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‘Nothing against good morals and correct taste’:
Subversion, containment and the masculine boundaries of
Victorian sensation fiction.

David Halliwell

A Thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The thesis explores the boundaries of sensation fiction with particular emphasis on masculine discourse as evidenced in these and their performance of ideological work. In its contemporary emphasis on the 1860s the study focuses on sensation novels in their initial published form as serials in family magazines and masculine discourse in paratexts surrounding instalments. Although masculinity is only one perspective in magazines there is sufficient cumulative evidence of a strong masculinist orientation in editorial selection of paratexts which I argue may affect the reading of instalments of sensation fiction. Critical reviews of these novels, the cultural anxieties and ideological fears they provoked are discussed in the following chapter. These critical reviews were a persistent feature of the periodical press and this is worth mentioning because they form a powerful, reactionary and persuasive viewpoint in the masculine boundaries of sensation fiction. Turning to modern criticism the thesis examines the neglect and omission of Edmund Yates, a sensation author who was very much part of the mid-nineteenth century literary scene. Through its emphasis on masculinities the thesis attempts to offer critical insights into the vexed and contentious question of how far sensation fiction is subversive and how far it is successfully and deliberately contained. In its assessment of Edmund Yates the study attempts to show that narrative structures which seem to support the containment of subversive trends in sensation fiction can be used to support dissident readings of a modern canon of sensation.

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To Nancy and Laura

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Abbreviations used in this thesis

List of Nineteenth Century Periodicals and abbreviations to their full titles as used in this study

<i>All The Year Round</i>	AYR
<i>The Argosy</i>	AR
<i>The Athenaeum</i>	ATH.
<i>Belgravia</i>	BL.
<i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i>	BEM.
<i>The Christian Remembrancer</i>	CR.
<i>The Cornhill</i>	TC.
<i>The Critic</i>	TCR.
<i>The Examiner</i>	TE.
<i>Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country</i>	FM.
<i>The London Review</i>	LR.
<i>The National Magazine</i>	NM.
<i>The North British Review</i>	NBR.
<i>The Quarterly Review</i>	QR.
<i>The Reader</i>	TR.
<i>The Rose, The Shamrock and the Thistle</i>	RST.
<i>The Saturday Review</i>	SR.
<i>St. James's Magazine</i>	SJM.
<i>Temple Bar</i>	TB.
<i>Tinsley's Magazine</i>	TM.
<i>The Westminster Review</i>	WR.

Abbreviations to titles of Edmund Yates's novels

TFH	<i>The Forlorn Hope</i>
KTR	<i>Kissing The Rod</i>
DWP	<i>Dr. Wainright's Patient</i>
TRA	<i>The Rock Ahead</i>
ARW	<i>A Righted Wrong</i>
LAL	<i>Land At Last</i>
RTG	<i>Running The Gauntlet</i>

Chapter One Literature review and introduction

A literature review situates the thesis in the sensation context and delineates the contours of its cross-disciplinary approach. The review is organised in four sections embracing the beginning of modern interest in the genre, consolidation and foregrounding of the genre and the continuing development of critical interest. Chronology in the literature review, below, reflects the development of my thesis. The thesis focuses on the initial appearance of sensation fiction, early critical interest, and the development of recent critical interest in the genre with particular emphasis on the omission of Edmund Yates. A fourth section of the literature review refers to other literature which has been of relevance and usefulness in this study.

Beginnings

Elaine Showalter (1977) *A Literature of Their Own*, Winifred Hughes (1980) *The Maniac in the Cellar* and Lyn Pykett (1994) *The Sensation Novel* contribute more than adequately to a historical view of the proliferation of Sensation fiction and critical reaction to it. Showalter's feminist work *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Bronte To Lessing* was aimed at foregrounding the work of women writers who, as she says, 'despite prejudice, despite guilt, despite inhibition [...] began to write' (1977: 36). She emphasises her feminist stance as she discusses Wilkie Collins and in doing so shows the way that literature is a useful device through which gender issues can be aired in a supportive or challenging discussion. Describing female writers of sensation, providing a challenge to male dominance of the genre, she concludes that 'the four novels Collins wrote in the 1860s, *The Woman In White* (1860), *No Name* (1862), *Armada* (1866), and *The Moonstone* (1868) are relatively conventional in terms of their social and sexual attitudes' (162). She supports this claim with a description of the story of *The Woman In White* and

its conventional ending, 'sentimental marriage[s] whose success is validated by the prompt appearance of male offspring' (162). This type of ending has itself been reassessed in some recent work and in this thesis.

Hughes pointed out that sensation novels were not only exciting and shocking but were also novels which 'struck at the roots of Victorian anxieties and otherwise unacknowledged concerns' (1980: 5). This sort of comment, which recognises the depth of meaning and variety of issues considered in sensation fiction, was important as was the work of Showalter which did much to refocus critical attention on a genre which still attracted a certain amount of critical reticence. In her seminal work, in 1977, Showalter had, as Deborah Wynne pertinently remarks, 'offered one of the first feminist critiques of the novels of female sensation writers of the 1860s' (Ed. Gilbert, 2011: 395). In her chapter entitled 'Subverting the Feminine Novel: Sensationalism and Feminine Protest', Showalter (1977) wrote of secrets in sensation novels:

their secrets were not simply solutions to mysteries and crimes; they were the secrets of women's dislike of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. These women novelists made a powerful appeal to the female audience by subverting the traditions of feminine fiction to suit their own imaginative impulses, by expressing a wide range of suppressed female emotions, and by tapping and satisfying fantasies of protest and escape. (1977: 158-9)

This was a powerful statement; almost a manifesto for sensation fiction which was still described two years later as, 'a minor subgenre of British fiction that flourished in the 1860s only to die out a decade later' (Patrick Brantlinger, 1982: 1). As Wynne points out, Showalter's chapter in this book was 'enormously influential' (Ed. Gilbert, 2011: 395). Not only did significant and exciting developments in feminist critical approaches follow but it has to be acknowledged that the richness of nineteenth century literature has been extensively augmented by the laudable efforts of recovering a lost canon of Victorian women writers.

Sensation Fiction invoked widespread contemporary comment on its appearance. In magazines and periodicals there was a mixture of excited and laudable praise for a new departure in novel writing followed by a more reactionary body of criticism. Comments were aired in Parliamentary debates and in the words of leading churchmen and the popular press of the 1860s. Well-known individuals had their say, as did the writers and even their characters such as Sigismund Smith who gets a whole chapter in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864). In *The Maniac in the Cellar* (1980) Winifred Hughes describes this instant response; she says that, 'the sensation novelists instantly monopolised the popular fancy of a decade, while provoking a substantial outcry from critics and moralists alike' (1980: 5). This was just the sort of hostility to increase the curiosity of a reading public whose appetite, once whetted, demanded more of the same. Hughes proceeds to describe the characteristics of the arrival of the genre and the great excitement it provoked. It is virtually a commonplace occurrence for texts on sensation fiction to include comment on the birth, early history and development of the new fiction. Although some of these accounts may appear to replicate each other their importance in situating the genre in the mid-Victorian publishing world cannot be overestimated.

Showalter, Hughes and, somewhat later, Pykett, did much to revive interest in the sensation genre. Pykett argues that, 'the impact of sensationalism on nineteenth-century fiction (and hence on fiction in general) was much more profound and enduring than Brantlinger's model would allow' (1994: 68). The initial view that sensation fiction might have faded away as a genre but that it was an important developmental phase in literature, a point which Hughes argues in her groundbreaking text on the genre, was gradually being superseded by an elevation of sensation to the status of a genre that was worthy of academically rigorous research in its own right.

As a first detailed analysis and a seminal text discussing the genre, detail from Hughes's work is worthwhile noting in this review. She sees contemporary critical reaction to sensation fiction as an important development in theorising the nature of fiction. In her chapter, 'The Sensation Novel and Victorian Theories of Fiction' she says:

Of course, much of the criticism is naive, narrow-minded, or prejudicial; but the best of it reveals an initial groping towards concepts, a forming of critical vocabulary, in order to begin discussing the novel as a distinct form of literary art. (1980: 47)

This is an important and relevant comment to a later chapter in this thesis. Chapter Three considers critical reaction to sensation and I have been cognisant of Hughes's comments. Hughes's broad view of sensation is continued later by Pykett.

Pykett encompasses views also aired in *The Improper Feminine* (1992). In *The Sensation Novel* she re-iterates her feminist views on sensation fiction, its links to gender constructs and also considers the way sensation fiction engages with 'The Woman Question: to debates about women's legal and political rights, women's educational opportunities and employment aspirations and opportunities and women's dissatisfactions with and resistance to traditional marital and familial patterns' (1994: 41). Pykett widens her scope to include male authors briefly mentioning Dickens, Trollope and Hardy and including Collins in her trio of 'the main exponents of the genre' (4). It is worth mentioning that Pykett has since enlarged the range of authors which are discussed in her 2011 revised version. Originally she is more generous to Collins than Showalter and devotes a chapter to examining how his novels:

focus on the ways in which individual identities are formed within specific cultural codes, and most notably those relating to class and gender, and within particular social institutions such as marriage and the family [...] and on [his] preoccupation with problems of subjectivity and perception and with the instability of (modern) identity. (15)

Ideas about identity, subjectivity, femininity and masculinities feature strongly in this thesis and Pykett's work has provided an interesting and useful source for research.

Pykett's *The Sensation Novel: From The Woman in White to The Moonstone* is a compact and incisive point of reference on the subject of Sensation. It is invaluable when read in conjunction with her work *The Improper Feminine* which has an intriguing section on the theatricality of

characterisation in sensation fiction, a model for analysing identity in the novels which has some interesting features worth exploring. These were comparatively new ideas with links to the field of psychology which are given an exhaustive examination in Jenny Bourne Taylor's (1988) important text *In The Secret Theatre Of The Home*. Other books emphasised the unsettling effect Sensation Fiction had on the Victorian home such as Anthea Trodd's *Domestic Crime In The Victorian Novel*. Trodd says that in her work she 'explores the tensions of the contemporary home' (1989: 5-6). She has chapters entitled 'Household Spies: Servants and Crime' and 'The Fiend In The House' sources for ideas on surveillance and deception which have significance for questions of identity. She uses images of the mythical, 'Asmodeus and his roof-raising activities' (Trodd, 1989: 4) to illustrate the hard-hitting relevance of sensation fiction's interrogation of the Victorian domestic paradigm of home and family.

Consolidation

By the 1990s renewed interest in sensation fiction was well established. Feminist criticism of sensation fiction is the major critical voice of the 1990s. It is the standpoint of such books as Lyn Pykett's (1992) *The Improper Feminine The Women's Sensation Novel And The New Woman Writing*, Tamar Heller's (1992) *Dead Secrets Wilkie Collins And The Female Gothic* and Ann Cvetkovich's (1992) *Mixed Feelings Feminism, Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism*. Late 1990s criticism of sensation fiction is also evidenced by many essays and individual chapters such as Deidre David's essay in (Eds. Barbara L. Harman and Susan Meyer, 1996) *The New Nineteenth Century Feminist Reading of Underread Victorian Novels*.

Pykett declares, 'my aim is to reinsert the women's sensation novel [...] into literary history' (Pykett, 1992: ix). She does this by a detailed analysis of a woman's place in nineteenth-century society, particularly women as writers, paying close attention to Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ellen Wood. Pykett's approach to these writers admits that they both 'reinscribe their culture's story about femininity' (5) and, 'also participate in a rewriting of this script of the feminine [...]

explor[ing] or implicitly expos[ing] the contradictions of prevailing femininity' (5). The book also contains brief but interesting comments on sensation fiction as a phenomenon of mass culture. Pykett comments that ways of reading modern mass cultural productions such as soap operas can help to develop ways of looking at the popular cultural innovations of the nineteenth century. The expansive outlook suggested by this book leads into avenues explored by other critics such as Tamar Heller.

Tamar Heller (1992), in *Dead Secrets Wilkie Collins And The Female Gothic*, specifically links Wilkie Collins with the female Gothic and backgrounds this link fully in her chapter 'Reigns of Terror: The Politics of The Female Gothic'. Heller describes Collins's rise to professional writer nicely linking it to his determination to voice his concerns through his 'literary professionalism' (93) by which he had 'to veil subversive elements in his writing so as not to tell "bitter truths" too bitterly' (93). Heller also broadens the analysis to encompass questions about gender. In her introductory note to *The Improper Feminine* Pykett refers to 'gender anxiety' (Pykett, 1992: x) also remarked on by Hughes in her chapter on the sensation novel in Eds. Brantlinger and Thesing, (2002) *A Companion To The Victorian Novel*. Heller uses the emasculation of the male 'artist' to initiate debate about masculine identity and the debate also surfaces in Ann Cvetkovich's (1992) *Mixed Feelings Feminism Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism*. Issues of masculinities are explored in the much neglected work of Edmund Yates in later chapters of the thesis marking an original contribution to critical work on Sensation Fiction. Cvetkovich theorises the politics of affect exemplified by sensation fiction. Her intricate and detailed study ranges over many areas including the troublesome area of maternal relations in the 'Maternal melodrama' explored in Cvetkovich's reading of *East Lynne* (1861) and to some extent in *The Woman In White*. These three texts alongside Kate Flint's (1993) examination of the Victorian reader form an extensive critique in the early 1990s of sensation fiction. It was a body of criticism which continued to expand and was often supplemented with elucidating and scholarly essays.

At the end of the 1990s the critique is characterised by Deirdre David's (1996) essay in *Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Novels*. David's essay 'Rewriting The Male Plot In Wilkie Collins's *No Name* (1862)' has an unusual but apt and credible sub-title, if you are aware of the novel, 'Captain Wragge Orders An Omelette And Mrs Wragge Goes Into Custody'. Without rehearsing the essay it is an example of the detailed way modern critics expose instances of subversive writing encompassed in the most mundane situations as David's reading links Mrs Wragge's deconstruction of the recipe book to, 'female subversion of male-authorized texts or laws' (Eds. Harman and Meyer, 1996: 41). David reads Mrs Wragge's obstructive and awkward attitude as, 'her resistance to accepted interpretation [which] intimates the larger battle in this novel between legitimacy and illegitimacy, between male governance and female revenge' (Eds. Harman and Meyer, 1996: 42). Reading was an issue of serious concern in the Victorian period and the growth in popularity of sensation fiction highlighted anxieties on this matter.

Kate Flint's (1993) comprehensive study of Victorian women readers *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* ranges over a variety of themes from medical manuals, advice books and school reading, varieties which she calls 'prescriptive' (Flint, 1993: 137), to magazines and journals which included book reviews. She follows with a discussion of fictional reading and of particular relevance here with a chapter on sensation fiction. In her introduction Flint mentions sensation fiction when she comments on an image she uses of a reader, 'unmistakably caught up in one of the fashionably controversial 'sensation novels'' (Flint, 1993: 3). Flint says, 'As we watch her consuming the text avidly by firelight, we conclude that the book has the power to keep her up and awake beyond the customary hour at which the house goes to bed' (Flint, 1993: 3). Flint's comment on the reader's possible choice of reading matter, affirms the notion that sensation fiction is exciting, nerve-tingling and possibly illicit. The secretive nature of the reader's late night act gives rise to Flint's comments on passive and active reading. She suggests that, 'sensation fiction and "New Woman" fiction mock within themselves the belief that women read uncritically, unthoughtfully' (Flint, 1993: 15). Her presentation of fictional reading asserts her opinion that, despite possible identification with

heroines the reader and sensation fiction 'did not take the stability of this moral universe for granted' (Flint, 1993: 282). She argues for the capacity of sensation fiction to destabilise accepted norms and 'invite their readers to join in a process which involves the active construction of meaning rather than its revelation' (Flint, 1993: 292). Flint's excellent background to sensation fiction encourages readers to read critically delving beneath the surface excitements which could be very distracting

Although this text is far-reaching in its analysis of women's reading, what is most significant in it is the description above of the affective nature of reading. This is a key feature of sensation fiction and an area which critics found worrying. Karin Littau's (2006) *Theories of reading: books, bodies, and bibliomania* also helps to inform ideas about the affective nature of reading. Littau covers many aspects of affect dealing with both poetry and novel reading which may have caused feelings ranging from pathos and sadness to exhilaration and fear. Critical reaction to sensation fiction, discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, has links to Littau's commentary on reading and affect and his opening question suggests the anxieties which concerned many nineteenth century reviewers, 'why was the novel especially blamed for endangering a reader's health, even society's health?' (Littau, 2006: 63). Concerns about reading provoked anxieties about physical reaction but ideological concerns were more worrying to parts of the publishing world.

Burgeoning Criticism

Such detailed analysis mentioned above is continued into subsequent critical work. Particular examples of this are Marlene Tromp (2000) *The private rod: marital violence, sensation and the law in Victorian Britain* and Marlene Tromp, Pamela K. Gilbert and Aeron Haynie Eds. (2000) *Beyond Sensation Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*. In the blurb to *The Private Rod* (2000) we are told that Marlene Tromp is dealing with the way traditional, 'Victorian understanding of what was "real" changed'. Her text explores the relationship between sensation fiction, realist fiction and the law. She reads deeply into the sensation fiction of Braddon and Collins

demonstrating how it exposed and unsettled traditional stereotypes of ‘socially constructed assumptions about race, class, and gender to describe marital violence in the domestic space’ (Tromp, 2000: 4). Her reading involves what she calls, ‘peeling back these layers’ (Tromp, 2000: 90) to reveal and read the text with microscopic attention to detail. Such detailed textual analysis substantiates her revelations of the nature of what was happening in the genre, so much disparaged and feared by its early critics. Her comments and references to the contemporary situation, regarding violent men in marriage, provide useful information in my examination of masculinities. New perspectives and detailed analysis are also the basis of *Beyond Sensation* (1999). Two examples, briefly commented, on will suggest the type of standpoint the writers take. In ‘Fiction Becomes Her’, Tabitha Sparks speaks of ‘the obfuscation of identity as a primary method of awakening the interest of its readers’ (Eds. Tromp, Gilbert, Haynie, 1999: 199) in sensation fiction. She asks, ‘Why do sensation novels so often figure characters that suffer a dislocation from their proper name and legal identity?’ (Eds. Tromp, Gilbert, Haynie, 1999: 199). Interest in commodities is raised in Katherine Montweiler’s ‘Marketing Sensation: *Lady Audley’s Secret* and Consumer Culture’. Conspicuous consumption, the glorification of objects and the feminisation of ownership is encouraged in Lady Audley’s fondness for shopping either herself or by proxy such as the time when Robert Audley brought her furs from Russia. The collection of essays is summed up in an afterword which poses the question about sensation fiction, is it radical or conservative?

Modern criticism has moved on to consider this rich and complex genre and Andrew Radford’s (2009) *Victorian Sensation Fiction* provides a veritable mine of reference information and commentary on major themes in sensation fiction. Other critics have taken specific areas as points of critical focus such as Andrew Mangham’s (2007) *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: crime, medicine and Victorian popular culture* with its detailed analysis of the problems surrounding mental health in the mid-nineteenth century or Laurie Garrison’s (2011) *Science, Sexuality and Sensation Novels: pleasure of the senses* and its analysis of the complexities for the Victorians of understanding developments in areas that include psychology, evolution and

degeneracy. These and other texts are very useful for those specialising in particular areas. Recently Gilbert's (2011) *A Companion To Sensation Fiction* has provided a valuable contribution to contextualising sensation fiction within a historical framework that includes chapters on a variety of genres which preceded it. This collection also includes a section of some of the most recent criticism on a variety of sensation writers pointing, 'to the range of approaches possible as well as bringing the reader up to date on the existing criticism on these texts and authors' (Gilbert Ed., 2011: 5). This companion has a chapter on the neglected author Edmund Yates whose work is discussed in later chapters in this thesis.

