarly, at the end of chapter five, playfully entitled “In Which the Stranger Does What he Ought to Have Done in the Last Chapter,” we learn that “The Stranger seized the poker!” (Jan. 30: 51). What we expect is gruesome violence; what we find is that “He put it solemnly in the fire.” These examples hint that sensationalism is not in the story at all but in the mind of the reader; the implication is that the reader needs to purify his or her mind, ridding it of sensational expectations. After we become immune to this trick, the author tries exaggerating the conventions of the genre instead. What was once contained in the predisposed mind of the reader now appears on the page itself. In chapter fourteen, where the term “sensation” is used twice in relation to the responses of the startled characters, we find that a man has been murdered with a corkscrew (Feb. 27: 95).

⁹ “Chikken Hazard” flaps indefatigably on for thirty chapters. Scattered amidst 163 pages of the journal, it details, among other preposterous events, a father and son’s dispute while trapped in a rapidly flooding cave, a balloon theft by the son, and the son’s arrival on an island inhabited by a boatman and daughter who have built their home upon a once extinct volcano.

Such parodies reveal how comic writers made ample use of their knowledge about the genre to critique it through exaggerated mimicry. Some obviously have Mary Elizabeth Braddon in mind, from the explicit article on “Miss Braddon” in *The Mask* to the playful skits with Braddon-like authors whose names remind us of her infamous character Lady Audley. No one escapes the comic writers’ wit—not the writers, readers, or even publishers of sensation fiction. These writers not only reflect the sensation debate of the time in their own journals: they outshine it through their shrewd humor and, at times, through mocking the very critical notions they are employing. What these writers may or may not have realized, however, is that Braddon was beating them to the punch, all puns intended.

Braddon makes her move: “The Doctor’s Wife”

When Braddon began *The Doctor’s Wife* in 1863, the comic journals were just beginning to gain momentum in their play with the sensation form, made popular by *Punch*’s “Mokeanna.” The serialized parody, which spoofed the type of bigamy plots Braddon frequently employed, likely drew enough literary recognition for Braddon to have been aware of its existence. M. H. Spielmann’s *History of “Punch”* offers a point of extreme importance in considering Braddon’s relationship to this text: the layout of “Mokeanna” was designed to look exactly like a page of the *London Journal*, causing an unusual response when the first issue appeared in late February 1863:

The proprietors rushed down to the office, terrified with the thought that, by accident, the ‘London Journal’ had been sewn up with *Punch*, and it took a lot of explanation in Mark Lemon’s best manner to make them see the joke in its right light. The success of the experiment was immediate. (qtd. in Spielmann 364)

The emulation of the *London Journal* style became part of the celebrity of “Mokeanna.” Unfortunately for Braddon, the parody’s printing appeared concurrently with the illustrated reprinting of *Lady Audley’s Secret* in the actual *London Journal* beginning in March 1863. *Lady Audley’s Secret* already had appeared in three-volume form in October 1862 and had been serialized fully in *Sixpenny Magazine* after its first journal, *Robin Goodfellow*, folded in 1861 in mid-release of the work. The fact that Braddon’s novel had been serialized not just once but three times attested to its success; but the outrageously

popular story of the donkey Mokeanna arrived just in time to pin the tail on Braddon's achievement.

Most notably, in April 1863, "Mokeanna" is prominently mentioned in the anonymous article "Mrs. Wood and Miss Braddon" appearing in *Littell's Living Age*. Mrs. Wood, having a "delicacy that restrains her," is playfully characterized as "falling behind" Braddon in the sensation race (99). The critic advises Mrs. Wood to "study *Punch*, read in the profound pages of that philosopher the thrilling romance of 'Mokeanna,' and write something like that" (100). Inspired by *Punch*, the article develops into a crossover between a scathing scholarly review and a comic parody. The author devotes almost an entire page of the essay to rewriting Braddon's fiction, replacing bigamy with octogamy and inventing a sensation author who, writing between meals, creates three murderous polygamist heroines in one day—including one who, having poisoned twenty-seven lovers, flies off "to sunny Italy . . . with the stable boy." The author laments, "We have not yet quite reached this perfection of sensation writing, but are fairly on the way to it." More blatantly than any of the comic journal writers, this essayist overtly critiques sensation fiction by parodying the commentary of critical literary reviews.¹⁰ Moreover, the critic conflates parody with actual sensation fiction until "perfection" in sensation novels becomes equal to the most outrageous events possible. This motley article implies that something remarkable was happening to the sensation genre by 1863: it was itself in danger of degenerating into self-parody to satisfy its readers.

It was at this critical moment that Braddon decided to create *The Doctor's Wife*, her experiment in high art.¹¹ *The Doctor's Wife* doubly renounces the sensation genre through its satiric portrayal of sensation writing. In the novel, which began serialized publication in January 1864, Braddon mocks precisely the same traits of sensation fiction that the comic journals had just begun to deride, and which they do not fully ridicule until years later. This reveals that Braddon was aware of the excessive nature of her genre which, so intent on putting the "sin" in sensation, became a natural target for satire. Writing to Bulwer-Lytton in 1862, she admitted she was "not elated by the superficial

¹⁰ In 1868, the Reverend Paget would produce a more straightforward satire/critical commentary combination in *Lucretia: or, the Heroine of the Nineteenth Century*, a satire followed by a diatribe against sensation fiction.

¹¹ Catherine J. Golden sees the novel as a literary "makeover" that Braddon hoped her critics "would not simply dismiss as 'sensational'" (30).

success" of her "bigamy novels": "The amount of crime, treachery, murder, slow poisoning, and general infamy required by the halfpenny reader is something terrible" (qtd. in Wolff 154, 126). Like the comic journalists, Braddon acknowledges that the whole sensation system, and not just the author, is at fault. Elsewhere she places the blame on her editor, Edmund Yates of *Temple Bar*, where *The Doctor's Wife* first appeared: "it seems you want the right-down sensational; floppings at the end of chapters, and bits of paper hidden in secret drawers, bank-notes and title-deeds under the carpet, and a part of the body putrefying in the coal-scuttle" (qtd. in Edwards 22). This passage, revealing Braddon's natural knack for mocking her own genre's conventions, including its suspenseful form and its stories of concealment and murder, prefigures the author/publisher interaction later spoofed in *The Tomahawk*, in which the publisher implies that one may sell copies only by adding the strangest plot twists.

In *The Doctor's Wife*, Braddon's boldest move is her prominent parody of her own vocation in the outrageous depiction of the "sensation author" Sigismund Smith. Smith's appearance in the opening chapters indicates Braddon's deliberate calculation to use him to distinguish this novel from her former works. While Smith's last name is undoubtedly commonplace, it is possible that Braddon borrows it from *Littell's* article, whose author mentions a certain "Mr. Smith" writing for "penny weeklies," whose name might be placed alongside Shakespeare's (99). Braddon's Mr. Smith similarly "appeared in weekly numbers at a penny" (*DW* 11) and longs to write his *magnum opus*. *Littell's* critic snidely suggested that Mrs. Wood emulate *Punch* to sell her fiction; but it is Miss Braddon who actually does so, revealing both superior wit and a willingness to play her critics' game of satire through a fully-fledged rendition of Mr. Smith in her own work.

Braddon uses Smith to introduce Dr. George Gilbert to his bride-to-be, Isabel Sleaford, but he also serves a larger purpose: as a writer, he enthusiastically overdoes literary sensationalism to such a degree that it becomes comical. Braddon's decision to create such a character may reveal a wish to participate in a comic genre she saw in development; after all, no one was better prepared than she to parody sensation, knowing firsthand the secrets of the trade. Most significantly, however, Braddon had her own personal agenda in mind, letting Sigismund Smith serve as her thinly veiled counterpart.¹² Braddon, too, began her career working in "penny numbers" (*DW* 45) and "had her

¹² Wolff also sees Smith as a stand-in for Braddon (126–33).

ambition" to leave sensation behind "to write a great novel" (11): for author and character, the dream of writing a "*magnum opus*" has yet to be realized (12).¹³ Smith, as a stand-in for Braddon, can represent her to the public in any way she desires. While he is a character steeped in the art of sensation, Smith is also a good man and one of the most likable characters in the novel. An author who can laugh at her own literary techniques without stooping to self-deprecation becomes endearing to the public; through her hilarious self-parody, Braddon is able to capture the hearts of her critics. Moreover, by using Smith to spoof her own art form, Braddon is empowered, shielding herself from critique by acknowledging the flaws of her genre and by making use of her critics' tool—the art of parody—for her own ends.

First, Braddon anticipates the comic journals' satires of the belief that the sensation author inhabits a sensational world. The narrator notes that readers "had their own idea of what the author of *The Smuggler's Bride* and *Lilia the Deserted* ought to be, and Mr. Smith did not at all come up to the popular standard" (DW 13). By popular opinion, he should have been a "splendid creature . . . with a pale face and fierce black eyes" surrounded by an "oak-panelled chamber . . . with grotesque and diabolical carvings," a mysteriously veiled picture whose observer would meet with "certain death," a collection of weapons, and various exotic animals (14). The real Sigismund Smith cannot compare to his imagined persona, being but "a young man with perennial ink-smudges upon his face . . . with nothing more romantic than a waste-paper basket, a litter of old letters and tumbled proofs, and a cracked teapot simmering on the hob." This joke prefigures *The Mask's* 1868 entry "Miss Braddon" that ridicules readers' expectations about sensation authors, showing "what readers will expect us to tell" about Braddon instead of her real history. Both texts first create a fanciful image of the sensation writer and then expose the readers' fantasy to reveal a commonplace individual.

Through Smith's descriptions of his literary plots, Braddon mocks her own sensation fiction: we especially see this when Smith discusses his character "Aureola" (DW 46), a scandalous derivative of Braddon's own "Aurora."¹⁴ Aureola's text satirizes the popular sensation plot structure of the hidden becoming revealed as she constantly is being buried

¹³ Braddon wrote to Bulwer-Lytton about the novel "I mean to write," stating, "This unfinished novel always seems destined to become my *magnum opus*" (qtd. in Wolff 161).

¹⁴ Braddon thus anticipates the silly variations on her own characters' names that we see in "Fowl Play" (1867) and "Chikken Hazard" (1868).

alive and then dug out again. When George first visits Mr. Smith, he learns all about his friend's favored genre. Upon inquiring whether Sigismund's novel contains any suicides, George receives this response:

a suicide in the *Smuggler's Bride!* why, it teems with suicides. There's the Duke of Port St. Martin's, who walls himself up alive in his own cellar; and there's Leonie de Pasdebasque, the ballet-dancer, who throws herself out of Count Caesar Maraschetti's private balloon; and there's Lilia, the dumb girl . . . who sets fire to herself to escape from the—in fact, there's lots of them. (12)

This, too, is in some ways a self-parody: a writer for the *London Quarterly Review* had noted Braddon's characters' "frequent contemplation of suicide as the refuge from all human griefs" (qtd. in Maunder 80). Braddon thus satirizes herself and her critics by upping the ante in Smith's work.

In this passage, we also glimpse the extraordinary extent to which Braddon had her finger on the pulse of current periodical humor. *Punch's Almanac for 1864* contains a comic illustration called "The Sensation Novel," depicting two ladies seated together in a cozy corner of a fashionable home, one holding an open book (Fig. 2). The caption reads: "Yes, dear. I've got the last one down, and it's Perfectly Delicious. A Man Marries his Grandmother—Fourteen Persons are Poisoned by a young and beautiful Girl—Forgeries by the dozen—Robberies, Hangings; in fact, full of Delightful Horrors!" Here, sensational violence literally enters the Victorian drawing room on a lady's lips; the cartoon mocks the conventions of sensation literature and takes them to a new extreme in its satiric creation. This is precisely the effect of Sigismund Smith's comment about his own work, and the two passages have qualities that are remarkably similar: the speaker's excitement in relating these events, the outlandish acts connected by the use of dashes to show their abundance, and the final interruption of the list with "in fact," followed by the admission of the sheer number of accounts to relate. This first installment of Braddon's novel (Jan. 1864) would have appeared almost simultaneously with the publication of the *Almanac*, which traditionally rang in the new year; therefore, readers may have had both satiric takes in their parlors at once. However coincidentally, this reveals Braddon's

PUNCH'S ALMANACK FOR 1864.



(Fig. 2) "The Sensation Novel"

ability to preempt much of the comic response to sensation with her own ideas.¹⁵

Braddon even uses Smith to play upon the rhetoric of consumption and addiction which the periodical parodies employ. Speaking about the number of dead bodies required by popular tastes, Sigismund states, "And when you've once had recourse to the stimulant of bodies, you're like a man who's accustomed to strong liquors, and to whose vitiated palate simple drinks seem flat and wishy-washy" (*DW* 47). His use of the word "palate" is significant, for it connects the discourse of "the alcoholic elements of fiction," the "strong liquors," to the discourse of food. Smith's manner of crafting novels is not explicitly named in terms of food imagery; but his notion of "a combination novel," which involves "tak[ing] a little bit all round" (45), evokes *The Tomahawk's* "Recipes for

¹⁵ Braddon wrote this chapter but did not publish it before the appearance of the 1864 *Punch's Almanac*. Sigismund's work in progress has other elements which look ahead to the comic journal parodies; years later, entrapment occurs as a theme in several parodies, as does suicide. Even the balloon appears later in "Chikkin Hazard." In fact, the more we compare *Punch* and Braddon, the more it seems that Braddon has done it all before.

Authors" and resembles *Punch's* "Chikkin Hazard," a story concocted from multiple sources. Sigismund's tendency to "steal other people's ideas" makes him very similar to Braddon, who based many of her plots on others' works and, at several points in her career, was accused of plagiarism. He also speaks of drawing fiction from French sources, merely turning Notre Dame into St. Paul's; Braddon here makes light of her own novel's design, modeled on Flaubert's scandalous French novel, *Madame Bovary* (1857).

Indeed, like Sigismund's "combination story," *The Doctor's Wife* is a kind of "combination satire," employing two differently colored but not altogether contrasting threads.¹⁶ First, Braddon has taken her French source material and softened it to suit English tastes;¹⁷ next, she has interwoven counternarratives created by the imaginations of two of her characters. At the center of the novel stands one writer, Sigismund, and one reader, Isabel. The friends feed off one another, with Sigismund getting inspiration from Isabel for his own work. Both characters are satirical; Isabel is addicted to reading romances, "beautiful sweet-meats, with opium inside the sugar" (*DW* 24). This is again the language of the sensation debates; as Lyn Pykett asserts, the text "displaces the discourse of addiction from sensation fiction on to romance" (Introduction xi). Isabel is a parody of the way sensation readers have been portrayed by the public, a girl "so absorbed by the interest of the page before her that she did not even lift her eyes when the two men went close up to her" (*DW* 23).¹⁸ Isabel's faults are her naïveté and her sheltered existence, not just her reading habits; as Sigismund asserts, "Novels are only dangerous for those poor foolish girls who read nothing else, and think their lives to be paraphrases of their favorite books" (30). As in Braddon's letters, the blame falls on the reader rather than the writer; Sigismund tells George, "the penny public require excitement . . . and in order to get the excitement up to a strong point, you're obliged to have recourse to bodies" (47). These two characters in combination create a satire far more complex than any seen thus far in a comic periodical; just as Sigismund is a version of Braddon, Isabel might be seen as a version of the novel's potential reader. The difference of course is that

¹⁶ I am not the first to apply Sigismund Smith's term to *The Doctor's Wife*. Albert C. Sears writes that, in this text, "the combination novel represents a blend of fictional modes. This form provides a writer a way to capture a different market of readers, especially when her reputation is already constricted" (44). Sears's main focus is Braddon's *Vixen* (1879).

¹⁷ On Braddon's interests in French realism, see Jennifer Carnell (ch. 4).

¹⁸ This also anticipates the way the heroine would be portrayed in Paget's satire *Lucretia* (1868), where she keeps intently reading *Aurora Floyd* though a wasp has stung her on the ankle.

Isabel, while amusing, is also pitiful, and the reader is likely to become repulsed by her appetite for the sensational. The novel satirizes its own reader by undermining expectations about the sensation genre.