Historical evidence is used substantially in this thesis. A valuable resource for scholars has been the effort aimed at the recovery of faded and almost forgotten writers. Also relevant here and throughout the thesis are articles in the periodical press of the day which provide comment on the sensation genre, individual authors and novels and other pertinent aspects of contemporary life such as observations about reading. As described below, the reading of Yates led to an analysis of his narrative structure and a reassessment of power structures and how they are manifest in his novels and in sensation fiction in general. Ideas about transgression and trespass are developed in Chapters Four and Five and linked to what is viewed as Yates's revision of dominant ideology. Here it is necessary to mention the wider field of literature which has been beneficial to this thesis.

Other Influential Literature

Work on serialisation has depended on Deborah Wynne's (2001) text on periodical influences. Her revealing connections between fiction and non-fiction articles points towards the use of serial instalments to make an alternative case with the aid of Gérard Genette's (1997) *Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation*. Genette's ideas about understanding the peripheral material surrounding book publication is used, in the absence of actual evidence, to construct an implied reader. Supplementing this has been a variety of texts which are representative of much work that has been done to provide a comprehensive understanding of nineteenth century publishing; Richard

Altick's (1957) *The English Common Reader*, Laurel Brake's (2001) *Print in Transition*, Andrew King and John Plunkett's (2005) *Victorian Print Media* and Hilary Fraser, Judith Johnston and Stephanie Green's (2003) *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* are just a few of the many consulted in this matter. Particularly helpful was the attempted reconstruction of a mid-nineteenth century publishing world by Mark Turner in 'Telling of my weekly doings' in Francis O'Gorman's (2005) *A Concise Companion to The Victorian Novel*.

The debate on masculinities is central to this thesis and as a primary source on male conduct I found Samuel Smiles's work invaluable for a contemporary intervention. John Tosh and Michael Roper's (1991) *Manful Assertions* and Tosh's (1999) *A Man's Place* provided much of the historical background needed in this work, supplemented by James Eli Adams's (1995) *Dandies and Desert Saints* and Herbert Sussman's (1995) *Victorian Masculinities*. These books were excellent in describing the variety of masculinities which were possible role models in the period. Theoretical explanations in John Brannigan's (1998) *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* helped to develop understanding of these areas. Ideas which supplied a way of describing how my work on Yates could intersect with the modern canon of sensation fiction developed from Alan Sinfield's (1992) *Faultlines: cultural materialism and the politics of dissident reading*. Chapter Five refers to Sinfield's description of how faultlines force their way into texts and to his explanation of plausibility as justification or disguise of hegemonic masculinity.

Introduction

Almost from its genesis sensation fiction prompted concerned, apprehensive and agitated comments. Heroines such as Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* were often the primary focus of such opinions. A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* declared that she was, '[O]ne of the most beautiful and

bewitching fiends ever met with in the annals of literature' (ATH 1862: 525)¹ and this was echoed in *The Rose, The Shamrock and The Thistle* with the words, 'we cannot call to memory a single instance in the history of devilry played by such a smiling fiend' (RST1862: 82)². What excited readers but troubled reviewers was the inconceivable combination of feminine and deviant qualities in one body. Eventually critical apprehensions were compounded by a series of such novels which were not only gripping but were conceived as threatening to dominant ideological structures through which society functioned

My research focuses on ideological concerns in sensation fiction particularly those centred on questions of gender, class and race. In modern criticism feminist partiality has been a well-considered and justifiably significant aspect of academic research. Recently, though, there has been some tentative widening of the critical scope to include masculinities. Although she remarks that, 'feminism has continued to be of central interest' (Ed. Gilbert, 2011: 6) in relation to sensation fiction Gilbert also draws attention to recent widening of critical approaches:

But now this work is inflected by the interests of gender studies, focusing on masculinity and queer theory in addition to the broader range of material and commodity culture reflected in this very commodified literature, its topicality and modernity, its emphasis on science and medical understandings of the body, its fascination with technology and temporality, and its peculiarly Victorian reflections on an emerging global order. (2011: 6)

In conjunction with this renewed interest my thesis explores what I have called the masculine boundaries of sensation fiction.

My aim is to extend and develop interest in masculinities in sensation fiction and to probe further the vexed question of its radical/reactionary potential. I argue that that by neglecting

¹ Lady Audley's Secret. 1862. *The Athenaeum*, (1862), pp. 525-526. Abbreviations are given at the front of this thesis e.g. ATH. *The Athenaeum*

² Lady Audley's Secret. 1862. *The Rose, the shamrock, and the thistle*, 2, pp. 82.

masculinities sensation criticism overlooks important contributions to debates on the ideological significance of the sensation genre. Richard Nemesvari briefly mentions, ‘the political, class, gender, and commercial anxieties that the sensation novel exacerbated, and which were often foregrounded in the arguments that swirled around it’ (Eds. Harrison and Fantina, 2006:17). Here Nemesvari hints incidentally at the boundaries of sensation fiction which first appeared in the burgeoning periodical press in the 1860s. These periodicals also contained, though not exclusively, a powerful masculine discourse. Critical reviews of sensation novels and reports of its transition into dramatic interpretation on the stage are also featured in the periodical press and these are examined for material relevant to the ideological import in the sensation genre.

In any thorough investigation of sensation fiction in the 1860s it is impossible not to be aware of the name of a prominent sensation writer of the period, Edmund Yates. He was very much part of the publishing scene in mid-nineteenth century Britain yet has been pushed into the boundaries of modern interest in the genre. Although this thesis is not exclusively concerned with recovery this is an area which is important to the modern critical field. The recovery and recuperation project of sensation fiction has seen the work of neglected and almost forgotten authors once more become available for study and enjoyment. This recovery has allowed the investigation of sensation fiction to expand and involve many areas of research, indicating the rich and complex nature of the genre. Yet a prolific sensation writer, Edmund Yates, has been relegated to the status of almost unknown in the modern canon of sensation fiction. Investigations of masculine boundaries of sensation fiction suggested that Edmund Yates’s neglected work *should* be scrutinised

Edmund Yates’s name appeared in a monthly periodical, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, in September 1867 in a review entitled ‘Novels’ written by Margaret Oliphant. In her lengthy consideration of fiction Oliphant devotes a large amount of space to a discussion of sensation fiction. In this review she notes that Annie Thomas and Edmund Yates have been mentioned in a

leading French journal as representative of English novelists. It is a recommendation she concurs with saying that at least in their novels:

The wicked people are punished and the good people are rewarded, as they always should be; and there are exquisite bits of pious reflection which make up to the reader for a doubtful situation or an equivocal character. (Oliphant 1867: 261)³

Yet Oliphant was not entirely happy with these writers. Sensation novels and what she identified as their deficiencies had become the mainspring of interest in fiction and in this well-known article she proceeds to fulminate on the shortcomings of the genre and of particular writers, Edmund Yates included. Yet Edmund Yates, named here by a leading critic, is hardly mentioned in the modern resurgent interest in the sensation genre. Further research elicited very little critical comment on Yates's sensation fiction apart from a useful biographical account of the writer by Peter D. Edwards; *Dickens's Young Men: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (1997). In this volume Yates's novels are mentioned but a comprehensive account of his work is missing from the critique of sensation fiction in general, although he did warrant a chapter in a recent *Companion To Sensation Fiction* (2011) edited by Gilbert. The trajectory of investigation in this thesis begins with a scrutiny of the ideological significance of contemporary masculine boundaries of sensation fiction in the 1860s and evolves organically into an examination of the modern masculine boundaries in a move towards the recovery of the work of Edmund Yates.

Chapter Two, 'Serialisation of sensation fiction' was prompted by Wynne's (2001) work on sensation fiction in periodicals, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*. My intention is quite different from Wynne's but involves a similar analysis. I look at the location of the first published sensation fiction by the two writers often credited with originating this genre, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins. I omitted Mrs Henry Wood from this exercise, but not the whole thesis, because of the limitations of space. My interest is focussed on the masculine discourse

³ Novels. 1867. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 102(623), pp. 257-280.

of magazines which hosted serialised sensation fiction and the intention of the analysis here is to suggest that serialisation of sensation fiction in magazines has a diffusive effect on any radical dialectic which might suggest itself to readers of sensation. I demonstrate that despite the inclusion of dramatic, stimulating, exciting and socially provocative fiction the influence of dominant ideology is so pervasive in paratexts that it works to reduce the radical effect of fictional instalments. My analysis points to magazine contents which construct an implied male reader first and foremost. To facilitate a close engagement with textual sources Genette's (1997) innovative work on paratexts was adapted and used in this chapter. Not all of his comprehensive analytical methods were useful but those I use, as explained in the text below, provided a functional tool with which to analyse original sources allowing a significant engagement with features whose cumulative effect, I argue, augments the strength of masculine discourse surrounding the actual novels. My decision to use Genette's methods was also determined by the fact that studying novels in serial instalments provided a different framework in which the novel was encountered. His attention to the function of all paratextual elements was relevant in making the case that reading instalments was substantially different from reading in volume form and that the various texts within periodicals form a whole which can be read and can affect reading in different ways. Although my engagement with novels in a magazine setting could never mirror original readers' experience, the articles and magazine minutiae could be examined closely for masculine influence to corroborate my hypothesised reading of discourse subsuming radical influence of serialised sensation novels. Next my concern was with critical reviews and reading.

In Chapter Three, 'Critics, culture and reading', I again turned to the well preserved and available source of Victorian periodicals, to read and analyse reviews of sensation fiction. Assumptions and concerns which are found in contemporary reviews, were analysed closely for inferences, allusions and manifest statements which gave an insight into the gendered nature of such articles. This cultural materialist approach prompted a close analysis of critical commentaries of sensation fiction, their relationship to dominant ideologies and the anxieties provoked by the

possibility of a breakdown of cultural boundaries. Such anxieties were located in the developing literary criticism of mid-nineteenth century Britain, in concerns about reading and the spread of literacy and in continuing disquiet about gender roles in a modern society which was the subject of debate. Close analysis of reviews reveals a move from positive acceptance and praise to adverse criticism. Reasons for this are examined as are also some of the few examples of pro-sensation arguments advanced to counter the negative critical onslaught which developed. This analysis which features *Novels*, an 1867 critical review by Margaret Oliphant, makes reference to Edmund Yates, and the chapter's concluding reference to Yates's moderating influence on the sensation genre leads into a more comprehensive examination of his work in the next chapter. It is an analysis which develops knowledge and debate on sensation and with the ensuing chapter represents an original contribution to the sensation debate particularly with reference to masculinities and the subversive/reactionary deliberation.

Chapter Four begins with thoughts on the recovery of writers and texts. According to Mark Knight, 'One of the ways in which literary critics have traditionally re-energised interest in a subject is by recovering forgotten texts' (2009: 325). Edmund Yates has not been part of that process and his recent inclusion in a chapter in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011) has become almost his only critical mention in recent years. My interest was to try and understand Yates's place in his time and his lack of place at the present time. Fortunately, Internet Archive allowed a reading of a selection of Yates's novels. Developments in technology are worth mentioning for the effect they have on the availability of texts which are out of print and subsequently their implications for scholarship. Chapter Four examines narrative structure in Yates's sensation novels of the 1860s. My aim is to assess how Yates's work compared with and differed from the established modern canon of sensation fiction, especially from the 1860s. Significant narrative difference and ideological inferences indicate a formulation of revision in Yates's sensation fiction that made it more acceptable to contemporary critics. Critical opinions suggest that his type of sensation fiction was less offensive and less ideologically controversial and I attribute this to his concentration on

masculinities. Yates's concerns and his critique of certain men reinforces patriarchal values hence his more readily acceptable sensation. My assessment develops a theoretical analysis of Yates's prioritisation of masculinities and this analysis is tested against the modern canon of sensation fiction. The results are the subject of chapter five.

Chapter five of this thesis, 'Edmund Yates and the modern sensation canon' is a detailed application of my development of a theoretical analysis of Yates's sensation fiction to a selection of novels which are part of a modern canon of the genre. The detail of my interpretation of Yates's fiction is integrated with contemporary attitudes to his work and with modern critical work. By using a theoretical framework, dependent to some extent on ideas about dominant, residual and emergent ideologies, I draw conclusions about the ideological implications of neglecting masculinities in critical approaches to sensation fiction. I use my interpretation of Yates's fiction to show how the previously unassailable power of men is inadvertently revealed as flawed by Yates's sensation fiction and what I see as his reductive taxonomy of masculinities. Yates, a peripheral figure in modern criticism, is shown as an effective basis for revealing subversive tendencies in sensation fiction.

Chapter Two The serialisation of sensation fiction

This chapter focuses on the serialisation of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's and Wilkie Collins's sensation fiction of the 1860s. The first and shorter part of the chapter provides methodological details which lead into the analysis which follows. Serial reading, as described below, was an important facet of mid-nineteenth century culture and it differed considerably from whole volume reading. The 1860s saw the inception of the genre that became known as sensation fiction and although it has been shown, in some recent critical work, that sensation fiction did not disappear entirely after this period it was the time of its major impact. Andrew Maunder says, 'the sensation novel cannot be tidily contained within a single decade' (2004: xiii) and Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina remark that the contributors to their volume of essays on sensation, 'resist focus on the novels of the 1860s, suggesting that the genre is wider in scope and broader in impact than at times assumed' (2006: xi). Prevailing scholarship, as evidenced by the work of such critics as Gilbert (1997), Maunder (2004) and Harrison and Fantina (2006), et al, has kept the genre in critical focus through wide-ranging and imaginative interpretations suggesting areas which are potential fields for further exploration.

The aim of this section is to describe a rationale for analysis of the original published context of serialised sensation fiction. Turner reminds us that:

Serialization of novels in the nineteenth century took a number of forms including weekly and monthly instalments that were bound and sold separately (what is called part-issue serialization), and weekly and monthly instalments that appeared in a wide range of magazines and newspapers. (Ed.O'Gorman, 2005: 115)

Although serial reading of fiction was mainly necessary for economic reasons it had a major effect on the dynamics of both literature production and consumption. This section is organised to provide initial comments on the serial process, making reference to how writers and readers were involved

in this. It discusses what constitutes text when a book is divided into sections and incorporated within a magazine and offers a rationale for analysing the reading of sensation serials alongside other articles. Brief comments on reaction to sensation fiction and the moral outrage it provoked support the examination of serialised sensation fiction. Of particular interest to this study, in this chapter, are ideas about sensation fiction as it reached a large part of the reading public in the first instance as serialised versions of novels in popular periodicals. As noted above reading a book in serial form was different from reading a book as a single unit. Novels impart meaning but meaning is changed by context. Single volumes allow readers control; they may look ahead, stop when they wish to or read the whole book at one sitting. Readers of instalments have enforced stopping points because they cannot look ahead while, also, they may be distracted by other surrounding articles.

These other articles referred to in Genette's typology as paratexts are the major concern of the chapter. As the interest and enthusiasm for sensation fiction increased critical reaction changed from approval to an unfounded moral panic that had no firmer or more rational foundation than to maintain patriarchal authority. It is argued that serialised sensation fiction is to a degree contained and subsumed by numerous paratexts that surround instalments. Susan Bernstein and Julia Chavez¹ argue that placing serial instalments in a magazine with a varied and changing content, 'creates an intertextual environment'. Arguing for the capacity of serialised novels to reveal cultural connections they continue, 'Recognition of the networks in which a particular serial novel, for instance, exists has the potential to reveal, in turn, subtle but important intersections among economic, scientific, literary, and even imperial facets of Victorian culture' (Bernstein and Chavez, 2013). By the same token I argue that novels positioned amongst articles that support dominant ideology will remain exciting and compulsive reading but will be viewed as less challenging or confrontational to normal social expectations. The lack of concrete evidence from actual readers is a limiting factor in this type of investigation and due regard is made to this while at the same time reasonable assumptions are derived from the evidence available.

¹ Online article

Serial Fiction

Collins and Braddon were two leading authors of serialised fiction. The novels I have chosen – Collins’s *The Woman In White*, *No Name*, *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* and Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*, *Aurora Floyd* and *The Doctor’s Wife* – appeared during the 1860s and were set in the late 1840s and the early to middle 1850s. Neither author mounts an outright literary crusade on social matters but issues as varied as women’s rights, class, consumerism, mental health, nationalism and imperialism surface throughout their fictions. These novels were published first in serial form in the burgeoning periodical press whose growth is remarked on by Laurel Brake: ‘The number of serial titles between 1800 and 1900 increased exponentially from the fresh crop of quarterlies at the beginning of the century to the new annuals, monthlies, weeklies, thrice weeklies, Sundays, and dailies’ (2001: 8). This huge growth in the number of magazines available greatly increased competition for readers and for ways of attracting and keeping them.

Increased literacy meant a concurrent increasing demand for more reading material of all kinds and, as ever, stories were always popular and in high demand. Cheaper means of presenting these to the public proliferated from library subscriptions, cheap single volumes to serial parts in the multiplicity of magazines on the market. Mark Turner, in his chapter ‘“Telling of my weekly doings” The Material Culture of the Victorian Novel,’ is at pains to point out that serial reading was not a mid-nineteenth century phenomenon but, ‘became pervasive and, arguably, the most significant literary form for much of the century’ (2000: 115). Significant factors in the growth of serialisation are the cost and the attractiveness of the periodicals in question.

Purchasing and reading books was expensive in mid-Victorian Britain. A writer and periodical editor, such as Charles Dickens, was quick to exploit and capitalise on a potential market that was developing with increasing literacy and technological advances. His magazine *All The Year Round* sold cheaply at just 2d per week and contained a variety of articles and serial fiction aimed at a middle-class readership. Fiction held a prime place in his journal and Dickens’s recruitment of

Wilkie Collins was an inspirational strategy in the competitive field of publishing. Richard Altick suggests that there was a bourgeois market for magazines that were a little less ponderous than the innovatory *Cornhill*, a new shilling weekly that had not supplied what its readers hoped for:

The *Cornhill's* initial success, however, was short-lived. Many of its first readers were attracted by its novelty but soon were repelled by its quality. They wanted shilling magazines, but they also wanted more fiction and a lighter literary tone than the *Cornhill* gave them. (1957: 359)

Fiction was a compelling attraction for many readers. Other publications, in particular, *Temple Bar*, *St. James's* and *Belgravia*, are selected by Altick as successful and popular examples of lighter magazines, which had an eclectic mix of articles and fiction. Many factors influenced the increasing popularity of serialised fiction. Periodicals could be easily and cheaply reproduced and, with the expanding railway system, distributed widely.

Writing serials

Magazines were not published solely for their fictional content but fiction was undeniably important and possibly the most attractive part of the content. This is evidenced in the fact that sales of a periodical decreased after a popular novel reached the end of its run. Sutherland (1995) records that Dickens was hurried into changing his plans for publishing *Great Expectations* when sales of *All The Year Round* slumped at one stage. This was due to the failure of the serialised *A Day's Ride* by Charles Levers to maintain the audience that had so keenly followed the serial run of *The Woman In White*. In 1859 Dickens had reassured readers that despite an overlap between *A Tale Of Two Cities* (1859) and the opening of *The Woman In White*, fiction would retain its prime textual space and that, 'the second story of our series [...] will pass, next week, into the station hitherto occupied by *A Tale Of Two Cities*' (1859: 95).² Dickens knew the marketplace and gave this guarantee to his

² THE WOMAN IN WHITE. 1859. *All the year round*, (31), pp. 95-104. (introduction to the new serial novel)

readers that fiction would still have an important place in his periodical. Sutherland remarks on how difficult it was for an editor to rely on a 'regular supply of fiction' (1995: 55) but Dickens and Collins were close friends and Dickens had recognised his friend's potential for exciting writing. Not only had writers to be found but the nature of serialisation demanded the ability to continually reproduce endings that would draw readers back.