Serialized in *Temple Bar*, *The Doctor's Wife* was advertised as "By the Author of Lady Audley's Secret," encouraging readers to categorize it with Braddon's highly successful sensation novel (155). Once readers encountered Sigismund, however, they would see that Braddon was up to something unusual; while Mr. Smith's plots satisfy sensational cravings, Braddon's own "realist" plot runs parallel. Meanwhile, Braddon realizes that her audience includes many sensation fiction enthusiasts, and her novel thwarts many of their expectations. In one case, her novel borders on the metatextual when, after the Sleafords disappear suddenly for America, leaving behind only a brief note, Sigismund comments, "I've never heard of such a thing in all my life With the exception of their going away in a four-wheeler cab instead of through a sliding panel and subterranean passage, it's for all the world like penny numbers" (*DW* 40). Just as soon as Braddon's realist plot borders on sensationalism, she uses Smith to mock it, thus distancing it from her former genre. In this way, *The Doctor's Wife* conforms to traditional nineteenth-century novelists' uses of parody, as articulated by Simon Dentith: for writers like Thackeray, Austen, and Eliot, "parody of certain stigmatized modes" acts "as a kind of guarantee of their realist credentials" (30).

When Isabel reappears without her family, Braddon continues to insert sensational plot elements through Isabel's romance-inspired imagination. George can serve for the moment as Isabel's "prince," but we are informed that masochistic Isabel "would have worshipped an aristocratic Bill Sykes, and would have been content to die under his cruel hand" (*DW* 72). There is much more sensationalism in Isabel's imagination than in the plot of which she is a part. Indeed, Isabel and Sigismund share similar imaginative potentials; the difference is that Sigismund uses his imagination for his art while Isabel uses hers to construct a false reality in which to live. Braddon hints that Isabel may be more dangerous than she seems; to the accustomed reader, this would be consistent with such heroines as Lady Audley. Even before the couple marry, George's gardener claims that Isabel had "somethin' that wasn't love lookin' out o' hearn" that he had once seen in his friend Joe's wife. Poor Joe "was found one summer's morning . . . hanging dead

behind the door of one of his barns" (96). However, readers' expectations never play out: Isabel remains completely listless throughout the text.¹⁹

Those familiar with *Madame Bovary* will remember the story of young Emma, the doctor's wife, who spends her youth immersed in romantic books and ultimately poisons herself after a series of unsatisfying affairs leaves her unable to enter the world of fantasy she desires. These readers, as guilty of reading scandalous French novels as Isabel Sleaford, expect Braddon's young heroine—steeped in her own world of imagination—to follow Emma Bovary's path. Instead, while Isabel falls in love with the romantic young poet Roland Lansdell, she rejects his plan to make her his mistress; thus, she never fully gets carried away by her fantasies. Unlike Emma, she never attempts suicide, although Isabel wishes for death many times in the novel. Indeed, Isabel remains so innocent that the idea of leaving her husband "was as far beyond her power of comprehension as the possibility that she might steal a handful of arsenic out of . . . the surgery, and mix it with the sugar that sweetened George Gilbert's matutinal coffee" (*DW* 276). Catherine Golden suggests that the novel challenges the "addictiveness and immorality" of sensation through Isabel; because Isabel is rewarded for not acting like a typical sensation heroine, the text reveals that "tempting fiction, despite its addictiveness, need not have permanent effects" (32). Its attitude toward sensation becomes more complex, however, when we consider Braddon's playful tone. Braddon's language in the previous quote reveals how, disregarding Isabel, sensation persists in the mind of the reader; she sneaks in the sensationalism her readers expect through its very absence. Braddon teases her sensation readers; anticipating the parodists of the comic journals, she shows how sensation can exist more in the mind of the reader than on the written page itself. So long as readers carry their sensational expectations with them, a realist plot will never fully satisfy.

Like her fictional counterpart, "Miss Orderly," who wanted the ability to produce "a novel without a crime if possible," Braddon yearned to create a less sensational text. Near the end of the novel, the narrator reminds the reader, "This is *not* a sensation novel" (*DW* 358), but its distinction from the form is not always clear. Albert C. Sears has located an oscillation between the sensational and "antisensational" in Braddon's novels, notably in

¹⁹ Sears has similarly found in *Vixen* (1879) that Braddon "manipulates and subverts" her readers' expectations (41). I agree with Sears that "To understand her simultaneous engagement and resistance to the sensation fiction marketplace, we need a reading practice that is dialogic, one that reads for generic expectation, but also attends to the ways her narratives surpass generic boundaries" (51). The more we investigate Braddon's works, the more levels of subtlety we find.

her later work, *Vixen* (1879). Something similar occurs in *The Doctor's Wife*, particularly in the last chapters. Isabel is not responsible for the death of George after all, for he suffers a mundane and ironic end from typhoid fever and dies without knowing Isabel's unfaithful thoughts. In a letter to Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon defended her choice to kill off George in this way: "Why not admit accident in a story, when almost all the great tragedies of real life hinge upon accident?" (qtd. in Wolff 166). Braddon upholds her wish to make her novel close to "real life"; nonetheless, it hits home with a gruesomely sensational finish in the death of Isabel's object of affection, Roland Lansdell. The only incidence of foreshadowing in the text that comes to fruition is Isabel's incarcerated father's promise to someday kill Mr. Lansdell, who once testified against him in court. When Mr. Lansdell sees Isabel embracing her father, he mistakes Mr. Sleaford for Isabel's lover. Until this point in the story, the sensation has resided only in the minds of the characters; suddenly, a brutal struggle occurs, allowing Braddon to be as sensational as she wishes. Isabel's father grasps "the young man's throat" and, in a grandiose gesture, brings down his bludgeon "once, twice, three times upon Roland Lansdell's bare head" (*DW* 353). This deadly duel may remind us of Sigismund's own work; in the *Smuggler's Bride*, for instance, he orders an illustration of "A man with his knee upon the chest of another man, and a knife in his hand" (10).

Does Braddon, like "Miss Orderly," thus give in, creating a work of sensation fiction after all? Despite the general praise *The Doctor's Wife* received, one critic remarked "how very nearly Miss Braddon has missed being a novelist whom we might respect and praise without reserve. But it also proves how she is a slave . . . to the style . . . she created. 'Sensation' is her Frankenstein" (qtd. in Wolff 195). Though the novel was Braddon's first attempt at literary realism, perhaps she could not resist peppering it with sensational hints and a brutal murder—thus, like Sigismund, realizing that "bodies" were necessary to satisfy the reading public. It is possible, however, that Braddon had a more clever scheme in mind, anticipating the comic journals once again. As in the *Tomahawk* story that later would hint at unrealized crimes and end in a barbarous murder, the brutality has greater impact, since there is no previous violence in the story. Roland's death additionally echoes Isabel's fantasy to die like Nancy in *Oliver Twist*; oddly, Isabel's almost-lover thus receives the fate of the "cruel hand" that Isabel once desired for herself. Braddon's realist narrative slips into the sensation of her counternarrative;

while once amusing, here it suddenly becomes overdone, even repugnant, as Mr. Sleaford removes blood and hair from his bludgeon (*DW* 355). This is what happens when fantasy slips into reality, and it is an ugly picture. Yet Braddon's final message seems to be that sensation, while enjoyable in its place, is not needed for a good novel. When Roland is found, the other characters are left to believe that he "fell from his horse" (377), meeting an unfortunate but not extraordinary fate. This neatly revises the ending as realism after all.

Understanding the historical moment in which Braddon wrote *The Doctor's Wife* is key to understanding its play with genre. Braddon keenly sensed its importance in her own career, feeling "especially anxious about this novel; as it seems to me a kind of turning point in my life, on the issue of which I must sink or swim" (qtd. in Wolff 164). Seen only as a writer of sensation fiction, the diversely talented Braddon wished to move beyond this label. The novel was highly regarded, though not seen as perfect. Nonetheless, besides its achievements in character portrayal, *The Doctor's Wife* is most remarkable for its experimental form. Braddon creatively employed a new work of art both to defend her popular form and to move beyond it. After this novel, Braddon chose to follow two distinct paths, writing *The Lady's Mile* (1866),²⁰ her first novel of social realism without recourse to "bodies," while also continuing her work in sensation. Just as Braddon ends *The Doctor's Wife* with Sigismund scribbling away at his penny fiction, "very happy and very inky" (*DW* 404), she foresaw no true end of sensation writing for herself; indeed, her ability to revise the form enough for the public to enjoy it for decades to come deserves further attention.²¹ Nonetheless, Braddon left *The Doctor's Wife* with a more sophisticated palette. Having revealed her adeptness at satire, Braddon used it further in her social novels and even went on to contribute to *Punch*; Wolff notes that in November of 1890 she produced an entertaining parody of Zola written entirely in French and originally called "Gorgonzola" (467).

Once we grasp how *The Doctor's Wife* arrives in the midst of the sensation debates and at the beginning of the comic journals' sensation satires, we can see how extraordinary Braddon's work is in responding to the criticism of the cultural moment.

²⁰ Interestingly, in *The Lady's Mile*, Sigismund Smith reappears, this time as Sigismund Smythe.

²¹ Braddon complained to Edmund Yates that she could not produce anything "new" since everything had been "done" already (qtd. in Edwards 22). Nonetheless, as Lyn Pykett argues in *The Sensation Novel*, "Braddon rarely simply repeated the formulas of the sensation novel; she was engaged in a constant process of negotiation and revision of its conventions" (52).

By presenting her own version of these easily-parodied elements at the forefront of their emergence in the comic journals, Braddon gains the upper hand over her critics. Self-parody is empowering, a form of reverse discourse which wins sympathy for the writer and her style even while critiquing it from within; as Margaret A. Rose notes, "the author is able to ironically 'pre-empt' the criticism of his work which he may expect from others" (98). Braddon's parody is her defense against the critics who "will gird me as long as I write a line." Like her own character Sigismund Smith, she did not renounce her genre of sensation fiction after *The Doctor's Wife*. While the comic journalists may employ parody to sway readers from the genre, Braddon ultimately uses parody to reinscribe her own art. Indeed, Wolff notes how Braddon actually borrowed elements of a plot from Sigismund Smith and used it in her 1867 novel *Like and Unlike* (132). It is thus that Mary Elizabeth Braddon gets the last laugh.

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Transcendental Monsters

by Janice Law Trzeka

University of Connecticut

The period between 1818 and 1897 yielded three British works that quickly achieved archetypal status: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. While all three tales explore intersections between humans and the supernatural, Shelley's work anticipates the concerns and strategies of the two post-Darwinian novelists. This is perhaps the result of Shelley's unique circumstances: gifted, unconventional, and motherless, she was a young parent married to a militant atheist; she was also passionately interested in scientific theories and developments. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley dealt with such issues as birth and creation, the development of the intellect, and the essence of human nature, the same challenges addressed by Stoker and Stevenson.

All three writers draw thematic content from earlier myths, especially the stories of the forbidden tree of knowledge and Promethean fire. Further, each presents the supernatural in ways suitable for an increasingly secular audience, surmounting the problem of writing about God or gods by the device of giving the protagonist (or in the case of *Dracula*, the antagonist) supernatural powers. Thus, Dr. Frankenstein can create life—or, at least, reanimate the dead; Dr. Jekyll temporarily finds a way to avoid that eternal affliction, guilt; and *Dracula* purchases a much restricted but no less genuine immortality with blood and atrocity. All three stories operate with ancient religious concepts that have migrated into secular life: the danger of *hubris*, fears of the afterlife and, most important, the essential limitations of humanity and of human knowledge.

The stories also confront the strange new forces of science in *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and the lures of sex and immortality in *Dracula*, as well as the connections between good and evil, and self and other, within each human being. The

combination of older religious ideas with modern anxieties and aspirations has made all three works fertile ground for both critical examination and popular drama.

There are other striking commonalities, too. Notably, there exist between each hero and antagonist curious bonds. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde share the same biology; Frankenstein's creature effortlessly tracks his creator, indicating the symbiotic relation that links them; and *Dracula's* Mina, the most self aware and probably most intelligent character in the novel, admits that when approached at night by the Count, "I was bewildered, and, strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him. I suppose it is part of the horrible curse that such is, when his touch is on the victim" (287). Jonathan Harker has a similar experience with the seductive vampire-brides at *Dracula's* castle, and the doomed Lucy shows quite different responses to the Count asleep and awake.

The frequency of sleep, delirium, and other altered states in the stories leads to another similarity: a sense of the unconscious and the mysterious workings of the mind. Both Stevenson's novella and *Dracula* reflect new theories of personality, emphasizing the irrational elements in human nature, while Victor Frankenstein, overwhelmed with the magnitude of what he's done, is stricken with "brain fever" almost at the moment the Creature is animated. All three stories are concerned, too, with the moral qualities of human nature. *Frankenstein* presents a romantic view: the Creature was innocent until warped by ill treatment. *Dracula*, in some ways the most hopeful story, hints at a pure soul even within a sinful being. Dr. Jekyll retains the Calvinist view that we are born sinners and bound to our "original evil."

Each story features a character who is tempted by power and intellectual arrogance, and who makes an ultimately disastrous use of scientific knowledge. In the two earlier novels, the focus is on modern biology and chemistry: Frankenstein's ambition to control nature is inspired by the pseudoscience of Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, and Cornelius Agrippa; *Dracula's* orientation is more diabolical, having studied, as Dr. Van Helsing tells us, at the *scolomance*, the school of the devil in the mountains of Transylvania (Stoker 245). In each case, a desire to transcend human limitations leads to clashes between individuals and society; that these clashes end in murder reveals authorial ambivalence about the potential, and the limits of, knowledge. Intellectual mastery is essential for human success and survival; but our unbridled imaginations can spawn

technologies that escape our control—not surprising, given our inability to manage the dark places in our own psyches, from whence, as Freud suggests, come both gods and monsters.

The union of internal and external threats in these stories is one reason why they have proven so flexible in meaning and, like earlier myths, so open to variable and ingenious interpretations, ranging from contemporary, even quite localized troubles, to accounts of the human condition. The stories have been seen to reflect political unrest, revolution, immigration, the Irish "question" or "problem," social reform, sexual mores, class attitudes, feminism and anti-feminism. But another reason that these three stories have entered our society's repertory of narratives is that they appeared when Christianity could no longer claim to have all the answers and when the immense promises of science and technology threatened to swamp spiritual values with materialism. As Robert Louis Stevenson trenchantly phrased it: "Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling . . . science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man" (*Across the Plains* 87). In an era looking for a narrative at once transcendent and modern, these three authors presented old religious ideas in secular dress to warn us that certain forces are no less potent for being products of our own creation.

While these stories function as replacements for or supplements to traditional religious myth, all three are careful to present themselves in a documentary format, with letters, diaries, memorandums, confessions, even shipping bills, designed to aid in the suspension of disbelief and to give the events a grounding in modern life. This is perhaps most essential in *Frankenstein*, which is narrated via the letters Captain Walton sends his sister about the striking events on board his polar exploration vessel. Walton, like Frankenstein, is ambitious, but with certain significant differences. He stresses the social, rather than personal, benefits of finding a route across the North Pole (Bennett xxviii) and, despite his appetite for risk and adventure, he is concerned about his crew. Walton eventually listens to the crew's pleas and halts the expedition to save their lives.

Not so Frankenstein. Even on his deathbed, the scientist attempts to rally the sailors, calling on them to be heroes, to "be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes, and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts might be; it

is mutable, and cannot withstand you, if you say that it shall not" (Shelley 164). This has a sinister ring to anyone who has experienced political leaders who believe that they can "create reality" with words alone or who has studied the pernicious efficacy of modern propaganda techniques. The latter, of course, deals more or less cynically in illusion; Frankenstein seems to have believed that the vaunting human spirit, immortal and indomitable, could conquer all. He was to learn otherwise.

Besides providing an ethical counterweight to Frankenstein, Walton also serves another important function: he validates the scientist's fantastic story, because he, alone of all the other characters, has actually seen the Creature. Every other report comes through Frankenstein, who repeats what he claims to be the Creature's own narrative: thus, we know only third-hand about the Creature's surveillance of the DeLacy's cottage, the murder of Victor's brother William, and the threats against Victor and his bride. Without Walton's sighting of the Creature racing north on his dogsled, or his account of the Creature's sudden arrival in the dead Frankenstein's cabin, we would doubtless be inclined to take literally, rather than figuratively, Frankenstein's overwrought claims to be a murderer:

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (55)

Later, when Frankenstein is released from the Irish jail where he had been confined on suspicion of murdering Henry Clerval, he asserts: "I heard one of the men say, 'He may be innocent of the murder, but he has certainly a bad conscience.' These words struck me. A bad conscience! Yes, surely I had one. William, Justine, and Clerval, had died through my infernal machinations" (143).

But self-centered as he is, Frankenstein never thinks to warn his family and friends of their danger. He makes no attempt to save the innocent Justine Moritz, condemned for his brother's murder, on the grounds that his story would be unbelievable. Although half convinced that the Creature is in pursuit during his trip through Britain with Clerval, he never mentions his fears. On his wedding night, Frankenstein, armed to confront the

Creature, sends his bride up to bed, where she is promptly murdered. And yet, after all this, Frankenstein can tell the Captain that he finds his own conduct blameless:

In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being. This was my duty; but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards my fellow-creatures had greater claims to my attention, because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery. (165)

With this rather specious and utilitarian argument, he justifies his refusal to create a mate for his creature, sliding over his cruel original abandonment of a being born harmless, though hideous in appearance. As the Creature tells Frankenstein: "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy and I shall again be virtuous" (75).

Clearly, this statement has both religious and political implications; but surely the author's conflicted experiences with maternity and maternal relations influence her narrative as well. Frankenstein's self absorption shows first, in his neglect of his family while he pursues his scientific endeavors; and later, in his guilty concealment of his relationship with the Creature, whom he abandons without knowing what its disposition might be or what its fate might entail. But he has more to conceal than just his laboratory experiment, since there is a superhuman dimension to the Creature. Not only is he stronger, hardier, and more athletic than an ordinary man: he also learns extremely rapidly and clearly has uncommon practical skills. Despised and hunted as he is, he travels through the most rugged terrain in Switzerland, locating Frankenstein and his family again and again. The Creature sails to England and on to Ireland in time to murder Henry Clerval before returning to Geneva to murder Elizabeth on her wedding night. At the finale, he is navigating the Arctic wastes with a dogsled.

His ability to track Frankenstein suggests a more fundamental bond than the obvious one of maker and creature, one Frankenstein alluded to when he described his creation as "my own spirit let loose from the grave" (55). Finally, for all his suffering, the Creature regrets Frankenstein's death, describing him to Captain Walton as a "generous and self-devoted being" (167) and telling the captain that he now intends to commit suicide. Though their aims were different—glory for Frankenstein, happiness for the Creature—

they have a very powerful psychic rapport. Both *Dracula* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* suggest that the characters are of a piece; but, distinct from Hyde, the Creature develops a personality independent from his creator, one open to both good and evil.

Frankenstein's "brain fever" on the Creature's animation emphasizes their psychic connection; he conceals his suspicions about his brother's killer, and his silence results in the arrest and execution of Justine. Later, his failure to warn Clerval about his Creature leads to his friend's death, making Frankenstein's hysterical claims to be a murderer more plausible and emphasizing the radical instability that underlies ordinary existence. After Justine is condemned for William's murder, Elizabeth says:

When I reflect, my dear cousin . . . on the miserable death of Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they before appeared to me . . . I feel as if I were walking on the edge of a precipice, towards which thousands are crowding, and endeavouring to plunge me into the abyss. (69)

Similar sentiments are echoed by Dr. Lanyon, Jekyll's former friend; after witnessing the transformation, he writes that he has had a shock from which he will never recover: "Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away" (Stevenson 55).

What Frankenstein disingenuously terms the "apparently innocent" ambitions of science can go disastrously wrong, especially if they are carried out without any thought for their impact on society or humanity. Yet, even when dying, he cannot quite resign himself to his limitations. Comparing himself to Satan, "the archangel who aspired to omnipotence," he tells Walton, "I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects" (161). All is lost for him; but, though he preaches the simple life, Frankenstein cannot give up his hopes, if not for himself, then for science:

Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed. (166)

Henry Jekyll, a much more self-aware experimenter, did succeed, temporarily. His story is presented, like Frankenstein's, with a narrative frame and documents; but the settings, rhetoric, and tone of Stevenson's 1886 novella are totally different from Shelley's novel. While *Frankenstein* is mostly chronological, with a short frame consisting of Captain Walton's letters about his experiences, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is structured as a mystery, one set carefully in the present and embedded in the plausible. Peculiar, but by no means unbelievable, events occur; a famous man is murdered, an old friend sickens and dies, and the doctor himself disappears before we are presented with the important explanatory documents—Dr. Lanyon's narrative and Dr. Jekyll's confession—which lead us into fanciful territory. The settings are different, too. Contrasting with the sublime natural landscapes of *Frankenstein* that inspire the characters' romantic attachments to nature and mirror their vaunting and effusive speeches, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has a distinctive urban locale and correspondingly modern rhetoric. This is not the boisterous London of Dickens but a nightmare city that up-dates Shelley's gothicism and anticipates Kafka and noir film.

The first glimpse we get of Hyde comes from Utterson's kinsman Mr. Enfield, who describes the city at three a.m.: "Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman" (33). Most of the rest of the novella takes place at night, but even morning has a twilight cast. When Utterson takes the police to Hyde's Soho address after the murder, it is about nine a.m.:

A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvelous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening, and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration . . . [the district] seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. (47–48)

The human landscape is also different in the two stories. Frankenstein's Creature longs for such companionship as he witnesses in the idealized family of the blind man, while Frankenstein himself has a father, two brothers, and a fiancée. In contrast, all the main characters of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are bachelors, fond of each other, but of an age to have outlived their parents and getting too old to embark on marriage and children. They are also psychologically different from Victor Frankenstein, who has wild fantasies of power. Describing his work on what will become the Creature, he claims: "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me" (Shelley 37). One turns with some relief from this grandiosity to Henry Jekyll, who more modestly wants to preserve his reputation while indulging in riotous behavior without getting caught.

While operatic emotion characterizes the speeches of Shelley's characters, Stevenson's characters tend to be laconic and dry, making Jekyll's emotional outbursts startling, and Poole's report of the inhabitant of Jekyll's cabinet "Weeping like a woman or a lost soul" even more shocking (66). Shelley's work relies on a non-stop heightening of setting, emotions, and ambitions to keep a fundamentally preposterous fiction afloat; Stevenson took the opposite tack. Throughout the novella, the rhetoric is short and to the point, conventionally "masculine," and this relative restraint, combined with Mr. Utterson's cautious, legalistic approach, helps make the strange case plausible.

The solution to the novella's mystery lies with the two written accounts by Lanyon and Jekyll. The latter's is a fascinating document, whether or not we need believe the gloss he puts on his own behavior. In contrast to Frankenstein, who denies he's done anything wrong, Dr. Jekyll looks at his own character through a theological lens: he sees himself, like everyone else, as a sinner and believes that, for each of us, guilt is only a matter of degree. Despite this gloomy assessment of human nature, the doctor is, in many ways, a better man than the self-aggrandizing Frankenstein; Jekyll practices a useful profession, he has assisted the poor, he suffers remorse and is concerned for others as well as himself.

But if Jekyll's view of human psychology and of the human condition is traditional, his aim of freeing himself from guilt is modern. He often speaks of the divided self in terms of the traditional clash between body and soul or the sensual and the spiritual; but the real clash is between civilization (in the form of a respectable, upper middle-class life) and desires which Jekyll dismisses as "undignified" and the result of "a certain gaiety of disposition" (78). He wishes to indulge himself and, at the same time, to "wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public." Many have done the same, Jekyll insists, denying, however, that he is a hypocrite; rather, even before the fatal transformation, he claims, "both sides of me were in dead earnest." He concludes that all humans have two personalities, possibly more, and speculates that we are "a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (79).

Although Dr. Jekyll sees humanity as born divided and sinful, he comes to believe, like his near contemporary Freud, that possibly we can be freed from guilt. This is not just remorse for our personal failings, I suspect, but an existential guilt which Freud rooted in the sexual impulse and which Stevenson would probably have located more generally in the inevitable cruelties and flaws of human nature. Unlike Shelley's Creature, who claims to have been born good but ruined by cruelty and neglect, Stevenson's hero has few illusions about human innocence, nor does he particularly crave goodness. Rather, he sees humans as fatally divided by better and worse impulses, neither of which he, for one, is willing to deny. He catches the first sight of Hyde with "a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human" (81). Jekyll doesn't wish to unite his two sides—they are already at odds— but to make a more complete break in his psyche: "If each [of my two selves], I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable" (79). Guilt would be unknown; the good and upright side would go its own way without temptation, while the less good side would enjoy itself without regret. Believing that modern biology and pharmacology can bring about this result, Jekyll, like Frankenstein, pursues "transcendental" medicine—metaphysical ambitions combined with up-to-date technique—that his old friend and colleague, Dr. Lanyon, so dislikes. The two had fallen out years before over their differing approaches to medicine and scientific experimentation; Lanyon regarded Jekyll's work as "unscientific balderdash . . . it is

more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind" (38).

Even after the experiment became a disaster, Jekyll is still enthralled with his scientific prowess, as this scene with Dr. Lanyon makes clear. When Hyde prepares to take the potion, he asks if the doctor wishes to see what will happen. If he does, Hyde promises that "a new province of knowledge and new avenues of fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan" (76). When Lanyon agrees, Hyde (sounding more than usual like his alter-ego Jekyll) announces: "And now, you, who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!"

The use of the word *transcendental* is interesting, and Henry Jekyll is not the only nineteenth-century literary scientist impatient with ordinary researches and eager to touch the secret spiritual springs of the universe. A generation before, Nathaniel Hawthorne created another scientist, Aylmer, whom his wife describes as having a "strong and eager aspiration toward the infinite" (638). Alas for Aylmer, despite the brilliance of his researches, his scientific notebooks reveal "the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter."

The composite man is Jekyll's problem exactly, and his scientific analysis of humans is a curious combination of classical and ultra modern. The multi-part psyche goes back at least as far as Plato, who used the image of a charioteer with two horses, one obedient and one wild, to depict the human mind, a triumvirate Freud elaborated with great success. Further, Jekyll implies that the spirit, even if not thoroughly unified, imprints a pattern on the flesh. The vigorous Mr. Hyde, his evil side, takes over the "stamping function" and, as he gains in strength, increasingly it is he, not Jekyll, who is the more powerful.

Jekyll also mentions another old idea which had just recently been given a modern upgrade: the essential immateriality of the supposedly solid world, provoked by the development of electricity, by the discovery of electromagnetic radiation by James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879), and by the startling development of X-ray pictures. Stevenson,

who had reluctantly studied engineering, was quite conversant with a variety of modern scientific ideas (Turnbull 228–31; Dury 237–39). In *Across the Plains*, Stevenson considers the abstract nature of the new scientific reality:

There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios. Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH₃, and H₂O. (290)

Even matter seems unreal and life itself a purely physical and rather disgusting process:

All of these [the solar system, the universe] we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help us to conceive; to whose incredible properties no familiarity can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life. (291)

Similar ideas appear in Jekyll's confession. He refers to "the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion" (79). He concludes: "I not only recognized my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy . . . [and supplanted by another that] bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul" (80).

Jekyll's description of the potion thus combines the up-to-date theory of immateriality with the old fashioned division between the immortal soul and the sinful flesh, embodied by Mr. Hyde. The latter converts the "undignified" pleasures of Jekyll to something more sinister: "his [Hyde's] every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another" (83). Jekyll is rightly "aghast" but weasels out of full blame by saying that the "situation was apart from ordinary laws" and that he was "no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible to undo the evil done by

Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered." No wonder he admits to "conniving" with Hyde! Some writers have suggested worse. Martin Troop's excellent *Images of Fear, How Horror Stories Helped Shape Modern Culture (1818–1918)* associates Stevenson's novella with Jack the Ripper and presents Jekyll as wicked from the start. But the story is perhaps more universal and meaningful if the doctor is only "an ordinary sinner," betrayed by his arrogance into losing all control.

Stevenson writes in *Across the Plains* that it is not human wickedness that is surprising but our continued efforts to be better. And Jekyll does make an effort. Before the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, he naively believes that Hyde's capacity to surface unbidden is "impossible." But once he transforms into Hyde spontaneously, he realizes he is in danger of being dominated by his creation and resolves to end the experiment:

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping pulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. (86)

Unfortunately for him, though he "chose the better part," he was unable to keep his resolution; soon ordinary temptation leads to the spontaneous appearance of Hyde and a train of events ending with Lanyon's death and Jekyll's ruin.

Generations of readers have wondered about the precise nature of Dr. Jekyll's vice. Despite many queries, Stevenson never revealed the details—not wishing, perhaps, to compromise the allegorical nature of the piece. Adaptors have not been so reticent. Some popular dramatizations present Jekyll's sins as heterosexual in orientation, providing Jekyll with a fiancé and Hyde a mistress, both placed in jeopardy, as in the 1941 film starring Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman, and Lana Turner. Others lean toward a homosexual interpretation, as in Elaine Showalter's analysis in *Sexual Anarchy*. But while the text does provide some circumstantial evidence for this supposition—the virtually all-male cast, the sexual mores of the time, Jekyll's fall as an "ordinary secret sinner" in a London park—narrative evidence suggests otherwise. Jekyll speaks of Hyde's love of inflicting pain and, when Hyde kills Sir Danvers Carew, it is in a frenzy of hatred and anger without any obvious motivation, since the old man had apparently simply asked for directions. This does not sound like a sex crime. In a letter to John Paul

Bocock, Stevenson emphasizes that he finds no harm in a "voluptuary"; rather the harm was in Jekyll's hypocrisy:

The Hypocrite let out the beast Hyde—who was no more sexual than another, but who is the essence of cruelty and malice, and selfishness and cowardice: and these are the diabolical in man—not this poor wish to have a woman, that they make such a cry about. (*Letters* 6:56)

He adds that "good and bad" have little to do with dissipation: "But the sexual field and the business field are perhaps the two best fitted for the display of cruelty and cowardice and selfishness. That is what people see, and these they confound" (6:56–57).

While Stevenson does not mention the wish to *have a man*, certainly the story focuses on Hyde's anger and violence: "That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred," Jekyll claims; "Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me: shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain" (90). Like Frankenstein, the doctor finds his dreams of power and achievement have turned to nightmare: "the doom and burthen of our life is bound forever on man's shoulders; and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure" (79).

Both *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* use a narrative about a scientist led astray by ignoble impulses. At first glance, *Dracula* looks rather different: a struggle of good against evil with a handful of professional men, one aristocrat, and a token woman doing battle with the forces of darkness. Long the manager of the Lyceum Theater, Bram Stoker had a showman's appreciation for what the public wants. While Shelley kept all violence in *Frankenstein* carefully off stage, and Stevenson never revealed Dr. Jekyll's addictive habit, Stoker laces his novel with the gruesome violence of vampire killing and brings seductive female Un-Dead very much to the fore. The novel is replete with old superstitions, magic, exotic settings, and Gothic paraphernalia. But from a certain angle, the same story of a scientist attracted to forbidden knowledge is very much present, not via Dr. Van Helsing and Dr. Seward or even the very logical Mina Harker, but through Dracula himself.

Stoker establishes the Count's intellectual and personal credentials in two ways, starting with the brilliantly atmospheric description of Jonathan Harker's visit to the Count's seat in Transylvania. Beginning as a conventional tourist—wondering at the scenery and enjoying exotic food, but skeptical of the natives and dismayed at the train service—Harker soon finds himself in precarious circumstances. The details of his journey to the castle on St. George's Eve—the weird and powerful carriage driver, the wolves, the mysterious lights, the stops along the way—portend nothing good, although his host initially proves gracious, cultured, and well-educated. He has been studying about England and detains Harker in order to practice his English and to satisfy himself on certain details of English law. Harker finds this impressive: "For a man who was never in the country, and who did not evidently do much in the way of business, his knowledge and acumen were wonderful" (56).