The writer of serials was involved in an industrial economy and despite all arguments, discussions and disagreements about aesthetic quality; deadlines were always approaching and had to be met. Braddon dealt with this pressure in *The Doctor's Wife* in her endearing portrait of Sigismund Smith churning out his cheap sensation fiction and always being almost ready for the printer's boy when he called for the next instalment: 'The boy came back before the last page was finished, and Mr Smith detained him for five or ten minutes, at the end of which time he rolled up the manuscript, still damp, and dismissed the printer's emissary' (Braddon, Ed. Pykett, 1998: 12). Serialisation also involved tightness of planning not just to meet deadlines but for the sake of keeping readers. Careful planning of instalments was designed to bring readers back time and again right through to the end of the novel. Serialisation could be a lucrative source of income with the chance that readers might want to own a story they had enjoyed so much and would buy the volume version to read again. Meeting deadlines and tightness of planning suggest stylistic rigours for the author. Sigismund Smith, in *The Doctor's Wife* thinks he has mastered the art by giving his readers interminable excitement well littered with an inexhaustible supply of bodies. He is described by Pykett, in her introduction to the novel as, 'Unburdened by the shameful label of the sensation novelist' (Braddon, Ed. Pykett, 1998: xi), but he is also able to make light of his work because he is unburdened by any aesthetic or social agendas which both Braddon and Collins had. Nevertheless readers' approval had to be gained and held and notwithstanding some criticism of ending instalments with suspense at all cost Braddon and Collins managed to keep their fictions vibrant and their readers enthusiastic.

Reading serials

Evidence about readers and their habits in mid-nineteenth century Britain is scarce. Brake points to various attempts to solve the problem. She says, 'Imagining the historical reader of periodicals is difficult, and can be based upon subscription rates, the topics discussed, the language used, the politics expressed, personal communication between editors and authors, and letters on the correspondence page' (2005: 3). Such evidence that there is has led critics to attempt informed constructions of how the Victorian public read. Serial fiction had particular implications that became important to reviewers of fiction, especially 1860s sensation fiction, in the periodical press of the time. Reading serial fiction eventually became a contentious issue with critics and is discussed in Chapter Three. These issues revolve around debates over the quality of reading material, the rapid output of serial fiction, and possible threats to the novel as a serious and artistic cultural form. The main focus of the discussion here will be issues of gender, class and race. Of these three gender overrides the remaining two issues in debates concerning sensation fiction. There were, nevertheless, a variety of readers and markets for different types of publications.

Wynne mentions various types of magazines and their contents, and readerships of different classes. She describes:

readers eagerly buying or borrowing from circulating libraries, 'respectable' magazines (that is those directed at a middle-class rather than working-class readership) in order to read instalments of novels saturated with the excesses traditionally associated with working-class melodrama and 'shilling shockers.'

(2001: 1)

Although Wynne's description implies a certain amount of freedom reading was not free from the pressures of gendered constraints. Even though women were at home much of the time, theirs was a busy existence, and their time was fragmented, so that reading became a 'snatched' leisure activity. In Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston's discussion of the gendered reader there is

reference to time as a restrictive element that curtailed application to reading. They cite the earlier example of Florence Nightingale and her remarks about the incessant and often trivial demands on a woman's time that hampered devoting long periods of time to reading: 'We know what can be done at odd times [...] a little worsted work, acquiring a language, copying something, putting the room to rights, mending a hole in your glove' (2003: 52). The implication is that if a woman found time to read she was lucky and it would be fragmented time. Hints at commercial opportunism here suggest that if women's reading was hindered by a social regime of perpetual triviality, manners and sheer boredom there was a possibility that literature that eschewed such tedium might attract the female reader and sensation's transgressive heroines readily assumed that role.

Other ideas about how reading was gendered suggest that it was often directed by narrow provision that steered women, for example, towards articles deemed to be suitable and uplifting. Policed reading habits and proscriptive ideas about what a woman should be reading when set against the transgressive nature of sensation fiction presents an interesting paradox. Flint describes women's reading as, 'a site on which one may see a variety of cultural and sexual anxieties displayed' (1993: 22). Patriarchal anxiety about women's reading is also augmented in worries about the spread of popular culture encouraged and made possible by technological innovation, wider distribution, and a growing audience encouraged by burgeoning literacy and advertising. For men, industrialisation, increased travel, urban growth and the pace of modern life seem to have had an effect on reading habits. People read when they travelled to work or crammed reading into increasingly organised and scheduled lives. Much of this was the increasing and necessary organisation of time to suit the industrial day, which affected all strands of life including the rapidly expanding publishing industry. Wherever and whenever they were read serialised fictions provided readers with a different prospect from other forms of reading.

Readers of periodicals, especially the fictional serial, were faced with a much different prospect from readers of single or triple volumes. They were limited to single instalments and were forced to stop when the author stopped. It was an enforced kind of reading but it was not entirely

limiting. Having only the current and previous instalments did not prevent conjecture and discussion about what had happened and what might come next. Hughes and Lund describe a sub-community of readers making the most of each magazine edition:

This community of readers shared a number of elements in their literary experience, such as the pleasure and excitement of anticipation. Letters, newspaper reports, and personal reminiscences consistently attested to the excitement of “magazine day” (the first of the month when new issues appeared in bookstalls across country) [...] response was public as well as private. Moreover, the reactions to the latest part could be shared and intensified. The time between installments in serial literature gave people the opportunity to review events with each other, to speculate about plot and characters, and to deepen their ties to their imagined world. (1991: 10)

Readers may have discussed their reading material and their reactions would have been noted by editors whose skilful selection of articles provided a wide-ranging choice other than fiction. This can be seen in any issue of *All The Year Round* with its eclectic mix of articles. Reading in whatever form was consistently used to reinforce ideological positioning of gender.

Periodicals and text

Although some readers may only have read fiction and some may have ignored it a periodical formed a complex structure of text and this has implications, in this study, for the way evidence is considered. The debate on methodology for studying the huge corpus of Victorian periodicals is still on-going and the question ‘what is text?’ is frequently raised and has several possible answers. Margaret Beetham’s chapter, ‘Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre’ in Brake, Jones and Madden (1990), goes some way towards answering this. Her explanation of how she perceives text in relation to periodicals is helpful when considering the original serial appearance of sensation fiction. This is not the usual unitary existence of the book form. The magazine form has particular relevance for readers. Beetham concludes:

The periodical is an open form in a number of ways: it resists closure because it comes out over time and is, in that respect, serial rather than end-stopped. Its boundaries are fluid and it mixes genres and authorial voices; all this in a time-extended form seems to encourage readers to produce their own readings. Yet, in complete opposition to these formal qualities are another set of qualities which are equally characteristic. Each number of the periodical is a self-contained text and will contain sub-texts which are end-stopped or marked by closure. (1990: 29)

For my purpose 'text' is best understood as a set of discursive fields that are experienced in a variety of ways by different readers. By its very nature a magazine offers a mixture of articles, all of which may not interest every reader. An example could be the number of features which refer to pastimes and leisure activities. These articles might interest active or passive followers of such pursuits or protesters against them. The complexity of periodical reading was, consequently, huge and as noted above it provided a talking point not only for the fictional content but for other topical issues and interests.

Sensation fiction was an ideal stimulus for discussion and eager editors would have had a good knowledge of what else to present to their readers, supplying an eclectic mix of ideological emphasis in their often changing variety. Deborah Wynne suggests that:

Victorian readers were invited by editors to adopt an intertextual approach to magazines by reading each issue's texts in conjunction with each other, encouraging the making of thematic connections between the serial and the novel and other features through the power of juxtaposition. (2001: 3)

When Wynne refers to 'invited by editors' she is not referring to direct editorial intrusion and instruction. My research found few editorials and no letter pages in magazines that hosted sensation fiction. Wynne assumes that editors deliberately chose articles to draw connections between serialised instalments and other features within the periodical.

As serials in magazines these fictions and their self-willed heroines were surrounded by a multiplicity of paratexts. As the impact of this new type of fiction took a firm grip on readers and their popularity increased, voices were raised in opposition. Critical reaction to sensation fiction forms the basis of my next chapter. For now my focus on paratextual elements considers how these elements appear to concur with or are at variance with radical undertones that materialize in sensation fiction particularly with respect to aspects of gender. The magazines which hosted novels on their first appearance and which I have chosen as my focus are: *All The Year Round*, *The Sixpenny Magazine*, *Temple Bar* and the *Cornhill*. Collins's *The Woman In White*, *No Name* and *The Moonstone* appeared in *All The Year Round*, and *Armadale* in the *Cornhill*. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* had a brief run in *Robin Goodfellow*, which folded after only twelve issues and the story was then completed in *The Sixpenny Magazine*. *Aurora Floyd* and *The Doctor's Wife* were serialised in *Temple Bar*.

Readers' responses to periodicals are difficult to assess. Mark Turner mentions ways readers might have approached their relatively valuable and possibly only source of weekly or monthly entertainment, 'start[ing] at the beginning and read[ing] through an issue, front to back [...] alter[ing] the text – by choosing what to read and in what order' (2000: 15). There is of course the gender of readers to consider, which raises other questions about content and readership. Turner acknowledges the difficulty of knowing the reader and states that what he is concerned with are, 'the textual possibilities of reading periodicals' (15). Intertextual reading is a possibility but not a certainty. Empirical evidence is not available to support claims about what readers read despite Wynne's comments. She says:

While the serial novel may have been a major incentive to buy a particular magazine, once bought it was unlikely to be discarded with most features unread. Indeed the relative scarcity of cheap entertainment for the middle classes, coupled with the care and attention given by editors in shaping their magazines intertextually, meant that readers were likely to have read most, if not all, of a magazine's contents. (2001: 3)

Despite the lack of firm evidence, it is possible to make inferences about editors' assumptions about the tastes and habits of their readership from a paratextual analysis. To inform and guide my methodology I turn briefly to Michel Foucault and to paratextual analysis advocated by Genette.

Paratexts

Michel Foucault emphasises textual function rather than the significance of authorial voice or unknowable intention. He refers to Samuel Beckett's words, "what does it matter who is speaking", someone said, "what does it matter who is speaking" (Lodge, 1988: 77). Focus in this chapter is not on the 'speaker'; the emphasis resides in what inferences can be rationally made from textual examples. In this case, paratextual evidence is used to reinforce the interpretation of gendering in magazines that hosted serial fiction. The analysis of 1860s sensation fiction in periodicals and its surrounding texts looks for sites of coherence: areas of what Groden and Kreiswirth call, 'mutual relevance' (Groden and Kreiswirth Eds., 1994: 207). These may be areas of accord or discord. The actual process of analysis will be partly guided by Genette's notion of the paratext through which he emphasises that the text, in this case the fictional instalment, is not separate but is part of an interlocking totality of texts. Paratexts are read and analysed over the timespan of a complete serial novel's run. Although my selection and analysis of paratexts suggests a powerful masculine voice in magazines hosting sensation fiction this is not to deny the multi-vocality of these magazines. Magazines contained multiple voices and cannot be viewed as homogenous in terms of gendering of discourse. This dialogic nature has been emphasised in recent critical work such as Jennifer Phegley's (2004) *Educating The Proper Woman Reader*. As suggested above my interest lies in the 'textual possibilities' suggested by paratexts and here my concern is with masculinity. These publications embody an editorial perspective which may itself be gendered to a greater or lesser extent. Selection of paratexts is a critical problem. Reviewers of recent work on periodicals recognize this as a possible stumbling block. Turner, in a review of Wynne's *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* suggest that, 'One of the chief

difficulties in contextualizing serial fiction is deciding what your “text” actually is: Is it the single instalment of a novel? Is it the single issue of a magazine? Is it the run of issues across the period of serialisation?’ (2003: 558). This begs the question; where does one draw the line regarding paratexts? Turner also speaks of ‘unnecessarily tidy[ing] up and arrang[ing] the reading of the magazine’ (559). I hypothesise a reading which foregrounds the sensation fiction instalments and treats surrounding features as paratexts both within and across numbers, not approving one more than the other but suggesting that although the ‘pull’ of fiction might have been the strongest influence, paratexts also influenced reader reception .

Genette’s methodology for paratextual analysis is comprehensive. Such elements that are used are described as the analysis proceeds. The most important aspect of my rationale for using Genette’s paratextual analysis is its usefulness as a tool for enquiry into ideological significance in the absence of data on reader reception. Serial instalments and paratexts are seen by Genette as part of a textual whole. This has inferences not just for single instalments but for the whole run of the serial. Paratexts which surround serials form a textual discourse that allows implications to be made about editors, writers and readers and it directs attention to the eventual reactionary outcry against sensation.

Contemporary critical reaction to sensation fiction is discussed more fully in Chapter three but here it is useful to recognise that opinion moved from commendation and praise for the genre to an apparent moral panic. Zealous and virtuous indignation soon became a normative reaction to sensation fiction. It was a reaction that encouraged reviewers, self-indulgently, to set themselves up as cultural guardians:

While the vicious tendency of the reading is being diffused over the land, those who possess a sounder judgement and a healthier taste, should, for the benefit of the community at large, discourage their circulation as far as their influence extends.³

³ PHILOSOPHY OF "SENSATION.". 1862. *The St.James's magazine*, pp. 340-346.

(St.J, 1862: 344)

Bitter resentment and outrage at the detailed use of criminality and sexuality in sensation novels displayed a lack of confidence in ideological representation in paratextual contents of magazines which carried sensation fiction. Next I provide examples of male discourse from magazines hosting sensation fiction and discuss how the status quo *is* maintained by articles which preserve patriarchy in their content and outlook.

The aim here is to show that serialised fiction was found amongst powerful discourses of gender. I argue that surrounding masculine discourse may work to neutralise any radical effect or challenge that was present in sensation fiction. These exciting stories contained some transgressive ideas but the surrounding discourse which is factual and real puts this back into balance. Sensation fiction was escapist and took readers temporarily out of the real world and the surrounding articles reaffirmed the domination of men and the masculine world of patriarchy. I argue that the pervasive discourse of masculinity encountered in ‘family’ magazines that carried instalments of sensation fiction could subsume and contain such fiction thus validating and reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. I examine sites of readers’ first encounter with sensation fiction and hypothesise the strength of dominant ideology to overcome fears about serialisation. In this section I use the positioning of sensation fiction in periodical instalments, surrounded by some articles that seem to imply a male reader, to argue that this defuses the disruptive and subversive potential of such fiction. I present evidence of the number of male oriented articles in host magazines. I recognize specific groups of articles and identify two groups for particular analysis. I make links between masculinised articles and sensation fiction to support the hypothesis outlined above.

The section begins with comments on gendering in sensation novels. In existing debates the critical focus has been primarily on the treatment of women to the point of imbalance. The approach in this thesis is to address this imbalance. Stefan Horlacher draws attention to this type of critical imbalance when he remarks, ‘It is a mistake to think that one can analyse men and women separately then simply combine the results’ (2011: 28). The wide range of examples in this section

delimits stereotypical views of women and to some extent men. It describes transgressional models of femininity that caused later concern amongst critics and is followed by analysis of paratexts.

Gender

In her review of five recent books on periodicals Kay Boardman discusses, ‘empirical studies that focus on aspects of material culture – such as histories of specific titles, statistics on circulation, and detailed information on editors and contributors,’ and, ‘works that focus on the text as a signifying practice’ (2006: 506). My study coincides with the latter but needs a particular indicative theme or themes to drive my scrutiny for what I have called areas of accord or discord. Gender issues caused much concern to the mid-Victorians and these, alongside closely linked questions of class, race and empire, will form my immediate focus. Gender has been the central issue in critical work on sensation fiction. Sensation fiction’s appearance brought gender issues forcefully to the forefront of public debate in what was to be a provocative, stimulating, dynamic and at times heated argument. As gender is a major focus in this thesis it is useful to examine some of these issues as they are raised in sensation fiction and to examine the ideological significances of such explorations of gender.

Lady Audley’s Secret is an ideal place to begin as Braddon’s earliest description of her major protagonist defines a thoroughly stereotypical, acceptable and sanctified depiction of Victorian womanhood. Setting the perfect example to her pupils and observers is Lucy Graham as governess in *Lady Audley’s Secret* enthusiastically promoting and encouraging her young protégées by example and by teaching them their appropriate roles:

perfectly well satisfied with her situation [...] she taught the girls to play sonatas by Beethoven, and to paint from Nature after Creswick, and walked through the dull, out-of-the-way village to the humble little church three times on Sunday, as contentedly as if she had no higher aspiration in this world than to do so all the rest of her life. (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 47)

The picture is completed by Sir Michael Audley's impression of her:

the tender fascination of those soft and melting blue eyes; the graceful beauty of that slender throat and drooping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the low music of that gentle voice; the perfect harmony which pervaded every charm, and made all doubly charming in this woman. (48)

The ethereal quality of this description emphasising feminine delicacy is the image which Talbot Bulstrode openly cherishes in Lucy Floyd, Aurora Floyd's insipid cousin, in the novel also named *Aurora Floyd*:

Talbot Bulstrode's ideal of a woman was some gentle and feminine creature crowned with an aureole of pale auburn hair; some timid soul with downcast eyes, fringed with golden-tinted lashes; some shrinking being, as pale and prim as the mediaeval saints in his pre-Raphaelite engravings, spotless as her own white robes, excelling in all womanly graces and accomplishments, but only exhibiting them in the narrow circle of a home. [...] when he entered the long drawing room at Felden Woods [...] Lucy Floyd was standing by an open piano, with her white dress and pale golden hair bathed in a flood of autumn sunlight [...] Yes, this was his ideal. (Braddon, Eds. Nemesvari and SurrIDGE, 1998: 86)

Despite the different material circumstances here these young ladies are typical stereotypes performing scripted roles which demand ideological conformity and become a contentious issue in sensation fiction. Braddon is adept at presenting images of controlled women.

In Lucy Graham's case, she helps other young women to train, practise, perfect and perform roles which allow them only to be men's ideals and possibly wives, limited to the domestic scene with rare unchaperoned public ventures, and even then perhaps only as far as the parish church which in some ways suggests surveillance. Here in the innocent childlike dependency and unquestioning submission of Lucy Floyd is just what the domineering male desires:

[S]he was exactly the sort of woman to make a good wife. She had been educated to that end by a careful mother. Purity and goodness had watched over her and hemmed her in from the cradle. She had never seen unseemly sights, or heard unseemly sounds. She was as ignorant as a baby of all the vices and horrors of this big world. She was lady-like, accomplished, well informed; and if there were a great many others of precisely the same type of graceful womanhood, it was certainly the highest type and the holiest, and the best. (94)

Such young women could have no realisable ambition other than proficiency in the limited educational curriculum briefly described above. They were constantly being conditioned into prescribed roles of domesticity laid down for them and reinforced in conduct books and in periodicals. Such reading material, aimed directly or sometimes indirectly at a female audience, was, as Pykett says, ‘deployed to reinforce the dominant definition of domestic woman, to delimit the domestic sphere,’ (1992: 13) and, ‘was also continually in the process of construction and reproduction in legal, medical and scientific discourses, as well as in the discourse of the new social science and anthropology’ (13). The emphasis is on behavioural aspects of gender and aims to reinforce a doctrine of strong male dominance. Discourse which emphasised the physical attraction of the weak, pure, innocent and almost spiritual female body is briefly touched on above and deserves further comment because it was of such pertinence to sensation fiction.