The Count's hospitality has its limits, of course, and poor Harker soon finds himself a prisoner, whether of something almost unimaginable or of the sudden onset of madness is unclear. What is certain is that Dracula is a person of ability and strength. Later, his character as an intellectual and scientist comes explicitly to the fore. When Van Helsing shares his historical research with his colleagues, he describes Dracula this way:

[He] was in life a most wonderful man. Soldier, statesman, and alchemist—which was the highest development of the science-knowledge of his time. He had a mighty brain, learning beyond compare, and a heart that knew no fear and no remorse . . . there was no branch of knowledge of his time that he did not essay. (300)

Alchemy was the parent of the modern sciences and especially of chemistry, which was Frankenstein's passion and Jekyll's downfall. As an alchemist, Dracula was on the cutting edge of the science of his time, and he completed his studies, legend says, with a stint at the devil's mountain school, where he learned the language of the animals, useful to him in summoning wolves, rats, and bats, as well as other magic. This was not an uncommon course for the Draculas who, Van Helsing informs us, were a noble race with a reputation for dealings "now and again" with the devil (245). Later in the novel, Van Helsing speculates that Dracula's brain survived death undamaged except for some

memory loss, calling it a "child brain" that was rapidly developing. He describes Dracula as now "experimenting and doing it well" (300).

From this point of view, Dracula's case is quite similar to that of Frankenstein and Jekyll. Instead of making a creature or releasing the lower elements in his soul, Dracula secured immortality by drinking peasants' blood to prolong his life. Unlike the other two experimenters, the Count is not burdened, so far as we can tell, by remorse or guilt. He excuses an ancestor (who may actually have been himself) for abandoning his army to slaughter so that he could return to fight another day: "Bah! What good are peasants without a leader? Where ends the war without a brain and heart to conduct it?" (54) Come what may, he intends to be master: "Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master . . . I have been master so long that I would be master still—or at least that none other should be master of me" (45).

Nor do the conditions of his immortality, including its roots in murder, trouble him unduly. The indispensable Van Helsing notes that Dracula can't cross running water except at the turn of the tide, must sleep in his own special earth, can only transform at noon or at exact sunrise or sunset, and can enter nowhere without invitation—a minor detail, given his talent for persuasion. In exchange, he has considerable power, in addition to longevity and an ability to command the dead:

he can, within limitations, appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are useful to him; he can, within his range, direct the elements: the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat—the moth, and the fox, and the wolf; he can grow and become small; he can at times vanish and become unknown. (242)

Dracula's difficulty in Transylvania appears to be a consequence of his fame. Only a foolish peasant ventures anywhere near the Count's castle, and probably Dracula often goes hungry. Certainly, the female vampires are strongly tempted by Jonathan Harker and thrilled with the child the Count kidnaps. Dracula rightly suspects that the English will be less savvy about vampire lore than his own much-tried neighbors. As Van Helsing later remarks to the vampire hunters, "A year ago which of us would have received such a

possibility, in the midst of our scientific, skeptical, matter-of-fact nineteenth century” (243). Who, indeed, except an inveterate reader of horror fiction?

Dracula might have lived and fed in London unmolested but for his bad luck of selecting the sleepwalking Lucy Westenra, who was connected via Mina to Jonathan Harker and also to Dr. Seward and his mentor, Dr. Van Helsing. The Count compounds this error by mounting a deliberate assault on his pursuers instead of making a strategic retreat. Confronting his enemies at one of his lairs, he declares: “My revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side. Your girls and all you love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine” (304). He further overreaches himself by attacking Mina, whose intellect and resolution rival his own. Once he has established the usually fatal bond between himself and his victim, Dracula proves vulnerable in a way he had not expected. In one of the novel’s modern touches, Mina suggests that Van Helsing hypnotize her and so open a line of communication to Dracula. By Mina’s reports of hearing waves and the sound of sails, the pursuers can be sure Dracula is on board ship. The information helps them track the vampire’s journey from Transylvania to England.

The cautionary tale of the vampire “scientist” is set within an occult thriller, a lively combination of chase, horror, and magic, which has provided inspiration for many generations of playwrights, script writers and critics, not to mention best selling vampire novelists. Interestingly enough, the novel proves to be the most hopeful of the three stories and quite as optimistic about our inborn possibilities as Frankenstein’s Creature. One of the curious restrictions on the vampire is the necessity for him to lie in hallowed ground, which ties in very nicely with some of the religious underpinnings of the novel. As Dr. Van Helsing explains:

There have come from the loins of this very one [Count Dracula] great men and good women, and their graves make sacred the earth where alone this foulness can dwell. For it is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest. (245)

Nor are the Undead necessarily forever lost and damned, no matter how vile their deeds. Here, evil is an addition to a soul that still retains the possibility of purity; wickedness—

even the murder of children—is not something essential to the soul but a sort of mist over the essence of the person. Thus, good and innocent (one might almost say “unconscious”) Lucy is bitten while sleepwalking; she declines and dies, becoming an Undead wandering on Hampstead Heath. Known to local children as the “Bloofer Lady,” she entices child-victims who are later abandoned, unconscious, with telltale vampire bite marks. As Van Helsing outlines the possible trajectory of her career, Lucy as Undead will continue to suck the blood of her victims, growing stronger as they grow weaker and more subservient to her power, becoming eventually Undead themselves. But, happily, through the gruesome operation of vampire killing—the traditional stake through the heart followed by decapitation and stuffing the head with garlic—all will be well:

But if she die in truth, then all [the sufferings of her victims] cease; the tiny wounds of the throat disappear, and they go back to their plays unknowing ever of what has been. But of the most blessed of all, when this now Un-Dead be made to rest as true dead, then the soul of the poor lady whom we love shall again be free. Instead of working wickedness by night and growing more debased in the assimilation of it by day, she shall take her place with the other Angels. (222)

With this assurance, her grieving fiancé hammers a stake through her “voluptuous” corpse, the “nightmare of Lucy.” Writhing and shrieking, the vampire expires, leaving the dead, but now recognizable, Lucy with her sweet and innocent face.

Mina suggests that a release from the condition of Undead is even possible for Dracula, a perspective no doubt conditioned by the uncertainty of her own situation. Bitten by the Count, she begins to show signs of vampirism, especially when, alone in the wilds of Transylvania with an increasingly nervous Van Helsing, she stops eating and falls into coma-like sleeps. Before leaving on this venture, she tells the men:

I know that you must fight—that you must destroy even as you destroyed the false Lucy so that the true Lucy might live hereafter; but it is not a work of hate. That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he too is destroyed in his worser [sic] part that his better part may

have spiritual immortality . . . some day . . . I too may need such pity; and that some other like you—and with equal cause for anger—may deny it to me! (306–07)

As muse, wife, and comforter, Mina seems too good to be true, but she is part of the optimistic side of *Dracula*, which has surely helped the long popularity of a work that offers something for nearly every taste and a handle for just about every critical approach. Is *Dracula* pure evil or a misunderstood outsider? A sexual rival to the young men opposing him or a false father? A Restoration Rake out of time, a liberator of female sexuality or even a victim?

The text supplies a welter of contradictory evidence, much of it erotic, but in a distinctly Victorian way. Unlike modern readers who accept explicit sex and brutality so long as they appear in a realistic context, the Victorians took the opposite approach in both literature and the visual arts. Sex and violence were fine in *unrealistic* or historic settings, but quite improper if they contaminated realistic portrayals of contemporary life. By this standard, the fanciful (and foreign) Count Dracula was acceptable even if he did visit London. Salon nudes—frisky and nubile—were admirable so long as they lacked body hair and came equipped with classical titles and frolicking *putti* to show that they really were art. Bondage in white marble passed the test, too—witness the success of Hiram Powers' *The Greek Slave*—while even an orgy scene like Thomas Couture's *The Romans of the Decadence* was considered suitable for mixed company, because it depicted the bad behavior of long ago. But the realism of Hardy's novels and Ibsen's plays, not to mention Manet's all too contemporary *Olympia*, was controversial, even scandalous, bringing sex and violence close to home and suggesting that all was not well in the best of all possible societies.

But whatever the overt or covert erotic messages, *Dracula* is as monstrous and unnatural as Dr. Frankenstein's Creature or Mr. Hyde. In the biological world, sex is death, and reproduction is purchased by mortality. Childbirth was still highly dangerous in the late nineteenth century, and a variety of sexually transmitted diseases threatened men, women, and children, ensuring that the close relationship between sexual activity, or even sexual feelings, and death must have had considerably more resonance than it does today. Frankenstein, Jekyll, and *Dracula* altered this biological equation in radical

ways. Frankenstein created the monster from corpses, while Jekyll used his own body to create Mr. Hyde. In *Dracula*, sex is death for the Count's victims/lovers, their blood purchasing a queasy and circumscribed, though genuine, immortality for him. Far from bringing sexual liberation to his female victims as some commentators seem to suggest, *Dracula* sets aside the natural rhythm of life and turns the women straight into corpses; Lucy becomes, not pregnant, but an Un-Dead predator of children.

Similarly, the glamorous vampires who both entice and frighten Jonathan Harker threaten something far worse than a breach of promise suit or a nasty case of VD; they threaten to destroy his volition and turn him into a murderous pariah. No wonder, then, that the forces of English society turn out to stop vampirism: a nobleman, a lawyer, two doctors, a visiting American hunter and adventurer, along with the essential addition of the highly rational Mina, assistant schoolmistress, stenographer, and typist. If not fully liberated by any means, Mina is further down the road to being a New Woman than many commentators credit, as Carol A. Senf notes. Given sassy dialogue, Mina, with her up-to-date technology, her passion for chronology and mastery of railroad timetables, anticipates the indispensable Girl Friday of the next century.

For all its sometimes horrific details and the genuinely uncanny episodes in Transylvania, the novel's conclusion is more hopeful than either Shelley's or Stevenson's. The Count returns to the natural order, and his evil spell is broken. Mina is free again to take on an accepted role in society, one she desires even if she clearly deserves a wider scope for her undoubted competence. In short, normalcy is restored though civilization's discontents remain; Mina will live in suburban domesticity, but London will no longer be haunted by the unnatural.

Dracula was consumed by the temptation of unending life, a desire parodied by the poor mad man, Renfield, who tries to consume "life" with his flies, spiders, and birds. In Greek myths, the gods were the keepers of immortality; their offspring by mortal women, even the mighty Achilles, were doomed to death. *Dracula*, written in a Christian but increasingly secular society, reserves proper immortality for the afterlife. Neither society nor biology, and certainly not theology, can permit the physical immortality that the Count devised.

All three stories employ similar plot lines with science enabling the protagonist to transcend the normal constraints of human life. In each case, too, the experimenter tampers not just with physical matter but also with the soul. The Creature is endowed with reason and emotions; Dr. Jekyll splits his personality; Dracula manipulates the bodies and souls of others to cheat death. This simple narrative has been elaborated by a variety of interpretations and adaptations, but I think one key to its appeal lies in what Dr. Jekyll referred to as “transcendental medicine.” The nineteenth century saw the rise of science and of materialism with the concomitant suspicion that we are not, after all, especially created; that the universe is not scaled to our use nor designed for our benefit; that we, and not just the lower creatures, are subject to the laws of biology and physics.

These three archetypal stories used science to confirm the existence of the soul. In each case, the scientist made a tremendous discovery, but one in which his particular desires confronted not only natural laws but the powers of the soul, and that in a way not dependent on theology. Thus Frankenstein succeeds in unlocking the secret of reanimation, only to discover that his Creature, with an individual mind and spirit, is determined to destroy him. Dr. Jekyll seeks to escape from guilt—one of our basic social restraints—and succumbs to what Mina would have called his “worsen” elements. As for Dracula, he succeeds brilliantly for a time, but his very success confirms the spiritual element, the essential something that can sustain and preserve the dead in a kind of quasi-life.

For a society uncertain about the impact of a host of new ideas and nervous about the future role of cherished religious beliefs, *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula* must have been reassuring as well as thrilling. Whatever the personal beliefs of their authors, each story represents at once a suspicion of the powers of science and a secularization of transcendence and mystery. In a sense, each uses the powers and drawbacks of science to confirm a transcendent spirit.

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Piercing the Public Sphere: Pompilia's
Rupture of the Public/Private Divide in
Browning's *The Ring and the Book*

by Elizabeth Coggin Womack

Baylor University

In Rome in the year 1698, Pompilia Comparini died of twenty-two stab wounds inflicted by her husband, Count Guido Franceschini. Robert Browning chronicled the ensuing trial for Victorian readers almost two hundred years later in *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), and the voices heard in the series of twelve dramatic monologues include a variety of figures representing a multiplicity of publics: the conflicting voices of public opinion; the aristocratic Guido himself; lawyers for each side, procurator and fisc; the ultimate arbiter of the case, Pope Innocent XII; and even the poet himself, addressing the nineteenth-century “British Public” (1.410, 1.1380, 12.835). But at the center of *The Ring and the Book*, speaking from the midst of an overwhelmingly masculine crowd of voices, is the seemingly most abject of figures: the dying young woman. From the otherwise private space of her deathbed, Pompilia speaks her truth and is heard for the first—if also for the last—time. While redirecting the consciousness of the Victorian reading public to the issue of domestic abuse, *The Ring and the Book* exposes the problematic nature of the public/private dichotomy and, furthermore, reveals the gendered limitations of the emerging bourgeois public sphere.

Domestic violence, long considered a private matter, emerged as a subject of serious public debate in the nineteenth century, resulting in new legislation intended to help battered women escape their abusers. However, these new laws created a problem of representation: women whose cases were presented in court also found their personal

lives, even their bodies, scrutinized in the press. The 1828 Offenses Against the Person Act allowed magistrates to adjudicate cases of domestic violence through an expedited process that often took place within days of an attack. Trial by magistrate allowed the actual wounds on an abused woman's body to serve as her most compelling piece of evidence, giving her a better chance to obtain a conviction against her abuser (Surridge 62).¹ While the new law recognized the problem of domestic violence in theory, in practice it failed to solve the problems of abused women. Middle class victims shied away from criminal proceedings altogether, and those few lower-class women who sought legal protection from abusive spouses in the first half of the century were more likely to receive marital advice than legal assistance (Hammerton 40). While exposed publicly in press reports, these women were effectively returned to their private sphere, seen but unheard.

The new civil divorce court created by the 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act brought the middle classes into the papers as well. Regular press reports from this new court exposed the extent to which violence pervaded even the middle-class home, proving that abuse was far more prevalent than previously believed. Since divorce required evidence of adultery, and women seeking divorce also had to present evidence of a second offense—generally physical cruelty—a woman escaping an abusive marriage needed to present evidence before both the court and the reading public of a combination of bodily infractions of the marriage contract.² Her wounded body, in addition to his unfaithful and abusive one, must be figuratively displayed before the public at large to obtain reprieve. While the new divorce law, unlike the Offenses Against the Person Act, offered women freedom from abusive marriages, both acts threatened the sanctity of the Victorian home, not only by dividing the family but also by exposing the most private of subjects—the woman's body—to the voyeuristic gaze of the reading public.

¹ Shani D'Cruze discusses the significance of injuries as evidence in these hearings in somewhat more detail, arguing that it brought women's bodies into public view as never before: “the courtroom was a very specific juxtaposition of bodies and space, saturated with power. Women seeking justice to some extent colluded with dominant projects of disciplining disorderly working-class masculinity. Violence signed disorder on the body through physical injury” (140).

² Legislation from the bench allowed for the recognition of such nonviolent abuse as verbal threats in some cases, but many judges continued to require evidence of physical abuse. The legal recognition of non-violent cruelty in divorce court first occurred in 1869–70 in *Kelly v. Kelly*; but in 1895, the precedent was reversed in *Russell v. Russell*, when the court rejected the legal validity of mental cruelty (Hammerton x–xi, 128–29).