The Victorian iconographic image of the child-like woman reaffirms the infantilisation of women that is often presented in Victorian fiction. Lucy’s employer can at the same time envisage her as both wife and lady and also use language which locates her firmly in subordination to and dependence on men; Mrs Dawson describes her as a ‘remarkably lucky girl’ (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 49). This remark is not lost on a new type of protagonist to enhance serial literature. Helen Graham deliberately cultivates her childlike image:

star[ing] wonderingly at her employer, shaking back a shower of curls. They were the most wonderful curls in the world – soft and feathery, always floating away from

her face, and making a pale halo round her head when the sunlight shone through them. (49)

What the doctor and other men have not realised is that Lucy has long understood the untaught lessons of her childhood:

I learned that my ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage, and I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any of them. (359)

Her understanding of what Pykett calls, 'her process of self-construction' (1992: 93) allows her to be proactive in attempting to direct the course of her life. She is one of many women in sensation fiction whose attempts to contest stereotypical gender positions force them into conflict in previously certain areas of dominance such as marriage and ownership and inheritance of property. They are women whose attitudes and actions are described by men and acquiescent women as transgressive or, in Pykett's terminology, 'improper' and examples of these women are used below to show that grievances, though varied, were, in essence, expressions of deeply felt dissatisfaction with lives that had no agency other than that which was decided for them by male dominated discourses.

By creating the archetypal model of what patriarchal attitudes decided a woman should be, some men also conceptualised their ideas of what a woman would be capable of, if she did not conform to their rigid precepts. Any departure from what was seen as the norm and the natural was summarily dismissed as 'a subversive threat to the family; threateningly sexual; pervaded by feeling; knowing; self-assertive; desiring and actively pleasure-seeking; pursuing self-fulfilment and self-identity; independent' (16). Resistant women were stigmatised as selfish, unnatural and 'fast' and in this way legitimate opposition to what they and sympathetic male supporters saw as irrational and unreasonable requirement of legal and cultural discourses was eschewed by implacable men holding on to a rigidly embedded power base. In sensation fiction rebellious women form a diverse body whose strong-mindedness is variously reflected in attempts, extreme or otherwise, to effect

some form of self-determination in the face of legalised and cultural oppression. They are not always the leading protagonists but they form a unitary and symbolic voice of opposition through their actions and occasionally through the sheer force of their physical presence which generates anxieties in their male counterparts. One such example is Braddon's *Aurora Floyd*.

Unlike her shrinking cousin, Lucy, *Aurora Floyd* has an immediate and stunning physical presence and interests which delineate her as aggressively sexual and rebellious. Her physical presence captivates the onlooker in a very different way from the fair-haired angelic vision of a Lucy Floyd or a Laura Fairlie. Hers is immediately a dangerous and suggestively anarchic presence for a young lady. Nemesvari and SurrIDGE, remarking that she was excessively fond of riding, interested in the hunt and loved the thrill of racing and its gambling associations, also note its symbolic association: 'Aurora's love of riding thus acts as a kind of shorthand for her rejection of the drawing room world of chaperoned Victorian femininity, and for her passionate and impulsive (unfeminine) character' (Braddon, Eds. Nemesvari and SurrIDGE, 1998: 20). Her striking, voluptuous appearance is offset by her first unlikely and unladylike words to Talbot Bulstrode: 'Do you know if Thunderbolt won the Leger?' (78). Unconventional and alluring, she both captivates and frightens Talbot who 'cannot help admiring this extraordinary girl [...] she is like everything that is beautiful, and strange, and wicked and unwomanly, and bewitching' (93). Bulstrode is enthralled and, 'having once abandoned himself to the spell of the siren, made no further struggle, but fairly fell into the pitfalls of her eyes, and was entangled in the meshy network of her blue black hair' (123). Here we have the encapsulation of men's great fear: the enchantingly beautiful woman whose power weakens his and can only be explained by references to evil and magic. Sir Michael Audley is similarly infatuated with Lucy Graham despite her apparently frank disclosure of an earlier life beset by poverty and hardship, and her avowal 'I do not love anyone in the world' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 52). These are attractive young women with secrets to hide who are prepared to use, 'the great matrimonial fisheries' (Braddon, Eds. Nemesvari and SurrIDGE, 1998: 75), as the narrator in *Aurora Floyd* describes the marriage market, to their own advantage.

Dissatisfaction with a woman's unenviable lack of agency is the common thread that links disparate female protagonists in sensation fiction. Each one's discontent reflects either a transitory or permanent state of disillusion with the patriarchal order that controls almost every aspect of their lives. Isabel Gilbert a provincial doctor's wife in the novel of that name is much plainer, less aggressively active beyond the proper restraints expected of a woman, and yet she powerfully manifests the paralysis women felt trapped in: domesticity with a husband who, 'now that she was his own property [...] set himself conscientiously to work to smooth her into the most ordinary semblance of everyday womanhood' (Braddon, Ed. Pykett 1998: 116). Tellingly Isabel and women in general are depicted as objects to be owned, manipulated, fashioned and shaped according to a man's plan which will leave her just a 'semblance' an approximation, 'ordinary' and unremarkable. However, Isabel, the doctor's wife, despite her predilection for 'romantic' literature, her youthful inexperience, immaturity, and continuous daydreams and fantasies, has a firm grasp on what the routine monotony of married life promises to be:

There are some young women who take kindly to a simple domestic life, and have a natural genius for pies and puddings, and cutting and contriving, in a cheery, pleasant way, that invests poverty with a grace of its own; and when a gentleman wishes to marry on three hundred a year, he should look out for one of those bright household fairies. Isabel had no liking for these things; to her the making of pastry was a wearisome business. (156)

Isabel cannot, unequivocally, accept the strictures of domesticity. Through her reading she has a different vision for a life a woman might have and in a moderate way represents opposition to patriarchy.

Isabel is duty bound, by marriage, to a good, but unimaginative and conventional man so set in his ways that he cannot even countenance anything other than utilitarian expenditure for either the marriage or for the marital home, 'the best parlour was good enough for my father and mother, and

it ought to be good enough for you and me' (115). The sheer force of the husband's total lack of empathy with his young wife is reflected here in what Pykett refers to as:

the middle-class woman's dissatisfaction with the conditions of her life, her sense of entrapment in a marriage too hastily embarked upon, and of alienation from a husband who happily inhabits his own male world of work and seems incapable of understanding her (or possibly any woman's) feelings and predicament. (xii)

More importantly Isabel cannot articulate her feelings in the way my next example of a much more intractable, and expressive woman is able to.

Marian Halcombe, half-sister to Laura Fairlie, is unequivocal in word and deed. When she first appears in *The Woman In White* she perplexes Hartright with her appearance and disarms him with the control and composure he would more readily have been prepared for from the master of Limmeridge:

The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large firm, muscular mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick coal-black hair, growing unusually down on her forehead. Her expression – bright, frank, and intelligent – appeared while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine attractions of gentleness and pliability. (Collins, Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2006: 74)

She startles him completely with her forthright introduction and dominance in their first meeting:

"Mr. Hartright?" said the lady interrogatively [...] "Shall we shake hands? I suppose we must come to it sooner or later – and why not sooner? [...] I hope you come here good humouredly determined to make the best of your position." (75)

Her antagonism to men's dominance is deeply felt and surfaces in an emotional outburst against their perfunctory attitude to marriage:

"Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship – they take us body and

soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?" (208)

Intensely and succinctly Marian summarises women's argument against men. She graphically identifies her indignation against patriarchal society and its literal appropriation of women's minds and bodies. Further examples of women's rebellious attitudes are evidenced in my selected sensation fiction through strong female characters, for example, women such as the courageous Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*, the spirited Rachel Verinder and the proto-radical Rosanna Spearman in *The Moonstone* and almost eclipsing a decade of subversive heroines the notorious Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale*.

It is also requisite here to consider the role of some men in the novels too. Almost inevitably when questions of gender and related examples of subversion and of radical actions are raised it is women who are central to these concerns in the debate of Victorian matters. Such is the position in my chosen sensation fiction from the 1860s but it would be remiss of this investigation to ignore a quite clear suggestion, in some novels, that other than women characters, some men's behaviour is questionable in terms of prevalent gender ideologies in mid-nineteenth century England. Pykett briefly mentions gender 'anxieties' (1992: 21) and 'gender boundaries' (23) as contentious areas. The ideologies that fix women's roles and prescribe patterns of acceptable behaviour are well documented. Fixing limits and parameters around expected behaviour from men is also, in itself, restrictive and possibly a hindrance to relationships they may have with others. It is probably worth considering at this point, what, for example, Marian Halcombe had in mind when she told Walter Hartright to act like a man in suppressing any thoughts of a relationship with Laura Fairlie: "Crush it!" she said. "Here, where you first saw her, crush it! Don't shrink under it like a woman. Tear it out; trample it under foot like a man!" (Collins, Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2006: 110). 'Like a man' suggests a notion of role playing and hints at a view of men as insensitive and prone to violence. Either you are a man or you are like a man and there is compelling evidence, in my chosen texts, to suggest that some male characters do not always 'act like a man' at least for part of the narratives. I

begin by summarising briefly some of the ways that men were expected to act in the mid-nineteenth century. I then focus on some examples of male protagonists from sensation fiction who confound preconceived ideas if only temporarily.

Apparent physical strength and bearing – a presence – was considered a marker of male virility and this was closely allied to what John Tosh calls ‘moral dispositions’ (2005: 2). Michael Roper and John Tosh (1991) detail such attributes as independence, authority, willpower, superiority, intellectual energy and moral purpose as the type of character traits that a Victorian man should ideally possess. Men were expected to be the provider for the family using their professional skills and business acumen to sustain and finance a desirable standard of living. Theirs was the voice of authority. In English society they were supported by the legal system and could even have recourse to violence without fear of judicial testimony from their wives. This is particularly evident in *The Woman In White* when Marian’s journal reveals that Fosco manages his wife through a system of paltry rewards with the sinister threat of violence forever lurking in the background:

He bows to her; he habitually addresses her as “my angel”; [...] he kisses her hand when she gives him cigarettes; he presents her with sugar plums, in return, which he puts into her mouth playfully [...] The rod of iron with which he rules her never appears in company – it is a private rod, and is always kept upstairs.

(Collins, Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2006: 244)

Here Fosco reveals a public man of simpering kindness hiding a privately violent man. Roper and Tosh remark that, ‘masculinity is always bound up with negotiations about power’ (1991: 18) but they are one-sided negotiations rarely ever culminating in what could be deemed a successful outcome for a woman. Men had a dominant position and were generally committed to maintaining it. As both husbands and fathers, they had authority, used it, and expected to be obeyed in the family situation. This somewhat rigid view of masculinity does not hide examples of supreme dominance occasionally undermined by protagonists in sensation fiction who appeared to be incompatible with

the Victorian cult of manliness. Nevertheless, for all their apparent lack of overt manliness, some of these men still retained or were endowed by law with power.

Frederick Fairlie, uncle and guardian of Laura Fairlie and head of the Limmeridge household, belies any Victorian patriarchal or manly construction. He is continually represented as weakly effeminate completely devoid of any vitality, energy and physicality even describing himself as, 'nothing but a bundle of nerves dressed up to look like a man' (363). He is a hypochondriac, delicate and constantly foregrounding his own fragility and blaming his unsound health on a nervous disposition so often associated with women. He is so obsessively anxiety ridden about his nervous constitution that he compares himself to Marian: 'how I envy your robust nervous system!' (203) He is unable, and selfishly unwilling to act in defence of his ward passively supporting his dead brother's wish that condemns her to a loveless and dangerous marriage that both threatens her sanity and her life. Even the manner of his eventual death, 'struck by paralysis' (616), in an obtuse way sums up his life which was totally lacking action and closely parallels the life of Noel Vanstone in *No Name* (1862).

Another insipid, weak and vacillating man, Noel Vanstone, is feminised in his first appearance:

a frail, flaxen-haired, self-satisfied little man, clothed in a fair white dressing gown, many sizes too large for him, with a nosegay of violets drawn neatly through the button-hole over his breast. He looked from thirty to five and thirty years old. His complexion was as delicate as a young girl's, his eyes were of the lightest blue, his upper lip was adorned by a weak little white moustache, waxed and twisted at either end into a thin spiral curl. When any object especially attracted his attention, he half closed his eyelids to look at it. When he smiled, the skin at his temples crumpled itself into a nest of wicked little wrinkles. He had a plate of strawberries on his lap, with a napkin under them to preserve the purity of his white dressing gown.

(Collins, Ed. Ford, 1995: 228)

He has a genuine medical condition but presents a pathetic figure languishing in his invalidity and causing his shrewd and wily housekeeper to remark: 'There is no positive disease; there is only a chronic feebleness – a fatty degeneration – a want of vital power in the organ itself' (227). Andrew Smith, referring to literary and scientific fields, remarks on 'a shared fascination with the collapse of dominant gender scripts' (2004: 5-6). Both Frederick Fairlie and Noel Vanstone could be cited as examples of degenerative decline, although the housekeeper's use of the word is strictly confined to the physical here. Both men are, however, frail examples of Victorian manhood immured by their weak constitutions, Fairlie at the heart of Limmeridge which Ceraldi describes as, 'a haven for biological and psychological disorders' (Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2003: 187), and Vanstone forever guarding his money in a state described by Bourne-Taylor as 'nervous debility and intellectual decline' (1988: 143). Bourne-Taylor also links his physical weakness to his inability and incapacity for positive action she says, 'He had inherited his father's love of money without inheriting his father's capacity for seeing the uses to which money can be put' (143). Men such as Frederick Fairlie and Noel Vanstone are in mortal decline. Their conditions, real or imagined, are hindered by a lack of purpose. Other male protagonists who appear, at first, to be lethargic and unambitious change considerably in the novels they are featured in.

There are other examples of male protagonists in sensation fiction who, by force of circumstances rather than by self-initiated processes, manage to reverse states of what has been called 'gender anxiety' (Pykett, 1992: x). What these men suggest is survival and success by dint of the ideological system rather than their own strength of character. Smith (2004) suggests that to combat degeneration it would be necessary to be practical, energetic, daring pioneers heading the march of progress but a system which supports men allows even undeserving men to prosper. Earlier, mention is made of the less than emphatic masculinity of Walter Hartright whose lack of motivation finds him in a state of indolence and apathy which almost renders him totally powerless to act for his own good. This state is temporarily suspended by his enforced move to Cumberland where, for a short time, he has a new direction in his life. He has to leave Limmeridge and

resurfaces in London in a dissolute state, ‘his face looked pale and haggard – his manner was hurried and uncertain [...] A momentary nervous contraction quivered about his lips and eyes’ (Collins Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2006: 185). Like his father before him Hartright is an artist although unlike his father he is struggling to make a living. Heller remarks, that he is the victim of ‘symbolic emasculation’ (1992: 117) both in London, where he is partly dependent on his mother, and at Limmeridge where he is completely surrounded by women and an employer who has little or no trace of masculinity. Kucich draws attention to Collins’s numerous, ‘melancholic male protagonists [...] dispirited heroes [...] persistent[ly] wallowing in sadness, loss, dejection and self-criticism (2006: 125); such is the persona of Walter Hartright. Robert Audley in *Lady Audley’s Secret* is another example of weak masculinity when he first appears. However, despite his apparent lack of drive and direction he displays none of these nervous characteristics. He has qualified as a barrister and looks set for a promising career:

As a barrister was his name inscribed in the Law List; as a barrister, he had chambers in Fig-tree Court, Temple; as a barrister he had eaten the allotted number of dinners, which form the sublime ordeal through which the forensic aspirant wades on to fame and fortune. If these things can make a man a barrister, Robert Audley decidedly was one. But he had never even had a brief, or tried to get a brief, or even wished to have a brief in all those five years, during which his name had been painted upon one of the doors in Fig-tree Court. (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 71)

He pursues a decadent lifestyle reading French novels, continually smoking and as Bourne-Taylor says is, ‘the figure who reads street literature and is at home in the streets and arcades of the city; the man who experiences reality through watching it’ (1998: xxiv). Life for Robert Audley is not a reality to be taken too seriously: ‘the young barrister took life as altogether too absurd a mistake for any one event in its foolish course to be for a moment considered seriously by a sensible man’ (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 98). Unlike the fatally flawed Fairlie and Vanstone these protagonists (Hartright and Audley) will have the chance to redeem their wasted existences by performing

traditional and contemporary roles as colonialist and detective respectively, ensuring their survival, and encapsulating the survival and superiority of men in general. Sensation fiction differs in one vital aspect from domestic realism. In sensation fiction it is transgressive heroines who actively raise gender questions in a different way from the more altruistic approach which seemed to have been favoured in previous fictions.

Transgressive heroines in fiction were not a new phenomenon but in sensation fiction they assumed a new potential. Passionate voices against social ills raised by characters such as Jane Eyre, Shirley Keeldar and Margaret Hale, voiced for the general good, were given an extra and more disquieting dimension. Women such as Lucy Graham, Aurora Floyd and Lydia Gwilt are motivated by self-aggrandisement first and are prepared to use extreme measures to increase their limited powers, and to improve and enrich their own lives. Dissimulation is the characteristic that links these different women. They use manipulative skills to undermine male domination questioning and threatening ideological certitudes. Questions about the suitability of reading material must have surfaced when popular magazines hosted fiction with deliberate portrayals of women whose characters were hostile to ideological beliefs.

At the present time sensation fiction is chiefly enmeshed in feminist-led debates. Mid-nineteenth century debates on gender revolved around issues of female emancipation and pressures about the changing nature of the expectations of men. Masculinities is a theme which has been overlooked in most recent critical appraisal of sensation fiction. Emerging discourses of hegemonic masculinities and changing status and anxieties about degeneration are just two examples of some of the issues affecting debates on gender in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ The larger question of masculinities has been neglected in modern critical trends. Paying close scholarly attention to Edmund Yates, who has not merited significant earlier close critical comment, can help to widen the scope of scrutiny of gender issues.

⁴ James Eli Adams *Dandies and Desert Saints* (1995), Herbert Sussman *Victorian Masculinities* (2008) and John Tosh *A Man's Place* (2008) provide comprehensive commentaries on nineteenth-century gender debates.

Masculinities

A close examination of the magazines hosting sensation fiction suggests that despite an apparently varied content these magazines did, in fact, have a greater number of articles whose subject matter had a male-orientated bias supporting patriarchal ideological standpoints. The seven novels in my survey represent a total of one hundred and seventy three magazine numbers in either weekly or monthly editions and with their supporting articles this amounts to a huge amount of features. There were no specific pages directly addressed to women readers or children and none that even exclusively invited male readers but as Brake has said, ‘Having [...] come to the view that *all* periodical space was gendered, I have been learning over the years how to read that space’ (2001: xiv). My reading of gendered space in these magazines supports a view that they contained a predominance of what Brake calls, ‘the maleness of the dominant discourse’ (191-2). Again it must be reiterated that other voices, viewpoints and emphases were present in magazines and that implied readers, as Nemesvari suggests, are manipulated by writers with specific agendas. He says, ‘Rae does not hesitate to use what might be called aesthetic/moral blackmail in his efforts to correctly align subscribers to the *North British Review* with his position’ (Eds. Harrison and Fantina, 2006: 23). These magazines were not, as some critics have been at pains to point out, a reflection of the times. Pykett indicates that, ‘far from being a mirror of Victorian culture, the periodicals have come to be seen as a central component of that culture – as an “active and integral part”’ (1989: 102). These magazines may not have made ideology but actively reinforced it rather than simply reflected it.