It was in this climate that Browning wrote *The Ring and the Book*—the story of the public outcry surrounding an aristocratic husband's conviction for an act of violence assumed to be his prerogative.³ While a number of feminist writers read Browning's poem as either an indictment of patriarchal tyranny or a failure to release Pompilia from the problematic virgin/whore dichotomy, the role that the gendered division of spheres plays in the poem has yet to be addressed.⁴ The poem not only evokes the concept of the public sphere through its web of differently situated voices—evocative of Jürgen Habermas's classic definition of the public sphere as “a network for communicating information and points of view”—but also directly engages with the issue of what matter should be public or private, and the problems and potentials inherent in a breach of the spheres (*Between Facts* 360). Moreover, this division is by no means a simple binary in Browning's work. Browning's depiction of the public sphere of late-seventeenth-century Rome is fractured by both the stratifications of class and the fissure of time between the poem's historical context and the era in which it was composed. While the multiplicity of public voices operating in the poem discourages the reader from isolating any monolithic truth, in its very cacophony we can read Browning's vision for the breakdown and reformation of the public sphere. As I will argue, it is the instability of the poem's newly porous public sphere that enables Guido's long-suffering wife to seek redress for his brutality toward her. But not unlike her Victorian counterparts, Pompilia faces a high personal cost for the privilege—the public exposure of her mortally wounded body.

³ Browning's earlier poems on the subject of domestic abuse were not well received by the reading public—apostrophized in *The Ring and the Book* as “ye who like me not” (1.410, 1379). Melissa Valiska Gregory notes that “My Last Duchess” and “Porphyria's Lover” were much criticized when they first appeared in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). Gregory argues that the somewhat warmer reception of *The Ring and the Book* (1868) may suggest that the reading public was better educated in the reality of domestic abuse by the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, both the subject of Browning's poem and its reception can be understood to reflect a shift of domestic abuse from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the court and the press.

⁴ See, for example, William Walker, Ann P. Brady, Susan Brown, and Candace Ward. Walker's work, while not explicitly feminist, argues that prior readings of Pompilia's tone as sweet and self-effacing obscure Browning's portrayal of a deliberate and “subtle rhetorician” who fully understands the moral failings of her society, including her auditors (60). Similarly, Susan Brown contends that Pompilia's speech is a complex moment of rhetorical female agency that, if anything, clouds rather than delineates the truth (33). Brady's brief monograph also seeks a feminist message in the poem; she celebrates Browning's “champion[ing of] womankind as a treasure misused and misprised” (134). However, Brady also notes the contrast between the apparent feminism in *The Ring and the Book* with Browning's more conflicted attitudes toward such issues as women's suffrage. Ward is openly critical of Browning, arguing that Pompilia is “objectified and idealized” in a poem that merely reaffirms conventional nineteenth century views of women and motherhood; Ward claims that Pompilia's virtue “only emphasizes the negation of her person” (12).

In the essay that follows, I will first demonstrate that Browning's depiction of multiple publics in *The Ring and the Book* draws on a history of change in the public sphere. This history illustrates social changes occurring between the poem's seventeenth-century setting and the Victorian world of its production; more specifically, it focuses on aristocratic decline through Guido's character and the growing influence of a bourgeois public. In the poem's historically overdetermined moment, melded from its source material and its nineteenth-century context, the aristocracy's monopoly on access to public representation is forfeited, indicating shifts in class hierarchies. I then examine Pompilia's limited access to public sites of representation—the courtroom and the church—and their potential as venues for representation, focusing on the restrictions imposed by these institutions on women seeking justice. Shifting my focus to the portrayal of Pompilia's efforts to escape her private torment, I argue that her attempts to testify against Guido to public figures are willfully read by her auditors as confession, a private discourse; the effect of her forestalled speech acts is to further secure her confinement in the private sphere. In order to exit a horrific private world, she must find a platform from which she can testify publicly. Ultimately, Pompilia exits the private sphere through the display of her wounded body and its capacity to attract members of the public—specifically a proto-Victorian bourgeois public—to her side.

Representation and the Transitional Public Sphere

As noted above, the male voices in the poem, far from presenting any monolithic Public, represent various embodiments of the notion of “public,” including the late Renaissance aristocracy, the ecclesiastical authorities of the Catholic Church, the secular public officials, and even nascent bourgeois public opinion. What is most interesting about this combination of different public voices in the poem is the possibility of implied temporal gaps between them. The moment Browning constructs in *The Ring and the Book* is in some ways anachronistic, for bourgeois ideology had not yet appeared in seventeenth-century Italy when Guido's trial occurred; therefore, Browning's depiction of a Roman bourgeois public is not strictly historical. However, neither is it totally fictional. Bourgeois economic and ideological formation had reached its zenith in England by the time of Browning's composition of this poem, which not only directly

addresses his own “British Public” but also resonates with the topical issue of domestic violence. Therefore, while it is based on historical sources, I argue that Browning is not seeking so much to recreate an actual historical moment as to depict a transition over time in the notion of public and public figures. By incorporating elements of both the poem’s historical source material and nineteenth-century ideology, Browning creates a dynamic setting that brings epic significance to the monologues as acts of public speech.⁵ The notion of shifting ideas of “public” over time is central to Habermas’s theory of the formation of the public sphere; and for this reason, I argue that Habermas’s work illuminates the complexity of Browning’s collapse of multiple histories—Guido’s feudal heritage, the late Italian Renaissance, the dawning of the Enlightenment, and the Victorian era—into one.

Count Guido senses that his world is changing and that his access to the public sphere and consequently to power has diminished. Standing before the court, he cites his ancient lineage and notes his family’s decline:

I am representative of a great line,
 One of the first of the old families
 In Arezzo, ancientest of Tuscan towns.

 I . . . descend from Guido once
 Homager to the Empire, nought below—
 Of which account as proof that, none o’ the line
 Having a single gift beyond brave blood,
 Or able to do aught but give, give, give
 In blood and brain, in house and land and cash,
 Not get and garner as the vulgar may,
 We became poor as Francis or our Lord. (5.140–64)

⁵ Discussing this sort of historical overdetermination in “The Discourse of History,” Barthes notes that *organizing shifters* (linguistic tools linking past with present) create a “problem arising from the coexistence, or to be more exact the friction between two times—the time of uttering and the time of the matter of the utterance” (10). This problem, for my purposes, can be understood as a disruption of the continuity and chronology of historical record. I argue that Browning forces just such a disruption, which for him is not a problem but a tool for exploring a controversial topic in a setting both remote and highly relevant for his readers.

Guido, in identifying himself as a descendant of his famous ancestor and namesake, also calls attention to his “descen[t]” (157) from that feudal puissance. The underlying cause of his family’s fallen status is that class identity no longer equates to representative power: “public” figures once combined both lineage and political authority. Habermas argues that beginning in the eighteenth century, Europe witnessed a divorce between aristocratic display and a quality he calls “representation,” or public visibility and authority. Feudal lords were by their very nature public because their class identity gave them the power of representation. This is the same sort of representation to which Guido refers in the passage above (5.140).

In using the word “representation” to describe a feudal nobleman’s public visibility and authority, Habermas draws on an older meaning of the term. As early as the fifteenth century and continuing throughout the early modern period, one’s “representation” was understood to mean one’s bearing or presence, a quality associated with nobility. This meaning coexisted with the still-current definition of “representation” as “an image, likeness, or reproduction.” Only by the seventeenth century was “representation” understood to mean a formal statement of “facts, reasons, or arguments, made with a view to effecting some change,” or the act of “standing for, or in place of, some other thing or person . . . with a right or authority to act on their account” (*OED*).

By the dawn of the Enlightenment, ruling privileges became increasingly concentrated in a central government and consequently abstracted from the aristocracy, leaving conspicuous personal grandeur as the sole distinction setting off the aristocracy from commoners. The role of aristocracy thus became more symbolic and increasingly centered on its ability to display not only wealth but also a noble mien. According to Goethe, the post-Renaissance nobleman became reliant on “his *figure*, his *person*” to maintain his limited public role (qtd. in Habermas, *Structural* 12). The representative power of the post-Renaissance nobleman was—theoretically, at least—contingent upon his body, and we see this shift reflected in the poem. Guido’s worth as a nobleman is no longer based on a public role as a titled lord but, rather, on his self-presentation as a nobleman and “public person”—a presentation at which Guido cannot but fail, given his poor physique (13). He is far shorter than his thirteen-year-old bride, boasts “no face to

please a wife" (12.196), and lacks bodily strength and resolve under torture.⁶ The Franceschini line's genetic stock, much like its money, has been depleted, and neither resource can well bear Guido's public representation in a time when the public role for a nobleman is changing.

As his powers of self-representation erode, so do his legal privileges. Guido's conviction is thus the final and most significant blow against his representative status. Guido, with his execution imminent, laments the end of aristocratic privilege by recounting the story of the guillotine's previous victim, a young man condemned for avenging his sister after her seduction by an aristocrat: "I do the Duke's deed, take Felice's place" (11.277). Guido calls this young man "Felice Whatsoever-was-the-name" (11.195), an effacement of Felice's full identity parallels Guido's lost title: the "Count Guido Franceschini" of book five is reduced to the humbled but unrepentant "Guido" by book eleven. Guido's execution by the same instrument as a commoner is itself a strong statement that class divisions are breaking down—especially when the instrument used is that which, within a hundred years, will take down the aristocracy of France, as Browning is aware.⁷

As Guido's public role disintegrates, a bourgeois public sphere—defined by Habermas as "the sphere of private people come together as a public"—coalesces, creating a more democratic form of representation based on promoting justice (*Structural* 27). For this reason, what I call Guido's failing power of "representation" is different from what I identify as the new, bourgeois "representation," which invokes newer ideas of civil government.

The bourgeois voices in the poem include among its members not only the Comparinis but also the nameless voices of public opinion in Rome and Arezzo. While the bourgeois public is comprised of persons ineligible for participation in public political life, as a majority influence it exerted corrective force through collective critique of the acting powers. While *The Ring and the Book* does not postulate that public opinion is

⁶ Archangeli comments, "I wonder, all the same . . . —Guido Franceschini, nobleman, / Bear pain no better!" (8.404–07). Unlike Pompilia, who wills herself to silence as Guido stabs her so that he will think her dead, Guido cannot endure pain.

⁷ Guido does receive the nobleman's privilege of death by beheading rather than hanging, which is the fate of his lower-class associates.

unanimous against Guido, it does invoke this notion of a growing aggregate of otherwise unremarkable persons, particularly in its description of Pompilia's caretakers and allies:

[F]riend and lover,—leech and man of law
Do service; busy ministrants
As varied in their calling as their mind,
Temper and age: and yet from all of these,
About the white bed under the arched roof,
Is somehow, as it were, evolved a one,—
Small separate sympathies combined and large,
Nothings that were, grown something very much. (1.1087–94)

The public opinion of these "somethings" becomes increasingly varied and disruptive to social order as voices accrue throughout the series of monologues.

Public opinion in *The Ring and the Book* manifests in speech that often resembles idle gossip rather than the sort of political critique envisioned by Enlightenment philosophers. While the speech act of gossip is not obviously politicized, it nonetheless serves as a discursive mode through which communities of common interest are forged. Karma Lochrie observes that gossip often "performs a crucial cultural function of constructing social identity"—a feat it accomplishes by "establish[ing] boundaries of outside and inside, public and private . . . draw[ing] distinctions between insiders and others" (62). But public opinion, in *The Ring and the Book*, in its instantiation as gossip, problematizes rather than demarcates the boundary between public and private.⁸ It is partly this transgressive potential of gossip to cross the public/private divide that challenges Guido's own powers of aristocratic representation and privileges other sites of representation.

While gossip is an important formal and thematic component in nearly all of the monologues, it is portrayed in the strongest terms in those monologues aligned with Guido's interests, especially "Count Guido Franceschini" and "Half-Rome." Guido is arguably the character most directly affected by the power of gossip: Pietro and Violante Comparini deliberately incite rumor as part of their onslaught against the count. Beginning with the first rumors of his conflict with the Comparinis in Arezzo—"the

⁸ Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that gossip plays a more liminal role between the public and the private (6, 262).

unimaginable story rife / I' the mouth of man, woman and child" (5.618–20)—Guido is plagued publicly and privately by gossip. Returning from Rome after his suit against Pompilia and Caponsacchi for alleged adultery, the (seemingly) cuckolded Guido endures the jeers of other travellers professing sympathy with the rumored lovers:

Station by station I retraced the road,

 Where, fresh-remembered yet, the fugitives
 Had risen to the heroic stature: still—
 "That was the bench they sat on,—there's the board
 They took the meal at,—yonder garden-ground
 They leaned across the gate of,"—ever a word
 O' the Helen and the Paris, with "Ha! you're he,
 The . . . much commiserated husband?" (5.1257–65)

Browning's phrasing, "[s]tation by station," evokes the Catholic devotion of the fourteen stations of the cross, in which believers commemorate various moments of Christ's intense public suffering and humiliation before his own execution. Guido thus sees himself here as a Christ-like figure, suffering egregious torment for the sins of others.⁹ While the shame is public, its keenest torment is the exposure of his private life, which he describes in terms evocative of his ruined castle:

Bit by bit thus made-up mosaic-wise,
 Flat lay my fortune,—tesselated floor,
 Imperishable tracery devils should foot
 And frolic it on, around my broken gods,
 Over my desecrated hearth. (5.1030–34)

While Guido's fall results from his loss of public influence, it is the loss of private autonomy that the nobleman most poignantly mourns.

Guido's loss of agency in the face of the aggregate of "separate sympathies" certainly seems to indicate a shift in the political landscape of Browning's Rome.

⁹ Guido is not the only speaker in the poem who understands that the effect of gossip on him is severe: "Half-Rome" argues that the vicious gossip actually goads Guido to commit the murders (2.1235–63), while Caponsacchi speculates that the public scorn itself may constitute adequate punishment for Guido's heinous offense (6.1908–20).

However, I must emphasize that Guido's fall from grace does not guarantee Pompilia's access to representation. In spite of the cohesion of her readiest advocates, public opinion in the poem has no united interest; its caprice is unpredictable, and it is voiced by speakers whose identities and interests remain undefined. Pompilia cannot control the public version of her own story, for public opinion and gossip propagate the version of the truth that is most titillating to the public: that Pompilia and Caponsacchi eloped and were cruelly thwarted by Guido. The question of whether or not such gossip is true—a point the poem does not seek to resolve—signifies nothing of Pompilia's agency. On her deathbed, Pompilia laments the inability of the public to understand her (7.908–09). While the proto-bourgeois of the poem gain a certain degree of collective representation through public opinion that undermines Guido's aristocratic public role, Pompilia—acting independently of her husband and parents—must find another way to articulate her own position.

Spaces for Representation

Pompilia's first failed attempts at self-representation take place in the courtroom and the church.¹⁰ Through these venues, two patterns of speech emerge through which the main characters of the poem seek representation in public spaces: one public—testimony, and one private—confession.

By "testimony," I refer to public representation of one's position.¹¹ Both Guido and Caponsacchi have access to the courts and are able to represent themselves through testimony. The two lawyers, Archangeli and Bottinus, are agents of representation and can support or oppose this testimony. Even the Comparinis, acting as a single unit, are able to testify in the three trials that precede their murder. Pompilia, however, as a woman acting apart from her husband, is denied a public voice in the courts and cannot present her own testimony directly. Her only reference to the trial following her escape with Caponsacchi is a declaration against her:

¹⁰ One of Browning's changes to his source material was his shift of the courtroom case from civil court to ecclesiastical court.

¹¹ Gregory argues that Browning's use of testimony is critical in interpreting the text and understanding its reception; by casting his dramatic monologues as legal testimony, Browning reconciled his readers to his difficult subject matter—the purpose of the court being the examination and righting of injustices (501–02).

I heard it read out in the public Court
 Before the judge, in presence of my friends
 Letters 't was said the priest had sent to me,
 And other letters sent him by myself,
 We being lovers! (7.175–79)

Although she is not officially charged with adultery, she is sent to live with the Convertites, an implicit accusation since the Convertites care for fallen women. Pompilia's presence in the public space of the courtroom does not in itself secure the right to speak her own testimony.

The church, too, is a public space, but its relationship to the public and private—and especially to public and private speech—is historically more complex, and its role in a discussion of representation in *The Ring and the Book* is perhaps the most crucial. François Lebrun argues that Christianity has, from its inception, featured a dialectic tension between public and private acts of devotion, a tension that increased in the seventeenth century.¹² Until the second half of the seventeenth century, which saw a reassertion of the public roles of the church against private devotions, those in the congregation were urged to perform private devotions during mass since they were excluded from the altar by the rood screen. Habermas suggests that “the relationship of the laity to the priesthood illustrates how the ‘surroundings’ were part and parcel of the publicity of representation (from which they were nevertheless excluded)” (*Structural* 8–9). In other words, the laity, even as members of a public institution, was nonetheless private because its role offered no agency or representation within that institution. This is most apparent in the ritual of confession.

Confession was both a site of the counter-Reformation's reassertion of authority over the laity and a focal point for Protestant anxiety about private, or secretive, Catholic practices. In the seventeenth century, communal confession, which had once been the primary means through which the masses were absolved of sin, was virtually abolished in favor of private confession.¹³ Church officials argued that the policy change would urge

¹² See Lebrun (3:68–109).

¹³ See Lebrun (75–80).

parishioners to confront their sins more fully; but it also exacerbated the private role of the laity, in contrast to the public authority of the priests during this period.

For Victorians—who were both predominantly Protestant and largely anti-Catholic—this uneasy straddling of public and private was one of the most disturbing elements of Catholicism. Edward Norman asserts, “[p]recisely because Catholic practices were hidden and unknown, they were popularly imagined to be purposefully secretive, and because secret, in some way disgraceful” (10). The secrecy of confession was thought to shroud evil intent on the part of the priests, especially when hearing the confessions of women. Norman, quoting from a pamphlet entitled *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), notes that the “[q]uestions asked by priests of women in the confessional were thought to be ‘often of the most improper and revolting nature, naming crimes both unthought of and inhuman’” (19). Thus, not only was confession legitimately a practice that exaggerated the public/private dichotomy in the Catholic Church: it was also understood by Victorians as a tool to violate the privacy of women, and these views are manifested in *The Ring and the Book*.¹⁴

Pompilia's forays to the church for confession are the primary means through which she seeks relief from her marriage; and, since the contrast between her eventual successful testimony and a mere deathbed confession is crucial, the role of confession in sustaining Pompilia's private seclusion requires further examination.

Pompilia's Confession

Although surrounded by a multiplicity of publics, Pompilia has access to none. After her peaceful and carefully guarded childhood, Guido brings “strange woes . . . / Into [her] neighborhood and privacy” (7.120). But rather than rupturing the private, domestic sphere of her childhood, Pompilia's marriage to Guido exaggerates her confinement by placing her in a private world under Guido's complete control. Arezzo, “the man's town, / The woman's trap and cage and torture-place” (1.501–02) is Guido's seat of power, the

¹⁴ While Robert Browning was not necessarily an opponent of Catholicism and was undoubtedly better informed about its doctrines and practices than many Victorians, both he and Elizabeth Barrett Browning maintained a strong Protestant affiliation. A number of his dramatic monologues, including “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,” “The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church,” and “Fra Lippo Lippi,” critique corruption and hypocrisy in the Catholic church. However, Andrew Tate observes that Browning is conscientious in his effort to portray Catholicism both “poetically and truthfully” in his two-part poem, “Christmas Eve and Easter Day,” in which his Protestant narrator is sympathetic to, if not convinced by, the performance of a mass (45).

site where his own representation as an aristocrat carries the most weight. Arezzo is also Caponsacchi's "stage," where he plays the part of guiding Pompilia on the journey to Rome. Pompilia shares neither her husband's authority nor the priest's agency. She is transferred to Guido's palace, where she is "hemmed in by her household-bars" (3.778). Her life there is a dark parody of the Victorian domestic sphere; the servants, including Margherita, "[w]hom it is said [Guido] found too fair" (7.1053), are under the direction of the husband rather than the wife, and all persons in the house work first to confine, and then to betray her.¹⁵

Pompilia's only regular forays from her home as a child and a wife are visits to the church. As a child, she "had never taken twenty steps in Rome / Beyond the church, pinned to her mother's gown" (3.1068–69), and her few excursions as a wife follow much the same pattern: she doesn't know her way through the Arezzo streets "except what led to the Archbishop's door" (3.1071). These frequent visits to church represent not only her regular attendance at mass but also her obedience to the ritual of confession. As suggested above, the liminal nature of confession—the private confessor in the public space—makes these moments of confession in *The Ring and the Book* particularly significant. Pompilia's childhood confessions are not emphasized in the narrative, for her childhood purity plays an important role in heightening the pathos of her brutal and debasing marriage. However, after marriage, confession serves a dual role for Pompilia, as she on one level confesses her "sin which came / Of their [and especially Guido's] sin" (7.1283–84)—hinting at thoughts of suicide and sexual indignities—while on another level she uses the confessions as thinly veiled pleas for help in escaping her abusive relationship. As her confessed sins are largely derivative of Guido's sins forcibly acted upon her body, she intends her confessions to play a secondary role as testimony to Guido's crimes, a role that her hearers dare not acknowledge.

Pompilia's first attempts to exit her confining private sphere are defeated by the nature of the institution. Her confessions, intended to stir pity, instead support the very power discourse that stifles her.¹⁶ With increasing desperation as her appeals to various

¹⁵ For a husband to rob his wife of her rightful place as mistress of the home and to displace her in the servants' favor was thought by some nineteenth century divorce-court judges to constitute mental cruelty. See Hammerton's discussion of *Kelly v. Kelly* (98–101).

¹⁶ On confession as a discourse that privileges the hearer rather than the speaker, see Foucault (53–73).

members of the clergy go unanswered, Pompilia finally discards the veneer of confession that overlays her attempts to testify in seeking out the Archbishop. However, when she attempts to break the pattern of the confession discourse, confession is imposed upon her by the Archbishop, obscuring her own attempted speech act. As Foucault notes, in confession "the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is [s/]he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know" (62). The Archbishop most clearly exposes the discursive power of confession by willfully misreading her attempt to testify.

Three times she approaches "the public steps" to his significantly closed door (2.879). Although her initial intent is to ask permission to enter a nunnery, the Archbishop elicits and then channels her testimony into the familiar and disempowering track of confession:

[W]hen I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
Inquiring into privacies of life,
—Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)
Nowise entitled to exemption there,
Then I obeyed. (7.724–28)

Her final attempt gains only cold reproof, for the Archbishop prompts even greater "confessions"; she reveals that Canon Girolamo has attempted to seduce her with her husband's knowledge—testimony that Guido has intentionally perverted the sacred covenant of marriage. The Archbishop, refusing to acknowledge Guido's evil and Pompilia's pain, bids her, as both solution and penance, to "go home, embrace your husband quick!" (7.844). Pompilia, rather than being understood as a victim of abuse, is thus seen as doubly sinful. When transposed by the Archbishop into the register of confession, Pompilia's testimony produces his truth rather than her own: the assertion that marital rape is not possible—that the defiling of a woman's body and soul cannot be imposed externally by man but instead stems from her own intrinsic fallibility. Moreover, this denial reinforces the established belief that marriage and the physical acts encompassed by it are private and therefore not to be interfered with by public institutions.

While Foucault notes that confession has historically taken place in a wide range of settings from the most public to the most private, Pompilia's "confessional" experience is certainly one that reinforces her role in the private sphere in spite of her resistance. Her repeated encounters with the clergy in Arezzo demonstrate that confession is not only a means of reproducing privileged discourse but also a means of safeguarding the boundaries of private spheres. We see that confession time and time again fails to provide relief, and instead returns her to Guido's home. He confidently allows her to leave the palace, knowing that the boundaries of Pompilia's life are policed by the clergy, who will censure and cajole her again and again through the administration of confession, urging her to remain at home with her husband.

The crucial shift that enables Pompilia's move into the public sphere centers on her ability to represent herself, to make her truth understood as testimony—a public matter—rather than as confession, a ritual and pattern of discourse that is inevitably tied up with the disempowerment of the private sphere.

Testimony and Bodily Representation

For Pompilia to achieve representation and give her testimony, she must fully exit the private sphere. As her world offers no known physical space in which a woman may speak for herself, Pompilia must create one. I would like to return here to the earlier definitions of "representation" as public visibility and authority as well as visual display. During and after the Renaissance, noblemen like Guido became increasingly reliant on the successful public display of their nobility. Guido's seedy appearance, coarse behavior, and lack of self-control under torture ill suit him for this sort of representation. However, the medieval nobleman's representation through his figure finds an intriguing counterpart in the physicality of the female. Pompilia's tall and elegant body, Madonna-like face, graceful deportment, and miraculous strength of will do favor her own physical representation, with some caveats.

The female body has traditionally been considered the most private of subjects, since women, as the private property of men, lacked meaningful political agency. Feminist thinkers, most notably Simone de Beauvoir and more recently Sherry B. Ortner, Joan B. Landes, and Iris Marion Young, have long observed a tendency on the part of

philosophers to align the female with nature and the body, while men are thought to represent culture and the mind. In contrast to the masculine mind, the female body was thought to signify all that was intimate and particular, and thus it was deemed unfit for public life. Moreover, women appearing publicly were vulnerable to sexual objectification, especially when doing so without the protection or consent of a male guardian. Key to Pompilia's defense, then, is her ability to represent herself publicly and independently without inciting the sort of sexual objectification that might reinforce assumptions of her immorality. If Pompilia can appear as a spectacle of sympathy rather than an object of shame, her superior physical form is much better suited than Guido's to attract the admiration of the poem's insatiable and unstable public sphere. Pompilia ultimately achieves this physical representation, embodying the sort of spectacle that is necessary for public agency. But she is only able to accomplish this after her fatal wounding by Guido. The public site in which she ultimately speaks is the one surrounding her own beautiful and spectacularly wounded body.

The murdered bodies of the three Comparinis all hold fascination for the public in Browning's poem. The first three monologues—"Half-Rome," "Other Half-Rome," and "Tertium Quid"—each dwell on the crowds forming around the dead and dying bodies. The speaker of "Half-Rome" in particular dwells on this morbid, circus-like fascination at the church where Pietro and Violante Comparini lay dead:

From dawn till now that it is growing dusk
 A multitude has flocked and filled the church,
 Coming and going, coming back again,
 Till to count crazed one. Rome was at the show.
 People climbed up the columns, fought for spikes
 O' the chapel-rail to perch themselves upon,
 Jumped over and so broke the wooden work
 Painted like porphyry to deceive the eye;
 Serve the priests right! The organ-loft was crammed,
 Women were fainting, no few fights ensued,
 In short, it was a show repaid your pains. (2.88–98)

The grotesque murdered bodies are Rome's nine days' wonder, and the fickle public gathers around to support them in death as it never did in life. While this massive wake results less from sympathy than from the crowd's lurid attraction to a scene of horror, it nonetheless fuels public outcry. Therefore the physicality of the display both serves as evidence of Guido's offense and defines a public space of insurrection.

Pompilia's body attracts a similar crowd. However, Pompilia, unlike her parents, survives long enough to speak. During this brief liminal moment, the four days she spends between life and death, Pompilia's truth is at last made public.

In the good house that helps the poor to die,—

Pompilia tells the story of her life. (1.1085–86)

The seemingly private space of her death bed is converted into a public space—by which I mean not the old public of aristocratic and ecclesiastical power, but instead a new secular and bourgeois public space, here inhabited mostly by sympathetic professional men. This collection of persons, identified not only by the affectionate titles of “friend” and “lover” but also by the professional ones of “leech” and “man of law,” is primarily a bourgeois and a masculine body, comprised of disparate backgrounds and interests that collectively join under her banner and listen at her bedside.¹⁷

The speaker first explains Pompilia's tolerance of this influx of bystanders by a reference to Pompilia's forbearance—“she is used to bear” (1.1102). However, I argue that Browning's Pompilia has created this moment, this public space around her dying body, by choice.¹⁸ Taking advantage of this impromptu audience and narrating her experience up to the moment of her soul's ascension to heaven,

to the common kindness she speaks,
There being scarce more privacy at the last
For mind than body. (1.1100–102)

¹⁷ The public nature of this space is further emphasized by Browning's choice to portray Pompilia as dying in a hospital rather than in the Comparini home, as did the historical Pompilia.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Bronfen has made similar claims about the speaking power of the dead female body. However, Bronfen argues that the female corpse does not merely represent itself—that which “is plainly visible”—but “also stands in for concepts other than death, femininity, and the body—most notably the masculine artist and the community of the survivors” (xi). The dead woman is not empowered by her image; rather, others appropriate that image for their own purposes. While I find Bronfen's argument compelling, I argue here that Browning posits Pompilia's wounds as a means through which she can obtain her own representation rather than as a discursive site for masculine interests. Of course, one must remember that ultimately it is Browning who speaks for Pompilia.

Pompilia is partner to rather than victim of her eager attendants, who look upon her not only as a saint in the making but as a woman in pain with a right to legal recourse against her attacker. Browning's poem posits Guido's conviction for the murder of his allegedly adulterous wife as a revolutionary moment; and, in the context of the poem, it seems to result from the shifting publics and the general social upheaval portrayed by Browning in the Rome of 1698. But it is the spectacle of Pompilia's mangled body that brings this moment of possibility for female public speech into fruition—a grisly sight that attracts a host of eager auditors.

The irony of the public attention her wounds command—attention that, come earlier, would have spared her life—is not lost on Pompilia. She addresses the listeners by her bed:

How patient then

All of you, — Oh yes, patient this long while

Listening, and understanding, I am sure!

Four days ago, when I was sound and well

And like to live, no one would understand. (7.905–09)

And yet she seizes, in spite of her pain, this moment of possibility, converging as it does with the changing public world. As aristocratic influence fades and a new collective public sphere emerges from the disparate voices of Rome, Pompilia comes to understand the rhetorical force of her own physical form as an object of both desire and horror.

In “*Tertium Quid*,” the ostensibly balanced viewpoint of a member of the upper class, we see the possibility for Pompilia's agency to rise out of her victimization:

So strange it seemed his wife should live and speak!

She had prayed—at least people tell you now—

For but one thing to the Virgin for herself.

Not simply,—as did Pietro 'mid the stabs,—

Time to confess and get her own soul saved

But time to make the truth apparent, truth

For God's sake, lest men should believe a lie:

.....

With this hope in her head, of telling truth,—

Being familiarized with pain, beside,—

She bore the stabbing to a certain pitch
 Without a useless cry, was flung for dead
 On Pietro's lap, and so attained her point. (4.1424–37)

Unlike her father, who begs for confession, Pompilia prays for "time to make the truth apparent." As a penitent, or rather as one understood to be confessing, Pompilia would have no agency, but Guido's attack strengthens her position as a speaker. As one who resolves to speak and is finally able to offer valid public testimony, Pompilia demonstrates her agency—not in her passive endurance of Guido's attack but in the stoic silence that persuades him of her death and the tenacious survival that allows her truth to be established in the public consciousness. She knows that her wounds will offer her the opportunity to become an object of the public gaze and to appear on the stage herself, however briefly, allowing her to seek both vindication and justice.

This final speech act is interpreted in a variety of ways by the public opinion of Rome, but the collective voices underscore Pompilia's intention to live for truth rather than for confession. In "The Ring and the Book," this speech act is unwaveringly called her defense (1.1080). Conversely, in "Other Half-Rome," it is deemed confession: the final rites are privileged over legal testimony, enshrouding Pompilia in the pathos of piety. However, the speaker shows inconsistency when he declares that it is Pompilia's "overplus of life beside"—the life remaining to her after shriving—that enables her "To speak and right herself from first to last" (3.268). While the speaker chooses to see her testimony as that "overplus," a bonus after her confession, even he notes that her legal testimony in fact precedes her final rites.¹⁹ Therefore, in spite of "Other Half-Rome's" sentimental privileging of the discourse of confession over the speech act of testimony, it is clear within this book, as it is within "Tertium Quid," that Pompilia has willed her survival for her right to speak. But if we are to take Pompilia at her word, we must look to her own explanation for her miraculous longevity after the attack. She muses:

¹⁹ The lines in "Other Half-Rome" read:

The lawyers first
 Paid the due visit—justice must be done;
 They took her witness, why the murder was.
 Then the priests followed properly,—a soul
 To shrive. (3.42–46)

I am held up, amid the nothingness,
 By one or two truths only—thence I hang,
 And there I live,—the rest is death or dream. (7.603–05)

Pompilia makes this assertion as she cites Don Celestine's attempts to extract further sins from her, reiterating that a desire for truth, and not confession, is the sustaining force.