Analysing Paratexts

In his paratextual analysis Genette starts with titles and it is a useful beginning in this analysis. Fraser, Johnston and Green (2003) provide a useful index listing biographical summaries of many magazines including *All The Year Round*, the *Cornhill* and *Temple Bar*. Their brief

summaries and my scrutiny of those magazines and also of *The Sixpenny Magazine* indicate that similarities in content are quite marked and that they claimed to be targeted at a broad audience. The titles of some of these magazines both belie the claim of a broad appeal and at the same time manage to underline such claims. At a surface level the titles of most magazines of sensation fiction seem to promise something for everyone. *All The Year Round* suggests inclusivity in its bannerhead which quotes Shakespeare and implies a wide target audience in the use of 'our'; '*The Story of our Lives From Year To Year*'. *The Sixpenny Magazine* as a title seems to have no particular targeted audience apart from one attracted by price and reinforces this with its sub-title which could hardly be broader in its appeal as a magazine describing itself as: '*A Miscellany for All Classes and All Seasons*'. Both *Temple Bar* and the *Cornhill* adopt the names of London landmarks as titles. These were areas closely linked to the heart of the capital and denote areas of male influence and domination at the very centre of commerce in the City, itself a symbol of male enterprise, success and progress. *Temple Bar* indicates a wide appeal by declaring itself, '*A London Magazine For Town and Country Readers*' while at the same time underlining the centrality, importance and male domination of the capital city and also influence on journalism in its bannerhead: ' "*Sir,*" said Dr. Johnson, "*Let us take a walk down Fleet Street*". Such titular claims for wide appeal, classlessness and an even-handed approach to their contents were made by publishers on the covers of their magazines knowing that in the rapidly expanding publishing field 'the battle was for supremacy, for the highest readership, for a reputation, for the hearts, minds and purses of its consumers' (Eds. Fraser, Johnston, Green, 2003: 83). Those claims were not, however, an absolute guarantee that the resulting magazine would have no other agenda. That readers of magazines are beyond knowing to a thorough degree is commonly acknowledged. Wynne (2001), amongst others, cites Brantlinger's succinct outline of 'the ultimate unknowability of the common reader' (Brantlinger, 1998: 17). What is not indefinite is the fact that readers clearly enjoyed serialised sensation fiction. My argument pursues the strenuous and persuasive evidence of a dominant masculine discourse in general magazines.

Articles

In a group of periodicals examined for the serial run of particular fictions it would not be expected that consistency of content or implied audience would be necessarily found given the ever changing nature of the magazine form. The variable content of the magazines has meant that the emphasis of discourse changes continually during serialization runs which I have examined. Empiricism is not the basis of my research in this instance. My research has focussed on uncovering textual associations which could possibly have had an effect on the way readers interpreted sensation fictions included in the magazines. Within the variety of magazine features it was possible to identify groups of articles which specifically endorsed an implied male reader. These articles are part of the masculine boundaries that I investigate. Within the broad confines of these articles a plurality of voices and implied readers are nonetheless evident. Deane (2003) and Phegley (2004) have recognised imprecise and expansive reading audiences in the nineteenth century in their work. Phegley, in particular, comments about the usefulness of what she calls the family literary magazine. She describes this type of magazine 'establishing itself as one solution to the educational void that existed for women readers' (2004:6). Although my interest is in masculine boundaries this type of comment emphasises that magazines were written for and read by women too. From the large amount of material contained in these magazines I have grouped articles by associations which reflect a predominantly male perspective in their subject matter, their possible appeal to male readers and through their implied significance for ideological standpoints. My groups are public spaces, homosocial groups, areas of interest, and didactic articles. These divisions are broadly based and my rationale for such groups is given below.

Articles which feature public spaces form my first group. Here I refer to articles which include, in their content, journalism associated with males, as figures free to wander, who see 'all', and perhaps experience a wider range of situations closed off to the narrower exposure of unescorted women in mid-nineteenth century Britain. This group can also be extended to include

men wandering in the wider spaces of Europe and the world. Homosocial groups, my second category, are often given prominence in articles and I have sub-divided this group into those articles which focus on groups that are exclusively male and those which feature male orientated activities as the gathering points for a largely male audience such as sporting events. Areas of interest is my third group, a very general, title to include what Fraser, Green and Johnston refer to as ‘men speaking to men about issues [...] in which only men are involved: politics, commerce, science, history’ (2003: 87). Here I am alluding to the doctrine of separate spheres and intellectual, academic, political and economic interests. Didactic articles do not feature heavily in these magazines whose main object is to entertain; there was no shortage of conduct-based material in print at this time but lighter magazines did carry occasional articles that could be said to be of a moralistic tone. Although each of these groups contributes to a discourse of masculinity in the magazines, my focus will be articles from the first two groups: firstly what I call public spaces and secondly homosocial groups subdivided into military and sporting articles. Evidence of articles from these groups, which appeared during the serial run of sensation novels, will be cited to demonstrate a view that these magazines to some extent supported a conservative attitude to gender positions while at the same time featuring fictions that compromised a categorically absolute standpoint.

Mindful of the contemporary impact of sensation literature and its radical heroines, and the fact that fiction had a prominent position in these magazines, there seems to be a dichotomy between a subversive element in the major sensation fictions carried and the generally conventional ideological positions of the host magazines. In *Victorian Masculinities* Herbert Sussman, talking about the social construction of masculinity, explains his use of the plural masculinities. He says, ‘The plural masculinities stresses the multiple possibilities of such social formations’ (1995: 8). The groups I discuss do not represent a monolithic unity of the mid-Victorian male. The overlapping constructions and congruity between the groups where it occurs is important in shaping the magazines’ coherent gendered discourse. Reference to the novels is made where it is deemed

appropriate and the analysis moves between text and paratext where necessary as will be seen below.

Public Spaces

Public spaces are used to denote actual physical spaces and, events occurring in those spaces which were restricted, in terms of access, for a woman. They are not places where a woman could not go but they were restricted, for example, in terms of access for reasons of propriety or possible danger, whereas no constraints would be applied to a man's facility to wander where he chose. Freedom to wander at will and therefore experience a whole variety of everyday events was missing from some women's lives. Articles in these magazines often describe public spaces re-affirming male control over these unobtrusively while describing them for entertainment and information. Such articles do not dwell on what Walkowitz calls the 'dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth' (1992: 17) of the city although there are some hints of this in certain descriptions. Two series of articles in *All The Year Round* describe places and events from a male perspective. 'The Uncommercial Traveller', a series of thirty six articles takes its title, we are informed by Slater and Drew, from the increasing importance of commercial travellers formerly known as 'bagmen'. The prefix is added by the writer 'to distance himself from the negative notions attaching to commercial' (2000: xv). The scope of the articles in this series published during the serialisation of *The Woman In White* covers events as varied as: a shipwreck, workhouse conditions, Sunday theatre, merchant seamen, refreshments for travellers, demobilised soldiers en route to England, tramps and night walks in the capital. These are topics which may have interested women but they are reported from a man's point of view. 'Uncommercial Traveller' published in *All The Year Round* on 28 January 1860 illustrates this (articles were not given individual titles until published later in collected volumes).

Introducing himself as the journalist responsible for a new series of articles Dickens says, 'I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent-garden, London – now about the

city streets: now about the country by-roads seeing many little things and some great things' (Dickens, 1860: 321).⁵ There is something of the notion of the *flâneur* figure in the way he describes his walking as both directed and aimless, 'one straight on to a definite goal at a round pace; one objectless, loitering and purely vagabond' (321). In this article he describes his nocturnal wandering in the capital detailing the places and people he encounters. He sees:

the last brawling drunkards [...] some late pie man or hot potato man [...] a man standing bolt upright to keep within the doorway's shadow [...] the toll keeper [...] and turnkeys [...] Suddenly a thing that in a moment more I should have trodden on without seeing [...] a beetle browed hair lipped youth of twenty [...] it had a loose bundle of rags on, which it held together with one of its hands. It shivered from head to foot and its teeth chattered. (349-351)

This description of London streets and its environs is echoed in lighter articles in the 'Our Eyewitness' series.

The journalist here, who self-consciously describes himself as 'an observant gentleman who goes about with his eyes and his ears open, who notes everything that comes in his way' (203),⁶ also gives accounts of wandering in the City's streets where he witnesses a variety of scenes: Sunday evening tavern storytelling, debating societies, wine imports at the docks, statues, impressive buildings, galleries, and public schools. The hurly-burly, the liveliness and bustle of the streets, though not forbidden to women, was considered unsuitable for respectable women to venture into alone especially at night. Several of these walks are night walks and feature unsavoury characters abroad in the darkness and at a late hour. They are poor, homeless, vagabond, drunken, ragged and totally unsavoury. They suggest threat, danger and apprehension: a male world where only women of ill-repute would venture. This is echoed in the opening instalment of *The Woman In White* as Walter Hartright makes his way home in the early hours of the morning and meets Ann Catherick.

⁵ THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER. 1860. *All the year round*, (40), pp. 321-326.

⁶ OUR EYE-WITNESS. 1859. *All the year round*, (9), pp. 203-205.

Although these articles are not in the same edition of the opening instalment to Collins's novel they support and enhance the configuration of gendered urban space. Small wonder it is that Ann Catherick's presence on the outskirts of London should cause such consternation to Walter Hartright who thinks of women who might be abroad at such a time: 'there was nothing wild, nothing immodest in her manner [...] the grossest of mankind could not have misconstrued her motive in speaking, even at that suspiciously late hour and in that suspiciously lonely place' (Collins Eds. Bachman and Cox, 2006: 63-5). Suspicion of the woman soliciting had crossed Hartright's mind as he recalled the 'quiet, decent, conventionally – domestic atmosphere of my mother's cottage' (67) where his sister and mother were decently 'shut up'. Reassured or not by the woman's demeanour Hartright emphasises the attitude that public spaces were not the proper places for unaccompanied women. It is a threat and danger returned to much later towards the end of the novel when the Fairlie sisters and Walter are fugitives in the East End of London.

The 'Our Eyewitness' accounts are not explicitly accounts of the darker side of the metropolis lacking a degree of voyeurism that could be associated with the wanderings at a later time of someone like Henry James described by Walkowitz in her chapter 'Urban Spectatorship'. In his wanderings and subsequent articles especially on statues, buildings and the contents of the National Gallery the eyewitness self-consciously delights in displaying his faculty for observation and his personal knowledge as he enunciates authoritatively a litany of dull facts about the capital. The journalist had boasted that he was, 'an observant gentleman who goes about with his eyes and ears open, who notes everything that comes in his way and who has furnished to this periodical certain results of the faculty of his imagination' (Dickens, 1859: 203). Again these public spaces are not the sole domain of men but the writer politicises his knowledge of them making them male spaces by reference to his expert knowledge.

The 'Eyewitness' articles take on a livelier more immediate tone when the journalist turns his attention to people in public spaces such as the encounter he describes in an article entitled 'Our Eyewitness At A Friendly Lead' (1860). The article describes a fund raising event for the dependent

father of a suicide. Held in the White Horse public house in Hare Street Bethnal Green, the event amounts to a public collection with impromptu singing and, while achieving its fundraising aims, declines from a quiet dignified affair into a packed house of ‘jollification and riot’ (Dickens, 1860: 476).⁷ Described for the reader’s interest and pleasure this is not a public space for respectable women to visit but demonstrates the freedom men had to wander uninvited and unobstructed almost where they pleased among the streets of the metropolis. Such freedom was illustrated by George Augustus Sala in a series of articles describing famous streets in European cities again emphasising a man’s independent liberty to travel at will.

Before Sala’s first article in the series, ‘The Streets Of The World,’ which ran in 1864 there is a brief introduction to the series by the editor of *Temple Bar*, Edmund Yates. This series coincided with the serial appearance of Braddon’s *The Doctor’s Wife*, her protagonist whose insular existence in her husband’s country practice is only enlivened by dreaming over romantic literature. It is worth noting here that Yates’s own career as a novelist was about to commence when there was need for a serial novel to fill a gap in *Temple Bar*. Yates’s work and its relevance to gender is discussed later in this thesis. Although he did not begin with sensation his first novel, *Broken To Harness* (1865), had some topical interest centred around ‘fast’ ladies.

Fulsome in praise of Sala, Yates details his descriptive skills from which the series will benefit: ‘the microscopic observation and the marvellous word-photography in which he has no equal’ (Yates, 1863: 6).⁸ In this series of articles the notion of the flâneur is pervasive as Sala wanders various streets from La Cannebiere in Marseilles and other continental cities to London, Liverpool and the more modest towns of Windsor and Dover. Sala conveys the essential humanity of the streets: the noise and clamour, the business and bustle and with rather less enthusiasm the grandeur and magnificence of buildings and sweeping boulevards where necessary. He admits that,

⁷ OUR EYEWITNESS AT A FRIENDLY LEAD. 1860 *All the year round*, (46), pp. 472-476

⁸ SALA, G.A., 1863. The Streets of the World. *Temple Bar: a London magazine for town and country readers*, Dec.1860-Dec.1881, 10, pp.5-14.

‘my choice of street is but a subterfuge, a transparent excuse for saying what I know, and what I think of a city generally’ (Sala, 1864: 479).⁹ With an air of sanguinity he describes his choices like a game of chance:

Spin the teetotum, toss the coin, dip in the lucky bag, cast the ball into the roulette wheel, shy at the stick, prick the garter, rattle the dice, fling the quoit, send the gray-goose shaft whirring towards the target. What is it? Head or tail; rouge ou noir; over seven or under seven; white, blue, feather or star? (Sala, 1863: 7)¹⁰

Ultimately wherever he is he will have the chance to wander freely and suggest the notion of the flâneur observing, for example, in *La Cannebiere* the ‘astounding, deafening, incessant clamour,’ of, ‘the noisiest street to be found on the earth’s surface’ (8) which he attributes to both the wine and, ‘the fiery Provençal blood’(8). In another article he describes arcades, ‘lined with handsome shops covered with glazed roofs’ (Sala, 1864: 339).¹¹ The exuberant vitality of the arcades he observes captures the spirit of Sala’s journalistic venture. Describing them he says:

They are all replete with the same varied life; they all present the same brilliant features; they are all overflowing with the same bustle and movement; they are all delightful and all dissipated. Pre-eminent, however, in the list the Passage Des Panoramas may be quoted. It is the very centre of that *tohu bohu*, that unequalled chaos of gaiety, known as *La Vie Parisienne*; it is the brass pillar of the eternally-revolving roulette-wheel of folly and fashion, frivolity and frenzy. (340)

That he can wander, stand and observe so closely the frenetic comings and goings hinted at here leaves little doubt that he has a privileged view.

⁹ SALA, G.A., 1864. *The Streets of the World. Temple Bar : a London magazine for town and country readers, Dec.1860-Dec.1881*, 11, pp. 479-485.

¹⁰ SALA, G.A., 1863. *The Streets of the World. Temple Bar: a London magazine for town and country readers, Dec.1860-Dec.1881*, 10, pp.5-14.

¹¹ SALA, G.A., 1864. *The Streets of the World. Temple Bar : a London magazine for town and country readers, Dec.1860-Dec.1881*, 10, pp. 335-341.

Sala presents the streets as a 'subterfuge'. It is a subterfuge openly displayed but directed towards an implied male audience who are able to share the textual construction of a gendered urban space of 'frivolity and frenzy'(340) because they share the same ideological privilege. Lynda Nead provides useful information about women on the streets of London. Her discussion complicates Sala's confident, personal but shared 'subterfuge' as she describes a modernising city in which the presence of unescorted women in public places was becoming a more regular and encouraged occurrence within certain constraints. Nead refers to women who were able to frequent the streets but not loiter and she cites an article 'Out Walking' from *Temple Bar* written in 1862 by Eliza Lynn Linton, a writer of increasingly conservative views of women's conduct. In this article Linton concurred with a masculine gendered view of public places. Her advice was unmistakeable. While conceding to a presence of women on the streets she said that proper passage therein was a responsibility of women themselves:

If she knows how to walk in the streets, self-possessed and quietly, with not too lagging and not too swift a step; if she avoids lounging about the shop windows, and regularly forgoes even the most tempting displays of finery; if she can attain that enviable street talent and pass men without looking at them, yet all the while seeing them [...] if she has anything of purpose or business in her air [...] she is for the most part as safe as if planting tulips and crocuses in her own garden. (Nead, 2000: 66)

Urban spaces, I have suggested, were dominantly male places and are portrayed as such in contemporary periodicals but this distinction was being gradually eroded. As Nead suggests, 'Rather than seeing public life as a monolithic entity, it is possible to conceive of a variety of ways of accessing the public world and a number of public arenas in which women could be involved' (70). Lady Audley had no qualms about taking a train to London to find letters whose handwriting would serve as incriminating evidence about her past. Travelling alone for a woman in her position would have been unusual and further emphasises the transgressive features of Braddon's novel. Thus, although there is an emphasis on public spaces as predominantly male spaces, frequent

representations of women transgressing this model may have caused concern in readers of a more conservative persuasion.

Although Sala describes some of the more glorious details of ‘The Streets Of The World’ like Unter Den Linden, ‘I won’t deny that this famous walk may well lay claim to be considered one of the handsomest promenades in Europe’ (Sala, 1864: 39),¹² it is the people who seem to captivate his attention more than the physical existence of the streets. A further example reinforces this and also foregrounds the fact that he has been able to stand and observe unhindered, passers-by in Church Street Liverpool:

Mauves and magentas and maizes were seen among the northern fashionables months ere they reached Regent Street. Where pork-pie hats, and cavaliers and Watteaus with hawk and pheasant plumes, or scarlet swaling feathers – where scarlet and violet stockings, and honeycombed waistcoats, and silken corduroy mantles, and mohair cloaks, and steel petticoats were – first invented [...] I can’t help fancying that many of our most transcendent fashions came from the North, and were first passed under review in Church Street, Liverpool. (Sala, 1864: 482)

However, it is not the streets or the people described here that are the crucial factor, but the fact that these are eminently public domains which a man may inhabit and wander through unconditionally both at home and abroad that is significant. There is no shortage of articles in the 1860s periodical press dealing with foreign travel and underscoring discourse which foregrounds men in dynamic roles not as primary explorers but as purveyors of knowledge they have acquired about the world or sometimes exemplifying men in danger, at risk and exhibiting valorous qualities portrayed in articles like ‘Kit Butler From Boonville’ (1862).

¹² SALA, G.A., 1864. The Streets of the World. *Temple Bar : a London magazine for town and country readers*, Dec. 1860-Dec. 1881, 11, pp. 34-40.

Part of a series in *All The Year Round* called 'American Sketches', and published in the magazine during the serial run of Collins's *No Name*, this article describes a journey through Oregon, 'that wild and unknown state' (AYR, 1862: 45),¹³ to California. The story told in the article embodies and symbolises Victorian qualities of masculinity undiminished by any niggling anxieties about pivotal or possibly changing roles in society. Details which emerge from the article give the number travelling as five: the narrator, 'two lethargic Germans, a feeble minded young artist lately from London, and a stark taciturn hunter from Missouri' (45). The lengthy journey is an authentic frontier tale: the travellers, camp, set guard, hunt and are infiltrated by a 'friendly' Indian. Disappearances, chilling screams and a mutilated figure expiring before them precedes 'a crowd of red-skins jump[ing] forth from the creek, and charg[ing] down upon us with pealing whoops' (AYR, 1862: 46). With coolness and courage the attack is beaten off and with two dead, the cowardly artist in hiding and the 'Indians' regrouping, Kit and the narrator retreated along the route already travelled earlier. There is more danger as they face a perilous mountain pass, darkness, exhausted horses and rapidly gaining 'Indians'. The narrator is sent on while Kit bravely and selflessly stays behind to sacrifice himself if necessary. In what might be considered copybook style help arrives just in time and with great aplomb the hero of the hour declares in his native idiom, 'You're welkim, boy [...] twar getting hot, though I peppered one or two of the varmints. They got on my trail right smart when yew quit; but they ain't got me this time, I reckon (48). The article's rendition of such an exciting tale would probably have delighted and entertained the family reading circle with its male authenticated account and bravado. It emphasises a different type of public space and one more threatening than urban spaces sometimes described.

Such 'spaces' required men to subdue, pacify and civilise them posing a severe test of their 'natural' resources. It is somewhat reminiscent of Hartright's Central American trip where he survived 'death by disease, death by the Indians, death by drowning' (Collins, Eds. Bachman and

¹³ KIT BUTLER FROM BOONVILLE. 1862. *All the year round*, 7(152), pp. 45-48.

Cox, 2006: 415). They could be seen as testing grounds of ideological premises which promoted and supported the notion of separate spheres. The party of travellers also configures different styles of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity intersects with others who are nationally and racially described in terms of disparagement from the ordinary members of the travelling group who are: lazy, incompetent, careless, unaware of danger and naive to the Native Americans portrayed as a lurking menace, violent, bloodthirsty, uncivilised, barbarous and wild. At the head of this group Kit Butler is brave, practical, uncompromising, nerveless and knowledgeable which determines his and the author's survival in the wilderness. Despite the complexity of relationships in this tale the article concentrates solely on men and their struggle in a wilderness. Kit Butler's personal qualities, experience and practical application indicate a reputation earned in a new society where rank and privilege count for little in terms of survival.

Kit Butler's name publicises his reputation in the story described above. Losing one's name or having it besmirched or denied was a social danger to be avoided at all cost as the Audleys do successfully in *Lady Audley's Secret*. The Vanstone sisters are almost deprived of this in *No Name* as they become helpless victims of an ideology so powerful that they become nameless in the sight of the law, which will deprive them of their property. Name in these examples is controlled by men.

Collins's *No Name* in this issue of *All The Year Round* is just in its second instalment and readers must have still been puzzling over its title. The title gives very little away, in fact, in typical sensation style, it hides more than it reveals. Characters have been introduced: the Vanstone family, Miss Garth, governess, and almost family, a mysterious distant relative, Captain Wragge and neighbours, the Clares, but the mystery of who or what has 'no name' is yet to be revealed. 'Kit Butler From Boonville', the article's title, indicates both name and a minor demographic detail which tell us immediately about the hunter who figures so importantly in the feature. A family connection and his reputation become clearer when the narrator arrives for help, 'Kit Butler from Boonville [...] By thunder! he's jest my fust cousin [...] We'll go – don't you fear, mister [...] yon darned red-skins aint goin' to wipe out the smartest mountain boy in all Oregon' (AYR, 1862: 48).

Within his own community Butler is known and respected by name and reputation. *No Name*, at this time, gives no indication of the revelations which will ultimately render even Magdalen's domestic space politically untenable and banish her into an apparently safe and familiar English world but which is at the same time a public world largely unknown and unexplored by an upper middle-class young lady used to the comfort and security of home and family in the sheltered domesticity of Combe-Raven. Contrasting with the safe haven, privacy and security of home, several articles featured in *The Cornhill* during the serial run of *Armadale* from 1864 to 1866 reveal details about the fragility and insecurity of life in the colonies which serve, amongst other functions, as dangerous and challenging prison colonies and testing grounds for the courage, resolve and moral strength of men determined to civilise these regions despite resistance from hardened criminals and indigenous people.

Such articles depicting men's dominance in urban and in wilderness places are continued below with analysis of articles describing men's courage, endurance and fortitude, their selfless devotion to state security in The Volunteer Movement, their leadership and industrial dominance of the armed forces and their athletic and physical prowess in leisure and sporting pursuits. Such masculine discourse confirms dominant ideology despite these magazines' inclusion of popular sensation fiction that caused anxieties, which are discussed later in this thesis.

The politicisation of greater public spaces for economic and social reasons features in articles describing the difficulties, hardships and severe examination of men's character in challenging situations in far off places. These are accounts which describe places and events without the sense of bullish enthusiasm, which pervades such articles, described above, about frontier life in America. In 1864 Australia is described reflectively in *The Cornhill* through the eyes of a convict in the article 'A Convict's View of Penal Discipline'. Completely lacking any sense of guilt, remorse, or character reformation the convict simply looks forward to release and the chance to continue in his 'profession'. He describes the long and perilous journey in which the convict's, 'education is finished and made complete' so that he is 'ready to return to his old life and do his one

job' which would be 'enough to bring in 500*l* or 1000*l*' (Roe, 1864: 726-7).¹⁴ Harsh conditions of sentence combined with the climate and terrain in those days which Hughes has described as, 'Except for some coastal [...] all desert, pebbles, saltbush and spinifex' (1986: 573) made life difficult. Little wonder that convicts could not wait to get away, possibly to New South Wales, from this area which constantly reminds the writer of being:

forced to work [...] for miserably poor wages [...] for the convenience of the colonists – harassed by intricate police regulations – oppressed by his master – at the mercy of any free man [...] his liberty dependent on the arbitrary will of an individual [...] his only home the public house and the brothel [...] detest[ing] alike colony and colonist, the country and the people. (Roe, 1864: 727)

The article informs us that of 'good land, navigable rivers and safe harbours Western Australia is singularly deficient in these' (728). Lacking optimism, convicts indulge in bouts of drinking convincing the writer that, 'no spot in the worst districts of London and Liverpool can match the little towns of Fremantle(sic) and Perth in drunkenness and debauchery' (733). A thoroughly depressing and harsh world of physical and predominantly male violence is described here in an article which seethes with almost unrestrained ferocity depicting the severe conditions of penal life within the greater colony, an aspect of colonial life echoed in other articles in *The Cornhill*.

Aggression and violent assertiveness, rarely if ever associated with the feminine, is markedly obvious in articles in *The Cornhill* featuring colonial and other foreign ventures. Violence is present in the opening chapters of *Armada*, Collins's serialised novel which began its lengthy run in the magazine in 1864. The opening three chapters of the novel are in what Genette refers to as the prefatorial situation of communication: they constitute what Collins calls in the serialised version Book The First and later a Prologue. In terms of Genette's analysis of paratexts they are used here by the author to provide contextual information which the reader, about to begin the

¹⁴ ROE JAMES, D. 1864. A Convict's Views of Penal Discipline. *The Cornhill magazine*, 10(60), pp. 722-733.

novel, needs as background information. The Prologue also has resonances with articles which feature spaces whose violence is more likely to be associated with men than with women. It needs to be emphasised that women were not forbidden in these spaces but they are represented as dangerous places and it is suggested that the presence of women could serve to put them at risk not only from indigenous people but frequently from European interlopers, as can be seen in Collins's scene-setting prologue.

Visitors to a spa town in Germany in 1832 include a rich, dying Englishman whose deathbed confession is written down to be left for his son's attention at a later date. During the confession Wrentmore Armadale, the dying man, allows details of his colonial past to surface. He had led, 'a wild life and a vicious life' (Collins, Ed. Peters, 1989: 15) and his sexual profligacy has led to his fatal illness most probably syphilis. His secret, revealed in chapter three, is the confession of murdering his namesake who, with the connivance of the later notorious Lydia Gwilt, had cheated him in marriage to Miss Blanchard who would have been a prized colonial wife. In his youth Wrentmore Armadale admits to using Barbados and his inherited estate as what Clare Midgely calls, 'an arena of sexual opportunity' (Midgely, 1998: 9). Despite his attempts to pass responsibility onto his lack of a father and overindulgent mother:

I lost my father when I was still a child. My mother was blindly fond of me: she denied me nothing; she let me live as I pleased. My boyhood and youth were passed in idleness and self-indulgence, among people – slaves and half-castes mostly – to whom my will was law. (Collins, Ed. Peters, 1989: 31)

He is violent and wickedly immoral. Corrupt and representative of colonisers he suggests the rape of their island in an almost indifferent aside: 'There was more than one woman on the island whom I had wronged beyond all forgiveness' (35). Articles in *The Cornhill* reflect the colonial project and could be read as either censure of this programme or, as in the case of the Mutiny narrative below, a story of a glorious and heroic action. Despite the ambivalence of attitude to colonial ventures men are cast as dominant figures whatever their roles.

‘The Story of my Escape from Futtehghur’ (1865) is featured in January 1865 by which time readers could have engaged with *Armada* which began its serial run in November 1864. Colonial narratives were not unusual in popular magazines and Indian Mutiny stories would stir up memories and passions linked to this event. Such recollections would resonate with current problems in scattered colonies as far afield as New Zealand, which is the subject of an article in October 1865, and which had been beset with the so called Maori wars during the 1860s, and with the West Indies, also plagued by problems culminating in rebellion in Jamaica in 1865. Colonial problems in different places called for various solutions but the underlying model was always what Levine calls, ‘the civilisational model of imperialism’ (2007: 100) with its basic tenet that, ‘allegedly backward peoples were well served by good colonial administration that would educate and Christianize them, help them curb disease and poverty [...] and fit them for a place in the afterlife’ (100). The civilising model was used to justify the fact that, ‘indigenous peoples mostly experienced colonization as upheaval’ (100). For them, ‘land use and ownership, occupational prospects, laws and customs, language and culture were all changed by the white colonial presence’ (100). This presence was, despite all contrary arguments and justifications, an intruding and violent presence and here violence includes its many forms, that Wrenmore *Armada* was also party to.

A story of desperate flight in *Cornhill*, which may have significance on sensitive handling of colonial affairs, becomes an heroic adventure yarn featuring the undisputed courage and fortitude of British men. The author of the tale relinquishes any overt responsibility for discussing the political aspects of the event and concentrates on the adventure narrative, which becomes, in the language of Victorian depiction of such events, either an indictment of native treachery or an acclamation of British, and almost by default, male heroism. The whole episode becomes the writer’s opportunity to depict British men at their most outstanding while indigenous natives are at the opposite extreme: almost sub-human renegades, deficient in feeling, disloyal and fanatical. Individual acts reflect selfless heroism such as ‘the devoted gallantry of Colonel Smith [...] and of Captain Vibart [...] quelling the disturbance and in bringing the sepoys back to their duty’ (TC,

1865: 90)¹⁵ or poignant and tragically: ‘Fitzgerald, who with his wife and child still lingered in the boat – he unwilling to quit her side, she resolved to die where she lay’ (99). More detailed descriptions of violence underlie the narrative until the author’s escape, aided by a native headman who admits ‘our countrymen have neither wisdom nor leaders competent to turn their advantage to account [...] they are destitute of justice and truth and have imbrued their hands in the blood of innocent women and children’ (105-6). In Victorian colonial discourse the application of civic and civilising qualities form the basis of ‘Maori Sketches’ (1865) in the *Cornhill* in October 1865. Although this article acknowledges local knowledge as a way forward in solving difficulties in New Zealand, this colony and other colonies were established as the outcome of strategies that encompassed violence.

Whether it was urban spaces of great cities or the wider regions of the world, this body of articles describes, primarily, the influence of men outside the domestic sphere. It must be acknowledged here that, in reality, an all-embracing concept of separate spheres was less secure and unequivocal than such a group of articles might indicate. To take just one example, Lynda Nead’s chapter ‘Mapping and Movement’ from *Victorian Babylon* refers to letters and articles in the press detailing examples of, ‘how women of the middle-class occupied and moved around the streets of London [...] exposing contemporary beliefs concerning the nature of respectable public behaviour’(2000: 63). Despite the accuracy or inaccuracy of this body of periodical articles in describing the social reality of public spaces they form part of the print space in general magazines on the borders of sensation fiction. In this instance my analysis is devoted to masculine discourse. Scholarly work on periodicals constantly draws attention to the unknowable reader hinting as Deane does that audiences were diverse when he speaks of, ‘the ideologically fragmenting literary market of the 1860s’ (Deane, 2003: 88). Articles featuring public spaces frame these spaces as distinctly

¹⁵ JONES, G.S., 1865. The Story of my Escape from Futtehghur. *The Cornhill magazine*, 11(61), pp. 88-108.

masculine and are linked to other paratexts framed as distinctly masculine such as military and sporting articles.

Homosociality, masculinity and the military

The homosocial group can be sub-divided into two groups: a group of military articles and a group of articles surrounding leisure, particularly sporting pursuits. I begin with articles about military matters. The most immediate impression these articles create is a strong voice for change and modernisation. Change is suggested in three areas, which I isolate from my reading of the military articles: the volunteer movement, reform and renewal. They are areas of change that demand the adaptation of masculinity within the context of a modern industrialised society. Despite the three different strands there is an underlying suggestion of the need for a revitalization of masculinity to meet the challenges of a modern and rapidly changing world. Articles in the periodical press emphasised tradition, suggested change and hopefully improvement, and reminded readers of the need for keeping the military up to strength and abreast of the latest technological advances in weaponry.

It has to be recognised that implied readers are not actual readers and actual readers may have read against expectations. This begs the question whether editors were using conservative paratexts as a shield to allow transgressive sensation fiction more licence? These articles suggest a strengthening of masculinity in the face of attitudes that suggest an image of British men:

more addicted to the acquisition of pounds, shillings, and pence, to the building up of glittering pyramids of wealth, such as that represented by the Australian colonies in the late Exhibition, than to cultivating the more manly habits of martial life. (T B, 1862: 142)¹⁶

¹⁶ The Volunteer Royal Commission. 1862. *Temple Bar: a London magazine for town and country readers*, Dec.1860-Dec.1881, 7, pp. 141-154.

The last major conflict involving nation states at war that Britain was involved in during the nineteenth century was the Crimean war 1854-6. Although never totally free from involvement in some kind of military action during the rest of the century, these were generally colonial problems that it was thought needed some kind of military intervention. Long years of peace at home or lack of real international threat did not mean there was stagnation in the armed forces. The short Crimean war had exposed deficiencies in the standing army and to a degree in the navy and these were part of the debate simmering during the mid-century period and often finding space in the periodical press. However, it should be recognised that despite its failings the military was exclusively male in composition and was, therefore, a potent symbol of masculine power and dominant ideology and as Dawson, in *Soldier Heroes* (1994) suggests, its status even in peacetime idealizes masculine power and durability, the possibility of heroic action, sacrifice and definitely of the true Englishman. Despite several years of peace, national security was always a crucial area for the military and shortages of serving men led to calls for new forces.

Voluntary service occupied much periodical space. Reports of volunteer forces would inform young men of what was happening and serve to prick their patriotic consciences. Here were textual constructions of 'real men'. To volunteer would indicate a man's willingness to serve, to protect those he dominated, and to be strong, aggressive, disciplined and active. Men who volunteered would be part of a constructed masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity was also sustained by this voluntary subjection to rules, to discipline and to other features such as payment of entrance fees and annual subscriptions fees. *All The Year Round* carried articles such as; 'Royal Naval Volunteers' (1859), 'Volunteer Cavalry' (1860), 'The Grimgribber Rifle Corps' (1860) and 'Portsmouth Volunteer Review' (1868) which appealed to men's sense of duty reminding prospective volunteers for the cavalry, for example, 'that we are a nation of horsemen, and with a little care and a little training, might turn out such a body of volunteer cavalry as the world has not

yet seen' (AYR,1860: 329)¹⁷. The same article reminds the reader of military history and tradition invoking memories of such events to inspire huntsmen to become volunteers:

Train these same fox-hunters to use their rifled carbines and their swords, as Englishmen, when properly taught, can use such weapons – to charge as their countrymen charged at Moodkee, at Aliwall, at Balaklava, and, more lately, in India – and man for man – nay, even at odds of three to two – no cavalry in the world could withstand them. (331)

A similar tone is evident in 'Royal Naval Volunteers' whose writer is sure that in time of need all that would be needed would be a call to arms, 'A foreign potentate shows signs of intending immediate mischief; England blazes up; and out comes a royal proclamation summoning the Royal Naval Volunteers' (AYR,1859: 152).¹⁸ Here were chances for men to visibly demonstrate their masculinity confirming the dependability of their ideologically constructed roles.

Temple Bar also discusses the work of The Volunteer Royal Commission in an article of the same name in 1863 again invoking tradition, history and more recent events to refute foreign notions:

that we were a race, if not effeminate, yet so unskilled in the science of war, so devoid of the very spirit of martial enterprise, so pusillanimous in all but what concerned our ledgers and day-books, that we could easily be overridden, did an enemy resolve to put foot upon our soil. (TB, 1862: 141)¹⁹

Dealing with all aspects of the Commission's review the article reminds the reader of the value of the volunteer organisation as a defensive unit and also as a character building institution, 'our young

¹⁷ VOLUNTEER CAVALRY. 1860. *All the year round*, 3(64), pp. 329-331.

¹⁸ ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEERS. 1859. *All the year round*, (33), pp. 151-153.

¹⁹ The Volunteer Royal Commission. 1862. *Temple Bar: a London magazine for town and country readers*, Dec.1860-Dec.1881, 7, pp. 141-154.

men are banded together as a menace to invaders [...] We do not believe, then, that the spirit of patriotism has evaporated in the hearts of our English Volunteers [...] [and] the influence of Volunteering upon the character of the youth of the country has been singularly and unexpectedly beneficial' (151-3). Finally it concludes that adequate funding must be granted to men who, patriotically, 'round our hearths are clustered a brave fraternal band' (154). Adequate funding was needed for uniforms, weapons and a token reimbursement for regular attendance. Sussman compares Carlyle's depiction of monastic life to 'a proto factory prefiguring the historically inevitable coming of the factory system and the monk anticip[ating] the factory worker sublimating his energy into productive work' (1995: 6). A volunteer's commitment: to attendance, to regular drill and training, and to acceptance of discipline also suggests a parallel with industry with its rhythms, patterns, skills and regular timekeeping. It also took men, if only briefly, out of the domestic situation in which they were becoming increasingly involved.

Strong ideological implications are present in these frequently recurring articles during the serialisation of sensation novels in the 1860s. They endorse the Volunteer Movement and implicate readers in such support which is for the public and national good and implies acceptance of officially approved institutions. Such implications also infer assumptions about gender constructions continually referencing situations which encourage acceptance of dominant masculinity. Again it must be emphasised that there is no certainty of how readers reacted to such articles. Appearing regularly such articles may have served to quell the transgressive excitement of sensation instalments. On the other hand they may have led some readers to eagerly anticipate reading them as a form of escapism from an unrelenting diet of masculine dominance. Articles which call for strong masculine involvement in volunteering to serve are also in juxtaposition to descriptions of weak and unmotivated men in some sensation novels. They reinforce a national view of how dominant men should conduct themselves as volunteers but there were problems with the standing military forces.

The army and navy were entrenched in old ideas; officers were drawn from the gentry and aristocracy. John Peck, referring to Charles Lever, a novelist of some minor military fictions, suggests he:

is accurate, in his representation of officers who see the army as an extension of the country gentleman's life of hunting and shooting. Commissions and promotions (up to the rank of lieutenant-colonel) were obtained by purchase, and most officers regarded the army simply as a temporary occupation. (1998: 13)

Colonel John Herncastle, in *The Moonstone*, is recalled here. He was rich, privileged, greedy, and violent, and convinced that he had a right to take the jewel at Seringapatam.

Apart from extolling the virtues of volunteer patriotism various articles throughout the decade call for change in out-dated practices especially the purchase system which saw men, rich enough to afford it, buying their way into the officer corps. In May 1864 *Temple Bar* carried an article condemning the purchase system even setting out a table of the tariffs one could expect to pay. Several pages of payment details regarding commissions and the corruption of the system are given and the magazine is in no doubt that the army should not be 'an institution raised, paid, and maintained for the occupation and amusement of a certain class – the upper ten or fifteen thousand of English society' (TB, 1864: 203).²⁰ Four years earlier 'Money Or Merit' in *All The Year Round* April 1860 had concluded that, 'in the English army money is of far more importance than any professional character or experience whatever' (AYR, 1860: 32).²¹ While not directly condemning the purchase system the magazine's 1868 article, 'The English Gentleman's Own Profession', condemns purchase as indiscriminate, allowing, 'a clown to be possessed of enough money to buy a commission in the army, and so become an officer without becoming a gentleman (AYR,1868:

²⁰ Promotion by Purchase. 1864. *Temple Bar : a London magazine for town and country readers, Dec.1860-Dec.1881*, 11, pp. 197-212

²¹ MONEY OR MERIT? 1860. *All the year round*, 3(52), pp. 30-32.