In fact, Pompilia may be understood to resist confession in her final moments—unsurprising after the failure of her repeated "confessions" in Arezzo to secure relief. In her monologue, she notes Don Celestine's urgency to elicit all those crimes of Guido's that were once ignored. Pompilia appears, perhaps disingenuously, to have lost interest. She notes Don Celestine's repeated urgings:

Don Celestine bade "Search and find!
 For your soul's sake, remember what is past,
 The better to forgive it." (7.596–98)

And again, later in the passage:

Don Celestine urged "But remember more!
 Other men's faults may help me find your own.
 I need the cruelty exposed, explained,
 Or how else can I advise you to forgive?" (7.627–30)

Echoing the crowd's salacious appetite for scandal, the priest's hysterical urgings also carry more than a trace of the Archbishop's cruel insinuations, "[i]nquiring into privacies of life" in order to assign her greater blame (7.725). Pompilia's abortive attempts to secure the help of authorities in Arezzo have taught her that such "confessions" work to undermine rather than to enable her narrative, and she pointedly avoids another such recapitulation of past sexual indignities: "[A]ll in vain!" she declares (7.598). Demurely—and perhaps wryly—she offers forgiveness without divulging the details the don seeks:

I . . . Have but little to forgive at last.
 For now,—be fair and say,— is it not true
 He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
 To get enriched by marriage? (7.635–40)

Rather than “confessing,” Pompilia preemptively deflects any attempt to sexualize her narrative by offering instead a faint non-apology for her failure to enrich Guido by marriage.

Pompilia’s resistance is also represented by the periodical rupture of her monologue by ellipses. These gaps in her narrative elide abusive acts including marital rape. For example, in one such passage, she recollects her first sexual experience with Guido:

I was let alone
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
First . . . but I need not think of that again—
Over and ended! Try and take the sense
Of what I signify, if it must be so. (7.735–40)²⁰

She urges the reader/listener to understand what she believes is important—“What I signify”—rather than the lurid details of her suffering. Other critical readings of Pompilia’s monologue, including those of Gregory, Walker, and Brady, have paid special attention to the ellipses, suggesting that they represent her unspeakable pain, an exercise for the reader’s imagination, or perhaps a rhetorical appeal to pathos. These moments also evoke Elaine Scarry’s discussion of the ineffability of pain. I, however, read the ellipses as conscious resistance, moments when she chooses to conceal that which, when revealed to the Archbishop, brought pain rather than solace. Her testimony, therefore, is no longer, like her visit to the Archbishop, couched as a private act of confession in which all must be exposed and surrendered to authority. Her testimony is a public rhetorical moment, from which she chooses to emphasize and to censor certain aspects in order to defend her own and Caponsacchi’s actions.

As the voices of public opinion coalesce around her, Pompilia is thus enabled to obtain representation by attracting the notice of the gathering bourgeois public sphere. Guido’s compromised aristocratic mien finds its counterpart—and Browning achieves admirable poetic symmetry—in Pompilia’s own, more successful spectacle of blighted womanly perfection, and public outcry shakes the foundations of the poem’s old order.

²⁰ Other such moments in Pompilia’s monologue include lines 1280–81 and the omission of the actual act of murder after line 1695.

Conclusion

It is important to note that, while the poem treats the rise of public opinion as a revolutionary moment, even going so far as to stage the events during Carnival (historically an inversion of social order), the poem does not necessarily advocate gender equality. Guido is first condemned by the courts—not because husbands should not kill their wives but because he failed to commit his otherwise sanctioned murder of Pompilia in the proper way: single-handedly, impulsively, and privately upon first finding her at the inn. He is next condemned by the Pope, who celebrates Pompilia as a perfect woman by virtue of her tripartite obedience: first to parents, then to Guido, and ultimately to God. Her resistance is not sanctioned by the abuse she suffers but by her design to protect her unborn child, a demonstration of her admirable maternal instinct. And the Convertites, the final female players in a very masculine world, utterly disavow Pompilia’s final testimony in their attempt to confiscate her son Gaetano’s inheritance on the grounds that Pompilia was sexually promiscuous. The door that Pompilia opens into the public sphere for herself closes with her death.

But while the cost for Pompilia’s speech act is troublingly high, and her victory does not extend beyond her life, what remains significant about this moment is that Browning recognizes in the poem not only the collective influence of the public but also the problematic nature of the public/private dichotomy. As his poem depicts, separate spheres ideology is increasingly untenable in the modern world, as private matter becomes public through the growing power of the courts and the press. Browning’s vision of the new public is not one of reason and insight but of sensation and reaction. Public opinion may rise against violence, but it also demands it. Thus, in *The Ring and the Book*, Browning’s celebration of an increasingly open public sphere is balanced by his lament for the deeply personal and potentially catastrophic cost of representation.²¹

²¹ Many thanks to the family of Shirley Bard Rapoport, particularly Morris Rapoport, for their generous support of my research through the Department of English at Rice University. Thanks also to Helena Michie, who read and responded to early drafts of this essay.

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Book Reviews

Lillian Nayder. *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8014-4787-7. 360 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Robert Lapidus

Lillian Nayder's new biography of Catherine Hogarth Dickens is a superb, long-overdue study of a great writer's misrepresented wife. It argues persuasively that she was not the passive, inadequate woman she has usually been seen as. And at least as satisfying as this corrective (which has always been plausible, given what we know about Charles Dickens's need to dominate) is the scholarship in this book. Nayder uses letters of Catherine (and her sisters and friends) that have rarely, if ever, been discussed in print, as well as household account books to shed new light on the Dickens family dynamics. She also presents useful and fascinating information on Victorian life, from childbirth to mesmerism.

It has generally been thought that their marriage failed because Catherine was not up to Dickens's level of development, and that he simply lost interest in her. Nayder demonstrates that this was not the case. She grew up in a well-connected, culturally sophisticated family: her father, who had been part of Walter Scott's circle, was one of Dickens's editors and also a lawyer, a critic, a skilled musician, and composer. Her maternal grandfather, an editor and publisher of Scottish folk songs, was a friend of Robert Burns. Catherine herself was bright, well-read, good-natured, and capable of treating would-be suitors ironically.

When she and Dickens became engaged, however, she lost considerable power. Dickens's letters to her give the impression that she was childishly demanding. She kept asking him to spend more time with her, while he kept refusing to leave his desk. He was constitutionally unable to give his work anything less than his full attention. Nor would he have achieved his great success had he not been so single-minded, especially during this period, when he was still only a journalist. His very hard work, his refusal to

interrupt his writing, his impatience with her difficulty understanding that his success (and, therefore, their future) mattered more than evenings spent together are completely understandable to us. But it is also true that they were in love and recently betrothed. He would not be the spouse many people would choose. These two young people had different priorities, and yet the problem has been seen, until now, as a defect of hers. Moreover, she was trapped. As Nayder points out, it was difficult for a woman at that time to break off her engagement without damaging her situation.

They might have settled into a division of labor. However, Nayder shows that throughout their marriage Dickens undermined Catherine's authority in the two domains that should have been hers: as mother and as manager of the household. She also argues that he interfered in her relationship with others, that he deluded himself about Catherine's sister Mary, and that he often had a need to deprecate women he did not or could not dominate. Nayder also underlines his selfishness in regard to his children, something that contrasts dramatically with Dickens's stance in his fiction; when his children were quite small, he insisted that Catherine accompany him to America (which meant leaving them for six months with friends and relatives) and, when they were still teenagers, he sent most of the boys off to difficult futures abroad, never to see them again.

Nayder brings to light an abundance of new information, which will make it possible to discuss a number of questions more intelligently than before. She avoids presenting Dickens's point of view, or rather the various defenses that might be made of his point of view. She suggests that his affair with Ellen Ternan may explain why he sent his teenaged boys away, but he may have felt they needed the kind of challenges he faced as a boy. If so, he failed to consider that they lacked the strength of character he already had when he was sent to work in the blacking house. Too, his extreme need for control was not primarily a matter of sexism, but these are issues the book will open up further. It does make very clear that his conduct, whatever its causes, suppressed Catherine's spirit. And yet, as Nayder also shows, her dignity, warmth, cultivation, and interest in life were very visible in her last years, despite the great cruelty with which Dickens forced her out of their marriage. The book is physically handsome, with sewn sheets, many pictures, and very readable typeface.

Stefano Evangelista, ed. *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*. London: Continuum, 2010. Athlone Critical Traditions Series: The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe. ISBN: 978-1-8470-6005-1. cv + 381 pp. \$295.00.

Reviewed by Nikolai Endres

Wilde lives! Mocked, spat at, imprisoned, and subsequently silenced in England, Oscar Wilde never lost his appeal on the continent. Stefano Evangelista has compiled an impressive collection by international scholars and translators on the cultural impact of Wilde's work across Europe, ranging from the 1890s to the present. The volume starts with a fifty-page Reception Timeline (divided in three sections: translations, criticism, and other literary, musical, and artistic works inspired by Wilde) by Paul Barnaby and a thirty-page Performance Timeline (listing date, venue, play, and additional information, such as world premieres, producers, directors, or actors) by Michelle Paull. In his introduction, "Oscar Wilde: European by Sympathy," Evangelista emphasizes Wilde's multifarious cosmopolitanism: born in Ireland, Wilde established his campy reputation during his American tour; living in London, he loved all things French; reunited with his lover in Naples after his release from prison, Wilde was buried in Paris. An overview of key moments defining Wilde's literary legacy includes Wilde's decadent canonization in Max Nordau's infamous *Entartung*; his "modernization" through Richard Strauss' opera *Salome*; and surprising performances of Wilde's comedies in Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, and Franco's Spain. Evangelista concludes by highlighting the paradox of Wilde's "Englishness": "[his] cultural resistance—his aestheticism, dandyism and even his homosexuality—were seen to be at once fundamentally English and fundamentally opposed to mainstream English values" (12).

Chapter 1, Joseph Bristow's "Picturing His Exact Decadence: The British Reception of Oscar Wilde," surveys a variety of Wilde's influences on British social and literary history. This includes the admiration of author Katherine Mansfield; Robert Harborough

Sherard's book *Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship* (1902); Wilde's equation with Friedrich Nietzsche as an avatar of modernity; dancer Maud Allen's libel suit against MP Noel Pemberton Billing (who had contended, in "The Cult of the Clitoris," that Allen's audience for *Salomé* consisted of "perverts"); Lawrence Housman's vindication of Wilde's homosexuality; the curious afterlife of Wilde on stage; John Betjeman's eccentric poem "The Arrest of Oscar Wilde at the Cadogan Hotel"; and the unveiling of a plaque in Wilde's honor at 34 Tite Street. In this chapter, Bristow covers a lot of ground familiar to Wilde scholars.

Noreen Doody's "Performance and Place: Oscar Wilde and the Irish National Interest" turns to Wilde the Irishman. While present-day Ireland has firmly reclaimed Wilde—his name appears at least once a week in the news—this was not always the case. Based on research in the *Irish Times* (Ireland's leading newspaper, with a moderate, Protestant bent) and the *Freeman's Journal* (its Catholic and nationalist rival), Doody's discussion analyzes Wilde's questionable Irish credentials (which, incredibly, resulted in Wilde being labeled quintessentially English), despite his many visits to Dublin. She questions the sparse but surprisingly sympathetic coverage of the trials: "It may be that the Irish media had no wish to collude or in any way aid the Crown in the prosecution of a fellow Irishman at a moment of polarized cultural outlook, sharp political division and intense endeavour towards Home Rule" (57). Doody also addresses Wilde's conspicuous absence from the Abbey Theatre through 2005, when a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest* featured an all-male cast of rent-boys and an appearance by Wilde metamorphosed into Lady Bracknell; Wilde's influence on W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Colm Tóibín, and others; the charming Wilde monument in Merrion Square; and a Wild(e) Dublin Pub Crawl.

Richard Hibbitt's "The Artist as Aesthete: The French Creation of Wilde" tackles the question of how "French" Wilde was. Wilde knew everyone in Paris, and it was French writers, critics, and journalists that shaped his image as the consummate English aesthete. Even in "decadent" France, however, some people distanced themselves from Wilde because of his homosexuality, while others conflated his trials with the notorious Dreyfus controversy. Emily Eells' "Naturalizing Oscar Wilde as an *homme de lettres*: The French Reception of *Dorian Gray* and *Salomé* (1895–1922)" focuses on two of Wilde's most

“French” works (*Salomé* was even written in French). *The Picture of Dorian Gray* featured prominently in French gay circles, for example Jean Cocteau’s *The Supernatural Portrait of Dorian Gray* and Marcel Proust’s *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Victoria Reid’s “André Gide’s ‘Hommage à Oscar Wilde’ or ‘The Tale of Judas’” covers Gide’s ambiguous reaction to Wilde as a prime example of Harold Bloom’s “anxiety of influence.” All in all, these French chapters are not particularly original.

Rita Severi’s “‘Astonishing in my Italian’: Oscar Wilde’s First Italian Editions, 1890–1952” establishes that Wilde was held in high esteem in Italy. Strangely, though, most Italian translations used French editions as originals, giving us Wilde’s texts at a double remove. Other curiosities include confusing titles—such as *Doriano Gray dipinto* (Dorian Gray Painted) or *L’importanza di far sul serio* (The Importance of Being Serious)—and the introduction by Fascist authorities of Wilde’s fairy tales as school primers in English classes. In the 1950s, Wilde’s works were included in the prestigious series *The Great Masters*, and today he is the second-most popular (after Shakespeare) “English” author in the country. Elisa Bizzotto’s “‘Children of Pleasure’: Oscar Wilde and Italian Decadence” turns to Gabriele d’Annunzio and his circle, investigating the Southern European/Catholic trend to interpret Wilde and his works, especially “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” and *De Profundis*, in terms of guilt or sin and the (im)possibility of redemption, rather than on strictly aesthetic or formalistic principles. Wilde thus became equated with Saint Sebastian, Job, Christ, and Francis of Assisi. At the same time, the euphemism *oscarwildismo* was coined to convey the love that dare not speak its name.

Richard A. Cardwell’s “The Strange Adventures of Oscar Wilde in Spain (1892–1912)” points out that Spanish literature of the *fin de siècle* was dominated by Realism and Naturalism; therefore, young progressive writers looked abroad for inspiration. Wilde, however, was introduced into Spain primarily by Latin American writers residing in Paris and Madrid, namely Guatemalan Enrique Gómez Carrillo and Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, who combined “medicine, evolutionism, degeneration, the law and criminality, and Christian teaching” (148) into a Protean Wilde. Marta Mateo’s “The Reception of Wilde’s Works in Spain through Theatre Performances at the Turn of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries” ranges from the two standard translations of Wilde’s plays (one

for the stage, the other for the page) to the heyday of Wildemia. While Wilde’s current status in the series *Grandes Clásicos* and *Obras eternas* (Eternal works) surprises no one, even during the harsh Franco years, Wilde was considered a classic (he is listed in the exhaustive censorship files on English language exemplars, “literary gems,” and the like). And now we have flamenco, hip-hop, and oriental versions of *Salomé*; *A Woman of No Importance* serving for an awareness campaign for women’s rights; and Miss Prism’s handbag as the progenitor of Teletubby Tinky Winky’s red purse. Unfortunately, Mateo says little about Wilde’s reception by Federico García Lorca.

Robert Vilain’s “Tragedy and the Apostle of Beauty: The Early Literary Reception of Oscar Wilde in Germany and Austria” notes the tendency to merge Wilde’s life with his art. Translations flourished, but Wilde’s works were often uncritically reduced to his aestheticism, anti-Victorian crusade, and homosexual martyrdom. Oskar (the German spelling) fascinated but was not taken seriously: “Empty of spirit and essence, Wilde has fallen victim to his own facility with words” (181). More ominously, some directors distorted the Jewish stereotypes in *Salomé* to cater to wide-spread (and growing) anti-Semitism. Rainer Kohlmayer and Lucia Krämer’s “*Bunbury* in Germany: Alive and Kicking” draws our attention to the staggering 225 German editions of Wilde’s works that were published between 1900 and 1934. Hedwig Lachmann’s 1900 translation of *Salomé* prompted Max Reinhardt’s first production in Berlin in 1902 and Richard Strauss’ 1905 opera. Kohlmayer and Krämer’s sketch of the reception history of Wilde’s comedies reveals that, during the Weimar Republic, Wilde was appropriated by the Left, while the Nazis fitted Wildean dandies into a straitjacket of “soldierly self-discipline and Nietzschean will-power” (196). During the German Democratic Republic, Wilde’s credentials were reduced to his “Marxist” critique of the bourgeoisie; today, he continues to appeal because of his superb wit rather than ideology.