451).²² Questions provoked by these articles also become part of the on-going debate about masculinity in what Turner describes as, ‘a decade of ideological debate and contradiction with regard to gender issues’ (2000: 239). In this exchange the complex notion of “gentleman” assumes a significant position.

Status and its perceived irrefutable link with money is clearly under interrogation. Although, in ‘Money Or Merit’, the two young officers cited as examples of some of the failings of the purchase system are both honourable men the underlying essence is the necessity to divorce ability from money. Lynn Alexander, in her introduction to *John Halifax Gentleman*, says that, ‘Craik’s novel reflects the shift from the eighteenth-century concept of the gentleman by birth to the nineteenth-century one of gentleman by deed’ (2005: 13). In some ways this correlates to Samuel Smiles’s ideas about abilities and status achieved through what Alexander calls, ‘the rewards of self-determination, self-control and self-help’ (2005: 24). The 1866 edition of Samuel Smiles’s *Self Help* (1859) contains a preface in which the author explains some of the misconceptions which had arisen from the title, ‘it has led some [...] to suppose that it consists of a eulogy of selfishness the very opposite of what the author intended it to be’ (Smiles, Ed. Bull, 1986: xii). Smiles’s emphasis on the selflessness of his ideals are sharply precise in his words, ‘the duty of helping one’s self in the highest sense involves the helping of one’s neighbours’ (xii). Here is the essence of gentlemanly ideals reaching back to old ideas of chivalry and noblesse oblige partly suggested too in these articles in the periodicals which contest unearned promotion through the power of money, and cite many examples of conduct which belies the truth of the idea of officer and gentleman. At this point it worthwhile referring again to John Herncastle in *The Moonstone*, a minor protagonist whose ungentlemanly actions and selfishness represent a critique of masculinity. Gentlemanly conduct and notions of chivalric manners also occur in Yates’s fiction and are examined in greater detail with reference to his work below.

²² THE ENGLISH GENTLEMAN'S OWN PROFESSION. 1868. *All the year round*, 19(469), pp. 444-451.

Serialised in *All The Year Round* in 1868 *The Moonstone* begins with a prologue preparing the reader for the main story which follows. This prologue amounts, we are told by its title, to a description of the storming of Seringapatam, and, as we also find out, it has been extracted from a family paper by Franklin Blake to protect the good family name. Although questions could be raised about the objectivity, truth and reliability of this paper it works, in the first instance, to inform the reader of details about the Indian diamond, the title and central catalyst for the action of the novel. John Herncastle, ostracised by the family, is accused of theft and murder in the paper and has earned the derisive nickname of Honourable John, a reference to the East India Company. It is left to Betteredge to supply further details about John Herncastle:

He went into the army, beginning in the Guards. He had to leave the Guards before he was two-and-twenty – never mind why. They are very strict in the army, and they were too strict for the Honourable John. He went out to India to see whether they were equally strict there, and to try a little active service. In the matter of bravery (to give him his due), he was a mixture of bull-dog and game-cock, with a dash of the savage. He was at the taking of Seringapatam. Soon afterwards he changed into another regiment, and, in course of time, changed again into a third. In the third he got his last step as lieutenant-colonel, and, getting that, got also a sunstroke, and came home to England. (Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999: 84)

It is obvious that Herncastle has bought his way up the ranks and retired on a lucrative pension at the highest promotion and all this despite remarks about the strictness of the army and a questionable character according to the family paper. John Herncastle, despite a minor fleeting appearance on the night of Rachel's birthday party, is emblematic of an older, and in some circumstances, a rejected form of masculinity that can be usefully demonstrated in simple binary terms. Herncastle is a mischief-maker, quick tempered, boastful, ego-centric, a thief, and amoral whereas a gentleman should be peaceable, placid, modest, considerate, honest and at least countenance a moral and Christian ethic.

Other paratextual articles more relevant to equipment than personnel are featured. Several articles become extremely technical in their discussion of the latest weapons and munitions for all forces and of the type of up to date ships the Navy should have. Such articles include 'Victoria's Ironsides' (1862) in *All The Year Round*, 'The Steam Navy Of England' (1862) in *The Sixpenny Magazine* and 'Iron Warships and Heavy Ordnance' (1862), 'Our Artillery' (1862) and 'Military Breech Loaders' (1864) in *Temple Bar*, which between them discuss military armour and armaments in a very technical manner and which, I would suggest, may have had little appeal for a female readership but which also, in their own way, extol the achievements of men in invention and industry.

Homosociality and Leisure

The second sub-group of homosocial articles are those that highlight sport. These articles concentrate on activities that are primarily, though not exclusively, the domain of men. Gail-Nina Anderson, curator of 'The Pursuit of Leisure Victorian Depictions of Pastimes' comments that, 'Leisure is uncontroversial where it functions to re-inforce the accepted values of a dominant society' (1997: 134). Women's leisure in mid-nineteenth century was generally a sedate and passive time occupied in genteel amusements. Relatively inactive musical entertainments, reading, and other hobbies could be followed at home. Peter Bailey in *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (1978) gives a comprehensive catalogue of pursuits that occupied middle-class women noting that they were not all housebound recreations. He says, 'Music was a fashionable, indeed necessary, accomplishment for girls,' adding, 'private theatricals, quizzes, and newly devised games for the middle-class family market,' and remarking that, 'The railway gave them in particular a new mobility in leisure' (1987: 72). Bailey also mentions games of tennis and croquet for those fortunate to have large gardens. Moderately active events might include walking out with the family especially at the seaside or in parks. Anderson mentions possible anxieties that might be the result

of mixed class attendance at sporting events. Reading Victorian paintings of sporting scenes she suggests that:

Leisure as a site of anxiety could not be avoided. Crowd scenes set in public places usually include a low-life presence, reminding the viewer that the promiscuous mixture of types and classes inevitable in such a context could be dangerous to those not fortified by a clear-cut sense of their own status and propriety. (1997: 12)

Lady Audley enjoyed her outings to the races with Sir Michael but her other leisure pursuits are more traditionally feminine such as playing the piano and strolling in the grounds of Audley Court. Michael Thompson (1988) commenting on spectating at sports events notes the prevalent masculine nature of such events into the early twentieth century. Talking about four sports, boxing, cricket, football and racing he says, 'What is known is that these were essentially male occasions: women were firmly excluded from boxing matches and were only just starting to go to cricket and football games in the early twentieth century, though race meetings were always considered suitable for family outings' (1988: 301).

Sporting articles concentrate on traditional organised field events and more loosely informal gatherings of friends engaged in fishing and shooting. Team and individual sports were gradually developing both as participatory and spectator pursuits and received major encouragement propounded in ideas surrounding 'Muscular Christianity' and pursued enthusiastically in the Public Schools. Gender, class and race impinge on any discussion of the history of sport and Richard Holt commenting on the development of sport describes it as, 'a male preserve with its own language, its initiation rites and models of true masculinity; its clubbable jokey cosiness' (1989: 8) and later confirms the part sport played in, 'constantly re-creating and sustaining male identity' (365). Derek Birley concurs and refers to stereotypical imagery suggesting that women were unsuitable for sporting activities because they were, 'ornamental and gracious [...] delicate and not to be exposed to physical challenge at work or play' (1993: 246). Sport provided opportunities for men to dissociate themselves from domesticity and reaffirm an independent masculinity that reflected both

mental and physical strength. Tosh (1999) links the interest in and the development of sport to political and economic affairs so in effect men's interest in sport could be seen to be subsumed by the general welfare of the Nation:

Important in disseminating sport were the periodic reminders – notably the invasion scare of 1859 – that the country needed men who were fit in body as well as in mind. In addition the competitive character of most sports appealed to the bourgeois ethic of the market-place, while the growing influence of biological models of human development raised fears about physical degeneration. (1999: 187-8)

Sport was gradually acquiring a greater importance and this was apparent in articles in periodicals.

In mid-Victorian times sport was part of the modern scene. It was more organised, it fitted into differing patterns of leisure time in an industrialised society, it made use of greater mobility allowing as Vamplew remarks, 'a reprieve to some of the oppressed traditional sports, in particular prize-fighting, by allowing participants and spectators to travel to isolated areas away from magisterial interference' (1988: 11) and it had an increasing public presence being variously reported in the growing media channels the press and periodicals with even some publications exclusively dedicated to sport such as the popular *Bell's Sporting Life*. Recognition of the importance of exercise for health and fitness of both mind and body saw participation in sport encouraged because, as Holt remarks, 'Increasingly a sense of personal moral worth and a new kind of patriotism and imperial fervour became embedded in the middle-class attitude to sport' (1989: 5). The inclusion of 'imperial' adds another dimension in which sport could also be seen to demonstrate the many qualities that the colonising power brought to other regions of the world. As interest and participation in sport increased over the decade it was not unusual for sporting articles to feature in the periodical press. Such articles dealt with sporting themes in a variety of ways. There are descriptions of events, details of behind the scene activities, stories of an almost anecdotal nature and those that focus on personalities.

A consideration of articles across this range reveals their masculine orientation. Nevertheless, this tendency towards gender essentialism is troubled by complexities which are manifest in links to sensation novels. Sporting or active leisure as it could be termed works like the military articles do to construct an energetic, vigorous, brave, socially acceptable and naturalised masculinity. Leisure activities feature in sensation novels, particularly riding. Riding out to the hunt, for example, is one way for men to display their manliness but it also affords an opportunity for transgression when women show more ability and interest in this activity than men. At one point in *Lady Audley's Secret* riding almost causes a social hiatus. Robert Audley was apathetic towards this type of 'manly' pursuit but his cousin was remarked on for her qualities as a horsewoman.

Alicia's aptitude for riding is noteworthy because it is inconsistent with ladylike conduct and Robert's lack of interest associates him with the dandy. In the description of Christmas activities at Audley Court we are told that Robert 'showed no inclination for any of these outdoor amusements' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 146-7). Referring, in particular, to hunting which he disdained strongly we learn he preferred, 'keep[ing] at a very respectful distance from the hard riders; his horse knowing quite as well as he did, that nothing was further from his mind than any desire to be in at the death' (72). Earlier in the novel Alicia was continually out riding, following the hounds and breakfasting with, 'The young squires, who talked all breakfast time of Flying Dutchman fillies and Voltigeur colts; of glorious runs of seven hours' hard riding over three counties' (145-6). While Robert's apathy towards sporting activity may be construed by the company at Audley Court as not very masculine, Alicia's riding ability was suggestive of a more deliberate transgression against accepted norms. Transgression and trespass are important terms which feature later in this thesis's attempts to emphasise the importance of masculinities in the critical appraisal of sensation fiction. Here, features about racing and riding support a view that magazines had articles aimed at an implied male reader.

Racing had a broad appeal and received coverage in the periodical press. Despite his assertion that, 'women attended race meetings and were involved in betting' Mike Huggins only

enlarges on this brief comment by stating that, 'racing was also associated with a range of female employments including prostitution, card-selling and stall holding' (2000: 6) which hardly gives it an air of respectability. Later uses of Edmund Yates's sensation fiction refer to racing which he found a particularly useful setting for his 'trespassing' men though as will be explained my use of trespass is not a reference to mere villainy. However, racing was a popular sport enjoyed by both sexes and it had its own very clear class dimension with the most obvious distinction evident in the amount of costs incurred in the owning, stabling and training of racehorses. 'The Training Stable' in *All The Year Round* in 1862 gives a comprehensive account of the management of a racing stable comparing it eventually to the best run industries, 'were you ever over any manufactory, did you ever inspect any gigantic "establishment," where the good genius of rule and order had a better home' (AYR, 1862: 64).²³ On a countrywide scale racing was quite rightly legitimised by comparisons to hugely successful industry. It employed hundreds, almost exclusively male and like hunting was traditionally a man's province and was cleverly used by Braddon to emphasise female rebellion in *Aurora Floyd*. Riding, racing and an undue interest in such affairs by some 'fast' women was part of the national debate on femininity but as 'The Training Stable' shows racing was well organised and administered by men.

A variety of racing articles enjoyed a presence in the periodicals. All aspects of the sport were covered with prestigious events like the Derby frequently mentioned and tales of favourites, tips, betting, famous horses and frauds the subject of such articles as: 'Two Tips' (1865), 'A Prince's Holiday' (1868) and 'Bookmaking' (1868) featuring in *All The Year Round* and 'Goodwood and Bognor' (1862) in *Temple Bar*. These articles are written in the almost specialist language of sport with talk of: the turf, favourites, outsiders, good things, and hedging and laying off bets. This was a language common to the racing man and outrageous and extraordinary in a young heiress like Aurora Floyd in Braddon's novel. Her intimate knowledge of the racing world

²³ THE TRAINING-STABLE. 1862. *All the year round*, 7(153), pp. 63-66.

astounds Talbot Bulstrode who, ‘had only been to the Derby once in his life, and on that one occasion had walked quietly away from the stand while the great race was being run’ (Braddon, Eds. Nemesvari and Surridge 1998: 75). He muses about Aurora’s choice of reading material concluding that she is probably, ‘as well read in the *‘Racing Calendar’* and *‘Ruff’s Guide’* as other ladies in Miss Yonge’s novels’ (95). He feels sorry for her disinterest in more feminine pursuits and for her unconventional interest in the ‘turf’ and the ‘field’. He is anxious that her unusual and transgressive interest in what were predominantly men’s activities might undermine his ‘natural’ dominance.

Field sports also feature in the magazines emphasising the male world of hunting, shooting and fishing. In *All The Year Round* field sports are celebrated in such articles as; ‘Seventy Years Fox-hunting’ (1860), ‘The Chicklebury Silver Cup’ (1862) and ‘A Day’s Rabbit-Shooting’ (1862), ‘Shooting’ (1864) in *Temple Bar* and ‘Modern Falconry’ (1865) in *The Cornhill*. These articles have an unmistakable sense of men going about their private leisure pursuits. They describe a historic tradition of men at play and even the journalist of ‘The Chicklebury Silver Cup’ (1862) digresses to talk of “‘the steel and chivalry of other days’ [...] ‘the smile of beauty’ and ‘lionhearts’ and other fine editorial furniture’ (AYR, 1862: 202)²⁴. The writer admits to envy of the winner’s return home with the cup, ‘when he placed it on the table [...] and his wife and children ran to kiss him’ (204). The culmination of ‘A Day’s Rabbit Shooting’ describes the gathering at the local inn at the end of the day:

The cheese in great moist wedges awaits us; the cider is ready in its great stone jar;
the leaves are duly cloven; the strong xxx ale is frothing in the horns; the guns stand
in the corners; the long rows of rabbits, twenty couple at least, lie in the outhouse;

²⁴ THE CHICKLEBURY SILVER CUP. 1862. *All the year round*, 7(159), pp. 202-204.

the keeper and his men seat themselves on distant benches [...] and we eat and talk.

(540)²⁵

Here is an example of the ‘male preserve,’ and ‘its clubbable joky cosiness’ to which Holt (1989) refers; all men together and each man, as the writer records, in his rightful place. Sport may have been the common factor but class distinctions were scrupulously maintained in an area where overt enjoyment of such pleasures signified status and wealth. Shooting also takes on a more international aspect when articles on tiger hunting reveal its excitement and danger *The Sixpenny Magazine* features ‘My First Shot At A Tiger’ (1862) and *All The Year Round* has ‘My First Tiger’ (1868). Boxing deserves a mention here because it also featured in articles in the magazines. They suggest both the masculinity of the sport and male collusion and participation as spectators in illicit bare-knuckle boxing.

Boxing has been called ‘the noble art’ but in mid-Victorian Britain it was a cruel and brutal sport which the authorities generally outlawed and tried their best to stamp out. Yet it still managed to exist in a quasi-legal state and looked to be heading for a revival of interest when an American arrived in England in 1860 for a contest with Tom Sayers as unofficial champion. The contest is described in *All The Year Round* although lurid details of the violence are omitted and the account becomes more of a social narrative in which it becomes clear that this event was men colluding in and enjoying an illegal gathering where niceties of class disappeared temporarily and apart from a few country girls who happened to be at the scene women were excluded. The affair received tacit approval from the police, ‘the winking majesty of the law. Their faces show[ing] the make-believe character of their opposition to the exceptional event’ (AYR, 1860: 135).²⁶ All classes were present and the journalist informs us, ‘there was no one man there who could say I am more refined than my neighbour’ (135). The illicit nature of the prize-fight which men of all classes share, suspending

²⁵ A DAY'S RABBIT-SHOOTING. 1862. *All the year round*, 7(173), pp. 538-540.

²⁶ THE GREAT PUGILISTIC REVIVAL. 1860. *All the year round*, 3(56), pp. 133-138.

their differences for a time, may also suggest a gendered participation outside of not only the law but the moral influence of home and women too if only temporarily. It is difficult to imagine a public event legal or illegal where ladies would mix on such easy terms with the lower classes. However, the all-male appeal of pugilism was such that as Mee remarks, ‘Finally with the date 17 April 1860 an open secret [...] the do-gooders and law-upholders stood aside. Parliament was virtually emptied’ (1998: 140) and even such notable figures as Palmerston ‘urged the opposition to be moderate and was commended by traditionalists for his thoroughly English character and his ‘love for every manly sport’ (Birley, 1993: 235). A similar boxing match and its male subterfuge is reported in *Temple Bar* under the title of ‘The Millers And Their Men’ (1864). Finally although little appears in my selection of magazines articles about organised team games *Temple Bar* includes an important article describing the first cricket tour by an English team to Australia.

‘Lords And Players’ (*Temple Bar* 1862) is varied in its approach including a brief history of the game, a review of its current popularity and confirmation of its place in the formation of British masculinity. The opening paragraph refers to *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) describing cricket as, ‘the birthright of British boys old and young’ (TB, 1862: 273).²⁷ Many readers would have been familiar with this novel’s support for sport and its advocacy of Muscular Christianity and here the writer equates it with such qualities as ‘nerve,’ ‘discipline,’ and ‘agility’(TB,1862: 273) and describes players as ‘stalwart men [...] their manly frames display strength and prowess’(273). The sport’s long history, memorable games, continuing popularity and the first Australian tour are celebrated in the article. The tour is described as a renewal of the colonial project, ‘Great was the excitement and enthusiasm of the whole colony at beholding this brave and plucky little band disembark’ (285). The social and political assimilation of sport under dominant ideological assumptions is more than evident in the writer’s summary of what cricket is to British men:

²⁷ Lord's-and Players. 1862. *Temple Bar: a London magazine for town and country readers, Dec. 1860-Dec. 1881*, pp. 273-287.

cricket relies on a cool head, a quick eye, a supple wrist, a swift foot; all the noblest attributes of the man, mental and physical, are brought into play by it [...] It is a healthy and a manly sport; it trains and disciplines the noblest faculties of the body, and tends to make Englishmen what they are – the masters of the world. (287)

Cricket and other apparently innocent sports and pastimes uphold dominant ideologies of gender, class and race and articles describing all their various facets support the domination of periodical space by masculinity in a multiplicity of ways. Paratexts, analysed in this chapter, are presented as evidence of a pervasive masculine discourse that surrounded serialised sensation fiction. These paratexts with their emphasis on military and imperialist affairs and assumptions about gendered space and leisure activities link closely to dominant patriarchal ideology.