Sandra Mayer’s “When Critics Disagree, the Artist Survives: Oscar Wilde, An All-Time Favourite of the Viennese Stage in the Twentieth Century” touches on the francophilia of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna and its affinity for Parisian Symbolism. Also addressed are Austria’s tangled history (Habsburg monarchy, republic of a rump state, Anschluss with the Third Reich, Allied occupation, Cold War buffer) that shaped its cultural and theatrical development; and Nobel Laureate Elfriede Jelinek’s near-

pornographic gay drama *Ernst ist das Leben* (Life is earnest): “Jack and Algernon are two happily queer dowry hunters in eccentric dress, Gwendolen an iron-willed, latex-clad dominatrix and Canon Chasuble a barely contained lech performing an act of zoophilia on an unsuspecting stuffed sheep” (213). Bums, buns, bunnies, bunburying, Burberry . . . happily complement and confuse each other. Chris Walton’s “Composing Oscar: Settings of Wilde for the German Stage” contends that Strauss’ *Salome* (spelled without the accent in German) inaugurated the craze for literature opera (Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*, Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, Benjamin Britten’s *Death in Venice*, to name but a few). Why did Strauss choose Wilde’s tragedy? “Strauss understood what every Hollywood producer knows today: sex sells, and sells all the more when it shocks” (218). Walton draws further parallels with Wagner’s operas and sees Herod’s court a reflection of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s pomposity and homoeroticism. He concludes with more obscure musical renderings of “The Birth of the Infanta” and *Dorian Gray*, and with Wilde’s appeal in Switzerland.

Lene Østermark-Johansen’s “From Continental Discourse to ‘A Breath from a Better World’: Oscar Wilde and Denmark” begins with Teutonic “earnestness,” which supposedly discouraged Danish (but not Swedish) culture from embracing a “Gallic” Wilde. For example, Wilde’s alter ego in Denmark, novelist and playwright Herman Bang (1857–1912), became the target of satire, variously ridiculed as “Miss Hermine Bang” or “Mr. Manbang”; a huge decency scandal in 1907 sent over a dozen homosexuals to prison; and rumors about beloved fairy-tale author Hans Christian Andersen’s sexual orientation were hushed. Only after World War II did Denmark fully embrace Anglo-American culture, beginning with 105 legendary runs of *The Importance of Being Earnest* between 1944 and 1947.

According to Mária Kurdi’s “An Ideal Situation? The Importance of Oscar Wilde’s Dramatic Work in Hungary,” Hungary first took notice of Wilde in 1902, when articles in the magazine *Magyar Gényusz* appeared. Marxist critic György (George) Lukács enjoyed the premiere of *Lady Windermere’s Fan* in 1903 for its blurring of the line between good and evil, and he was even more impressed by *Salomé*. After World War I and the loss of two thirds of its territory, Hungary affiliated with other “minority” countries and therefore emphasized Wilde’s Irish background. In the wake of the 1956 uprising, the

Communist Party “was willing to acknowledge the humanist merits of the best of bourgeois literature in order to win the support of intellectuals” (251), leading to a rehabilitation of Wilde. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, an innovative staging of *Salomé* cast the protagonist as a concentration camp doctor lusting after a Jewish boy.

Zdeněk Beran’s “Oscar Wilde and the Czech Decadence” summarizes the lively exchange about Wilde after his conviction for gross indecency. The future leaders of the Czech Decadence or Synthetic Art (their preferred term, denoting a Wildean synthesis of beauty and life in art) rose to his defense in their journal *Moderní revue*, where Wilde remained a constant presence after his death. Here Beran also tells a heartbreaking story of Wildean suffering. One of Wilde’s disciples, Arthur Breisky, who styled his look after Wilde, died at age twenty-five, his handsome face crushed beyond recognition in an elevator accident. Later, Wilde became a favorite for Czech artists. A fabulous 1907 portrait by Jan Konůpek combines ideas from Joris-Karl Huysmans’ *A Rebours*, the Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones, and the Austrian Secessionist painters Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

According to Irena Grubica’s “The ‘Byron of Kipling’s England’: Oscar Wilde in Croatia,” many Croatian intellectuals were educated in Vienna, Munich, or Prague, where they first encountered Wilde’s works. Moreover, Autun Gustav Matoš, a central figure in Croatian Modernism, sent regular reports from Paris to Zagreb, lamenting Wilde’s “Byronic” fate and British hypocrisy. Wilde’s plays soon conquered the stage, especially *Salomé* and its complex symbolism. Future Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić falsely accused of conspiring to assassinate Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo, poignantly translated “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” in prison, while “The Soul of Man under Socialism” was seamlessly absorbed into Tito’s Yugoslavia. And nowadays Wilde is cherished in independent Croatia as a pop idol *avant la lettre*.

Chapter 18, Evgenii Bershtein’s “‘Next to Christ’: Oscar Wilde in Russian Modernism,” singles out Wilde as the most popular source of early European modernism, where his tenet of life as art proved crucial in Russian culture, just as his homosexuality helped shape sexual ideologies (unlike many European countries, Czarist Russia had no public sex scandals). The Symbolist poets eagerly equated Wilde with Nietzsche, who went mad and was shut away and whose “sufferings put the stamp of truth on his writings

and gave him the moral right to preach amorality" (291): hence the popularity of Wilde's prison writings. Ironically, Mikhail Kuzmin (1872–1936), whose gay novel *Wings* (1906) earned him the nickname "the Russian Wilde," rejected this facile myth of gay or Christian martyrdom, emancipating gay men toward a Hellenistic vision of ecstasy and bliss.

A massive bibliography, arranged by the contributors' chapters (and sometimes split into primary and secondary sources), concludes the tome. This is an extremely valuable study, but there is also something terribly annoying: throughout the entire book, all of Wilde's titles are abbreviated, so we have *LASCOS* (*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*), *IBE* (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), or *PPUY* ("Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young"). A passage like "Andersen translated the four tales from *HPOT* closest in spirit to the national bard, Hans Christian Andersen, namely HP, NR, SG and DF. He thus left out RR with its Whistlerian references and the somewhat problematic PMWH" (239) thus becomes virtually incomprehensible. On the plus side, the volume is remarkably and admirably free from spelling errors for quotations from foreign languages (no doubt testifying to Evangelista's multilingualism!). And the only glaring omission I noticed is Greece. Considering Wilde's memorable quip "to read Greek and speak French are two of the greatest pleasures in the cultivation of Life," half of his pleasure is missing.

George Gissing. *Demos: A Story of English Socialism*. Ed. Debbie Harrison. Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-906469-17-7. 480 pp. £14, €16, \$22.

Reviewed by Malcolm Allen

"SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESS'D," wrote Dr. Johnson, and in capital letters, too. The line from "London" could be an epigraph for the life of George Gissing (1857–1903). The first child of a Yorkshire pharmacist, Gissing was a brilliant student and seemed destined for the life of a scholar. But he fell in love with a certain

Marianne Helen Harrison, known as Nell, a young woman who was selling herself, sometimes to Gissing's own friends, to finance an increasingly well-entrenched drinking habit. Naïve and idealistic, Gissing gave her what money he could, then stole in an effort to keep her off the streets. He was caught in the act, spent a month in prison and a year in exile in the USA, returned to London, and eventually married his mistress. The marriage did not go well. Gissing finally paid Nell a modest weekly sum to keep away. She died in 1888, a dozen years after ruining his life, probably of some combination of alcohol poisoning, malnutrition, and syphilis.

Upon his return to London in 1877 after the American sojourn, Gissing set himself to make a career as a novelist. In fact, he did more than that. With fierce integrity and a bookish ignorance of life remarkable even for an idealistic twenty year old, he worked to become a writer of undeniable achievement. Gissing's first novel was rejected by at least one publisher. His second, *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), appeared only because its author, who had inherited a modest sum, financed its publication. His third, *Mrs. Grundy's Enemies*, was accepted but never appeared, the publisher shying away from the book's frankness. His fourth, *The Unclassed* (1884), did attain the dignity of print and was even reviewed with some respect, though it did little to fatten its author's purse. It was only with the publication of *Demos* in March 1886 that Gissing achieved something like success; although, having accepted £100 from Smith, Elder for complete rights, he again did not benefit financially despite relatively good sales (the publishers disposed of five hundred copies or so within three months). This was his situation after a decade of ferocious and dogged labor in exceedingly unfavorable circumstances.

But with *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* (1886), for once the chronically unlucky Gissing would find himself the author of a timely book. As Debbie Harrison points out in her introduction, there had been working-class riots in the heart of the fashionable West End of London in February 1886; Gissing wrote to his sister that "For myself, it is rather a good thing than otherwise, for I am writing a book that deals with Socialism, & it may prove more interesting on account of the attention that is being drawn to the subject" (10). In the previous year, "Socialists" (Gissing's word) and police had fought in the working-class East End, and William Morris, partial inspiration for the figure of Westlake in *Demos*, had been arrested for assaulting a policeman. Gissing's

indignant response, in a letter of 22 September 1885 to his brother Algernon, not quoted by Harrison, is revealing: "But, alas, what the devil is such a man doing in that galley? It is painful to me beyond expression. Why cannot he write poetry in the shade? He will inevitably coarsen himself in the company of ruffians" (Mattheisen 2:349). At first published anonymously, presumably in an attempt to start speculative gossip, *Demos* won praise not only in contemporary reviews but also, for example, from Charles Booth in *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889) for the reliability of its depiction of the lives of the poor. When it was reissued in 1888 and acknowledged as Gissing's, the novel helped consolidate his reputation.

Only one man could have written *Demos*, and his characteristic foibles and obsessions are to be found on many a page. For years the sensitive and highly educated Gissing was compelled by lack of funds and the chronic insobriety of his wife to live in what Harrison delicately calls "the less salubrious areas of London" (12). A mixture of pity at the sufferings of the helpless poor combines with a fastidious, even snobbish, dislike of their behavior and attitudes, real or perceived. The result is an idiosyncratic work that is both a forceful condemnation of the society of his day and a rejection of the chief projects advanced for that society's amelioration.

The former is given expression in the description of Manor Park Cemetery, justly noted by Harrison as "one of the most moving passages in the novel." This is the resting place of Jane Vine, dead after a brief life of pain and deprivation; Jane's sister was a seamstress who has been abandoned by *Demos*'s central character, Richard Mutimer. Because of a misplaced will, Mutimer inherits money and property that should have gone to the upper-middle class Hubert Eldon. The Cemetery houses "indistinguishable units in the vast throng that labours but to support life, the name of each, father, mother, child, . . . a dumb cry for the warmth and love of which Fate so stunted them" (qtd. 17). The latter, a lack of confidence in "socialism" as a panacea for society's ills, manifests itself in the novel's portrayal of Mutimer. Gissing labors to be fair to "the English artisan as we find him on rare occasions, the issue of a good strain which has managed to procure a sufficiency of food for two or three generations" (63). But his fascinated scorn for the man to whom "English literature was . . . a sealed book; poetry he scarcely knew by name," in whose pronunciation of "the second syllable" of his fiancée Adela's name

"there was a slurring . . . disagreeably suggestive of vulgarity," and who later speaks to his wife "with a cigar in his mouth" cannot be entirely repressed (72, 199, 264). The famous, or notorious, passage, in which Adela, examining the face of her sleeping husband, has a "moment of true insight," begins with her realization that "It was the face of a man by birth and breeding altogether beneath her" (350). After losing his property, Mutimer shows real compassion for the London poor and learns to feel genuine respect for his wife; of those whose lot he tries to improve, Gissing writes: "they would look at one another with a leer of cunning, or at best a doubtful grin. Socialism, forsooth! They were as ready for translation to supernal spheres" (410).

Set against the manners and capacities of the working classes is Adela Waltham, the young lady for whom Richard Mutimer, in the most unworthy of the acts that signal his gradual corruption, will abandon his working-class betrothed, and whose very manner of peeling an orange teaches him the validity of class distinctions. "Now, who could have imaged that the simple paring of an orange could be achieved at once with such consummate grace and so naturally? . . . Metamorphosis! Richard Mutimer speculates on aesthetic problems" (115).

The last edition of *Demos* was published by Harvester Press in 1972, with an introduction and notes by the doyen of Gissing scholars Pierre Coustillas, who also provides a preface for the edition under review. Harvester Press editions of the novels are themselves now collectables much sought after by Gissingites, so Debbie Harrison's new version of *Demos* is welcome. It can reasonably be hoped that Gissing's third published novel will now be taught more often in schools and universities and will provide instructors with an alternative to his better known works, notably *New Grub Street* (1891) and the proto-feminist *The Odd Women* (1893). Harrison's edition comes with a good introduction in which she discusses the contrasting themes of "reactionary aesthetic conservatism and energetic but ugly progress" (9) and the significance of the "triumph of hereditary privilege, nature and sensibility that marks the ending of *Demos*" (20). There is a brief biography of Gissing, a "Chronology," and a useful select bibliography. An appendix sets the politics of the novel against their contemporary background and nearly a hundred notes elucidate allusions and difficulties within the text. This is the second

Gissing novel published by Victorian Secrets: last year they issued *Workers in the Dawn*, also edited by Harrison, and gave us the only readily available edition of that promising, if flawed, work. Rumor has it that the almost unprocurable 1884 text of *The Unclassed* is also on the stocks. Victorian Secrets is doing sterling work.

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Contributors

M. D. Allen is Professor of English at University of Wisconsin, Fox Valley. He has published articles in *The Gissing Journal* and is currently working on Gissing's interest in French literature and culture. He has also studied the writing of English travelers in the Middle East.

M. Melissa Elston is a Ph.D student in the Department of English at Texas A&M University. Her research interests include 19th–20th century visual culture, and the relationship(s) between art and rhetoric as manifested through literature and other discourses. She has previously published essays in *Atenea* and **disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory**.

Nikolai Endres is associate professor of World Literature at Western Kentucky University. His publications include articles on Oscar Wilde, Mary Renault, and Gore Vidal. His new work includes a "queer" reading of the myth and music of Richard Wagner.

Justin T. Jones recently completed his dissertation, "Unmaking Progress: Individual and Social Teleology in Victorian Children's Fiction," at University of North Texas. His article "Morality's Ugly Implications in Oscar Wilde's Fairy Tales" is forthcoming in *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* (Fall 2011). His research focuses on Victorian children's fiction and the Victorian literary essay. His current project studies the function of game-play in the fantasy narratives of Lewis Carroll.

Joyce E. Kelley is assistant professor of English at Auburn University, Montgomery where she teaches courses in Victorian literature, British and American modernism, and children's literature. Her most recent article is "Virginia Woolf and Music" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (2010). She is currently working on a book project on modernist women writers and travel.

Doug Kirshen is a doctoral candidate at Brandeis University. His dissertation on the "New Man" and performances of masculinity in the London theatre season of 1895 focuses on plays by J. Comyns Carr, Henry James, and Oscar Wilde and on productions by George Alexander and Henry Irving. Previous publications include "Embodiment of the King: Henry Irving's *King Arthur*" in *Henry Irving: A Re-Evaluation of the Pre-Eminent Victorian Actor-Manager* (2008).

Robert Lapides, a professor of English at Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY, is completing a book on Dickens's creative development. He was the editor of *Hudson River* magazine for many years and the co-editor of *Lodz Ghetto* (Viking 1989, Penguin 1991).

Janice Law Trecker recently retired after twenty years as adjunct instructor of English at the University of Connecticut. As Janice Law, she is a novelist, and her most recent book is a collection of short mystery fiction, *Blood in the Water*.

Elizabeth Coggin Womack, lecturer in British Literature at Baylor University, received her Ph.D from Rice University in 2010. Research interests include 19th-century poetry and prose, women and gender studies, poverty studies, and new economic criticism. Her current project, tentatively titled "Secondhand Economies: Recycling, Reuse, and Exchange in the Victorian Novel," examines patterns of secondhand exchange as a counterpoint to the more-frequently discussed literary representations of industrial production and mass consumption.