A close examination of surrounding articles offered the possibility that, what are called above, ‘sites of coherence’ might be found recognising that these could be areas of accord or discord. The results of my survey of paratexts in magazines that hosted sensation fiction is that while they provide an extensive and unequivocal male discourse and to a degree upheld traditional ideological positions they were unquestionably not the sole voice that speaks. As a vibrant, energetic and eclectic source of news, topical debate and ideas these magazines supported a modernising and proactive vision of masculinity. They confirmed and strengthened ideological norms choosing to ignore or counter any hint of decline. This apparently uncompromising perspective has implications for the reader and for his/her understanding of sensation fiction. What becomes patently obvious in this type of study is the complexity of the problem of knowing how the magazines were read. My conclusion, echoing the work of other commentators, is that it is impossible to know completely the actual readership of these magazines and therefore various dichotomies arise in trying to construct a picture of the reader of sensation fiction as it appeared in magazines. The overriding, almost exclusively, male centred discourse of articles surrounding serial runs appears to be a source for conditioning a reader response that expects and accepts stereotypical subject positions. Suddenly, though, readers are confronted by characters whose behaviour

contradicts expected norms. That readers eagerly anticipated each issue is well documented suggesting a desire for at least the vicarious thrill of the unusual, the non-conformist and the outrageous experienced from the security of the reader's armchair. There is also the rider that it cannot be assumed that readers read anything other than the sensation fictions that helped to swell the sales figures of magazines. Unanswerable as some of these questions may remain the presence of an overwhelming male discourse in surrounding articles would appear to negate support for any open radical agenda in sensation fiction. Although sensation fiction was a welcome and fascinating inclusion in periodicals, the inescapable and pervasive presence of masculinist articles, seems to exclude any obvious overall editorial commitment to challenging gender norms. Edmund Yates's sensation fiction, discussed later, has elements of change but proved somewhat consistent with editorial bias. The next chapter proceeds to consider other mediating influences that made a deliberate intrusion to influence readers.

Chapter Three Critics, culture and reading

This chapter examines nineteenth-century critical commentary on sensation fiction and attitudes to popular culture evidenced in these reviews. The chapter traces the changing reviews of sensation novels and shows how this moves from emphasising their literary attractions to those which exposed cultural and ideological anxieties. The chapter also explores attitudes and opinions about reading in mid-nineteenth century Britain. It shows how, for some critics, reading in itself and, more definitively, reading sensation fiction, highlighted, as Radford puts it, ‘contemporary arguments about porous class boundaries [...] imperi[ling] the social regulation that safeguard[ed] rigid class divisions.’ (2009: 6-7). The significant focus of this chapter is the anxious reaction to and perceived threat of this popular cultural phenomenon. Sensation fiction, at first welcomed and appreciated for its exciting approach to storytelling, became a threat that had to be contained by zealous reaction in the periodical press.

This chapter turns from analysis of surrounding articles in periodicals, which has been explored in the previous chapter, to other more direct attempts to influence readers of sensation fiction, principally in the form of contemporary critical reviews and commentaries on sensation novels. Critical reactions to ideological practices and gender issues in popular novels are both analysed. The reviews featured in this analysis appear in both popular and serious magazines. Both the early favourable responses from reviewers and the later critical disapproval and denunciation of sensation are assessed. Additionally, this chapter offers some brief comments on how personal statements and observations, for example the strong opinions of Margaret Oliphant and W. Fraser Rae, intruded into the debate. This shows that individual interests in the publishing industry were often significant. Due to the fact that it was commercially successful, sensation fiction needed little defence on commercial grounds. There were some perfunctory efforts to bolster its cultural prestige, for example in *All The Year Round*, and these are included in my analysis. The chapter also examines conspicuous and persistent concerns about reading in mid-nineteenth century Britain.

Reviewers and sensation fiction

The magazine publishing world involved a highly competitive economic struggle for survival and all strategies which might attract readers were considered. In a period when print culture was becoming more readily and more cheaply available, fiction, as indicated previously, was a popular inclusion in many periodicals of the day. Laurel Brake (2011) in 'The Advantage of Fiction' in *A Return to the Common Reader* describes the inclusion of fiction in periodicals as vital and deliberate in their efforts to expand a share of the readership. Reviews of fiction were also a routine inclusion in nineteenth century periodicals. Brake notes, also, that even those periodicals which did not feature fiction in their issues were mindful of contemporary interest and published 'reviews', 'literary gossip' and 'advertising.' Even the *Saturday Review*, she adds, 'relied on spleen in its reviews to claim a notoriety that attracted purchasers' (Eds. Palmer and Buckland, 2011: 17). The extraordinary growth of interest in sensation fiction had a variety of effects on the way reviewers responded.

Reaction from reviewers showed a marked change as the genre's popularity escalated across various classes of readers. The emphasis on a lowering of the status of fiction and of the novel in particular became a concern with reviewers as reading was continually located in a hierarchical classification in which serial fiction was perceived to have a low status in the ranks of available reading matter. Comments on sensation fiction were often multi-edged, criticising both authors and readers. *The Rose, the shamrock and the thistle* described it thus: 'works of sensational fiction – that fast as the teeming brain of the novelist can produce them are eagerly devoured by the reading public' (RST, 1864: 387).¹ Underlying this type of comment is a scornful attitude to the association of 'art' with industrial output and profit and its detrimental links to popular reading. The changing focus in critical reaction revealed ideological concerns beginning to have more prominence in reviews.

¹ GWYNETH, 1864. SENSATION LITERATURE. *The Rose, the shamrock, and the thistle*, 5(28), pp. 385-390.

Ideology in mid-nineteenth century literary reviewing, particularly in terms of gender and class associations and also in attempts to maintain a cultural hierarchy, was markedly evident. It can be viewed as a deliberate attempt to control what was read. There was a desire by the upper classes to maintain a boundary between high and low culture. Popular, in this instance sensation fiction, was derided as representative of low culture but such aversions were associated with the perceived threat that sensation fiction crossed class boundaries and might have been influential in higher circles rather than with concerns about literary quality. The continuous and rapid turnover of fiction in periodicals prompted comments by notable critics such as Margaret Oliphant who allied this rapid output to mechanistic industrial processes rather than high art:

To combine the higher requirements of art with the lower ones of a popular weekly periodical and produce something that will be equally perfect in snatches as a book, is an operation too difficult and delicate for even genius to accomplish, without a bold adaptation of the cunning of the mechanist and closest elaboration of workmanship. (BEM, 1862: 584)²

Such deliberate attempts to position the popular at the foot of a cultural scale exposed political and social judgements rather than literary assessment although concerns with the literary merits of sensation stories were customary in early reviews.

Critical approval

It is useful to take stock of early reviews of the genre as these are less inclined towards moral judgements than later responses which featured in magazines when the genre had become well established and critics were trying to come to terms with its continuing success and their fear of the genre's disruptive social potential. Some early comments, such as the one found in the *London Review* of *The Woman In White*, remark on how the reader is held by 'an untiring succession of incidents which absorb his feelings, and keep his attention on the alert' (LR 1860:

² SENSATION NOVELS. 1862. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 91(559), pp. 564-584.

234)³. Similarly, E. S. Dallas writing in *The Times* on 30 October 1860 commends the novel's hold on the reader: '*The Woman In White* is a novel of the rare old sort which must be finished at a sitting'. In the same vein *The Critic* in December 1862, in a review of *Lady Audley's Secret* – a review that is not entirely complimentary – declares 'The tale is eminently a fascinating one [...] and fascination is one of the greatest charms in works of fiction'(Cr, 1862 : 178)⁴. A further comment in the same review compliments its: 'Incident upon incident related in the most easy and attractive manner [...] a complete series of what it is the fashion to call "sensation scenes," through which the reader's attention never for an instant flags' (179). Such positive publicity was even augmented by the comments of one of the most prominent reviewers of the day: Margaret Oliphant.

Oliphant, who was eventually to become one of the genre's fiercest critics, wrote favourably in her early reaction to Collins's *The Woman In White*. Noting its strength of plot – 'astute and deeply laid' – and commenting also on the extent of its realism employed to make the story acceptable she added:

His effects are produced by common human acts, performed by recognizable human agents, whose motives are never inscrutable, and whose line of conduct is always more or less consistent. [...] The more we perceive the perfectly legitimate nature of the means used to produce the sensation, the more striking does that sensation become. (Oliphant, 1862: 566)⁵

Her comments optimistically anticipated, 'a new beginning in fiction' (566). Oliphant clearly had no ideological dispute with the writer or his work at this stage. There is hardly anything that Oliphant objected to in Collins's work but there was a hint of later hostility when she referred to other writers, who as yet were unnamed acolytes of sensation and who would, in her opinion,

³ "THE WOMAN IN WHITE"--A NOVEL. 1860. *The London review and weekly journal of politics, literature, art, and society*, July 7, 1860-June 29, 1861, (10), pp. 233-234.

⁴ LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET. 1862. *The Critic*, 25(631), pp. 178-179.

⁵ SENSATION NOVELS. 1862. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 91(559), pp. 564-584.

attempt to copy and capitalise on Collins's genuine and 'closely-wrought plot'(573). Predominantly, praise was the overwhelming tone of reviews when sensation first appeared.

Initially writers such as Collins and Braddon were praised for their ability to captivate audiences by their clever and much admired storytelling. *The Saturday Review* in August 1860 is both effusive in praise and carefully reserved in criticism of *The Woman In White*:

Mr. Wilkie Collins is an admirable storyteller, though he is not a great novelist. His plots are framed with artistic ingenuity – he unfolds them bit by bit clearly, and with great care – and each chapter is a most skilful sequel to the chapter before. He does not attempt to paint character or passion. He is not in the least imaginative. He is not by any means a master of pathos. The fascination which he exercises over the mind of his reader consists in this – that he is a good constructor. (SR, 1860: 249)⁶

This review is interlaced with caution and reservation pointing out what is missing in *The Woman In White* and principally praising the plot construction. In September *The Examiner* similarly cautiously enthused:

In so much of the novelist's art as consists in the effective telling of a certain kind of story Mr Wilkie Collins has almost attained perfection. [...] He is great at a mystery, and shows his power not merely in the cunning construction of a plot [...] but even more strongly in his manner of giving also to minor incidents a strength of mysterious suggestion. (EX, 1860: 549)⁷

This glowing praise for narrative construction was to be repeated for other early writers of sensation. Mary Braddon's hugely commercially successful novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* received appreciative comments in early reviews. *The Rose, the shamrock, and the thistle* declared:

⁶ THE WOMAN IN WHITE. 1860. *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, 10(252), pp. 249-250.

⁷ The Woman in White. 1860. *Examiner*, (2744), pp. 549.

Miss Braddon has long had a reputation which the incidents and construction of the present novel are likely to increase. From the first to last the reader is well entertained, and her curiosity kept alive by the march of events. (RST, 1862: 82)⁸

Here again there is praise for good story-telling, entertainment and ability to keep readers' interest alive but, significantly, no indication that her novel has any deeper and more significant artistic merit.

Another comment from *The Athenaeum* described *Lady Audley's Secret* in such favourable terms that the reviewer might have been describing a standard domestic realist novel. *The Athenaeum*, a popular middle class magazine catering for an eclectic mix of interests, in October 1862, described the novel as a paradigm of acceptable fiction. Ideologically balanced and unthreatening, in the reviewer's opinion, the novel entailed sufficient utility for a man and abundant sentiment for a woman. The article even suggested that Braddon's novel ultimately upheld ideological positions. The reviewer noted, accepted and confirmed perceived ideological gender differences which were exemplified in male and female readings of the same novel:

It is, in fact, just the sort of book to be read by everybody, – not too sentimental for a man's requirements, nor too useful for a woman's; having no end of plots and conspiracies for those who like plots, and plenty of light, easy, agreeable conversation for those who do not. The descriptions of scenery are excellent, and discrimination is displayed in the delineation of even the minor characters. There is a secret to be found out, and everybody is to be made happy and comfortable – after justice has been done. (ATH, 1862: 525)⁹

There is nothing here that suggests this novel was a serious or threatening attack on society as it was constituted at the time. The reviewer commented on pleasing aspects of the novel but revealed also an interest in the gendering of the book's appeal and its moral correctness showing awareness that

⁸ LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET. 1862. *The Rose, the shamrock, and the Thistle*, 2, pp. 82.

⁹ Lady Audley's a Secret. 1862. *The Athenaeum*, (1862), pp. 525-526.

there was more involved than just a satisfying story. Domestic realism, the prevalent form of the novel, was considered unthreatening.

Despite this type of comment, early reviews of sensation generally focus on a more basic literary assessment than a moral evaluation. Mrs Henry Wood's novel, *East Lynne*, was received with glowing affirmation. *The Athenaeum* declared, 'This is one of the best novels published for a season. The plot is interesting, intricate and well carried out; the characters are life-like and the writing simple and natural' (ATH, 1861: 473). Commenting on the same novel, the *Saturday Review* was cautiously generous in its praise for the three volumes declaring in a somewhat contradictory fashion:

This is a really good novel. It is not indeed a novel of much pretension, and it is unmistakably a novel of the second class. There is no wit in it, nor any powerful play of passion, nor any subtle analysis of character. It merely flows on with a good plot carefully worked out. [...] It is so interesting, that the interest begins with the beginning of the first volume, and ends with the end of the third. [...] It is because the plot of *East Lynne* is so good that it rises to the height which it attains.

(SR, 1862: 186-7)¹⁰

There is no condemnation or moral outrage here against this novel which raises important domestic issues, such as the restrictive confinement of domesticity and the reviewer consistently praises Mrs Wood's skilful plot construction and storytelling. Such positive and affirmative comment for sensation fiction was to change dramatically.

Anti-sensation reviews, cultural and class anxiety

Reaction to this new type of exciting fiction, typified in the examples cited above, was positive at first but eventually provoked a strong reactionary outburst from many critics. Such a powerful reaction, found in conservative or liberal leaning review magazines like the *London*

¹⁰ EAST LYNNE. 1862. *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, 13(329), pp. 186-187.

Review and heavyweight, intellectual quarterlies such as the *Quarterly Review* and the *Westminster Review*, was symptomatic of what Lovell describes as ‘The moral panic [...] which occurred whenever a new cultural commodity made its debut’ (1987: 8). The threat, unease and impulse to restrict the effect caused by these new novels eventually resulted in vitriolic outbursts against the genre and even personal acrimony in critical reviews.

Critical opposition to sensation fiction, evidenced below, highlighted topical issues, particularly ideological questions of gender, class and race which surfaced in the debate carried on in the periodical press. What followed in the ensuing decade and beyond was a conspicuous dichotomy between readers and reviewers. Reviewers seemed to be trying to exercise some form of censure against sensation fiction. In the complexity of issues which created fierce arguments, largely conducted in the periodical press, critical outrage appeared to be an attempted containment of the genre. It was also an attempt to reinforce ideological values which were increasingly being questioned, particularly those centring on issues of gender. Liggins and Duffy suggest that nineteenth-century reviewers, ‘often prove very helpful to modern critics, revealing the subversive dynamics of popular genres while condemning them’ (2001: xx). Concomitant with this view is the idea that reviewers’ critical remarks also pointed out some of the very features that made sensation fiction popular and possibly helped to recruit readers to the genre. Reader enthusiasm for sensation fiction, despite the carping criticism of reviews, was undiminished for many years and this inescapably prompts questions about why there was such resistance to critical authority. Readers’ reaction to sensation fiction was frequently depicted as macabre and unnatural. A reviewer in *The Critic* describes writers ‘pandering to feed these morbid tendencies’ (TC, 1862: 178)¹¹ and the *Westminster Review* suggests that ‘the Sensational Mania in literature burst[s] out only in times of mental poverty.’ (WR, 1866: 270)¹² Readers’ passionate enthusiasm for the genre was a more understandable reaction than that of critics who had an ideological agenda to pursue.

¹¹ LADY AUDLEY’S SECRET. 1862. *The Critic*, 25(631), pp. 178-179.

As remarked above the anti-sensation rage was addressed to several aspects of such writing that were considered of questionable suitability for readers. Some articles urged readers to renounce sensation novels altogether and often did so with a startling vehemence. A random perusal of articles about sensation fiction readily generates an abundance of negative comments. Just two years after the appearance of the genre *St. James's Magazine* declares, 'We are weary of this unwholesome excitement in any form but in literature it has become intolerable'(St.JM, 1862: 345)¹³. The complaint against objectionable thrills provoked by sensation here begins to take on a moral tone. *The Christian Remembrancer*, apologising to its readers for straying from its usual agenda, complains that sensation fiction:

stimulates a vulgar curiosity, weakens the established rules of right and wrong, touches, to say the least, upon things illicit, raises false and vain expectations, and draws a wholly false picture of life. (CR, 1863, 46: 236)¹⁴

This review leaves no doubt that sensation is considered to be morally reprehensible and suggests that it is deliberately attempting to persuade readers into certain viewpoints which it considers to be irregular.

Other complaints attack sensation for its poor quality and unsuitability on class grounds, 'readers will find stories not one whit worse [...] in the Newgate Calendar' (LR: 482).¹⁵ They reject it for its appeal to a lower order of intellect, 'the Sensational Mania in literature burst[s] out only in time of mental poverty and afflict[s] only the most poverty stricken minds' (WR, 1866: 270)¹⁶. The condemnation here is class based and hinges on the threat of moral degradation by sensation fiction which is, by inference, suitable only for a lower class of readers. There were also fears of a cultural

¹² BELLES LETTRES. 1866. *Westminster review, Jan.1852-Jan.1914*, **30**(1), pp. 268-280.

¹³ PHILOSOPHY OF "SENSATION.". 1862. *The St.James's magazine*, pp. 340-346.

¹⁴ ART. VII.-1. Lost and Saved. 1863. *The Christian remembrancer*, **46**(121), pp. 209-236.

¹⁵ Newgate novels and their criminal content were considered only suitable for lower classes of readers. Linking them to sensation suggested the fear of infiltration of alien codes of behaviour and culture into the middle classes.

¹⁶ BELLES LETTRES. 1866. *Westminster review, Jan.1852-Jan.1914*, **30**(1), pp. 268-280.

crisis in which aesthetic quality and creativity was being replaced by a distinct phase of mental poverty in the country. Anxiety and fear permeate such criticism. Sensation fiction's ability to attract a cross-section of the reading public, both male and female, upper-class and lower, distorted what to many reviewers was the natural order of things where higher class was somehow equated with high culture. The sheer excitement of compelling plots may have distracted readers but critics were alert to moral dangers.

Considerable attention was given to a perceived lack of moral standards in a variety of sensation fiction. Rhoda Broughton's *Cometh Up As A Flower* (1867), discussed below, received fiercely antagonistic reviews because of its excessive sexuality. A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* declared:

Of good feeling, or ordinary good principle, there is not a trace. There is a sensual sentimentality, self-indulgent emotion, a morbid scepticism, with dashes of equally morbid religious emotion. Of all true love or noble sentiment the story is destitute. (ATH, 1867: 515)¹⁷

It is hugely ironic that the writer, later in this review, mistakenly attributes the novel to a male author obviously unable to believe that a young woman would be capable of such explicit writing. In Tinsley's magazine a review in the guise of a letter from an aunt to a niece describes at length the pitfalls of too much sensation reading. Aunt Anastasia remarks to her niece:

The fact is my dear niece, you are always half-drunk, in the sense of moral intoxication, and that too on the coarsest and most injurious kind of intoxicating literary liquor [...] There is nothing brilliant, fervent, poetical in this kind of intoxication; it has the brutalising effect of dram-drinking; one of its speediest results is the destruction of the intellectual appetite and digestion. (TM, 1867: 310)¹⁸

¹⁷ *Cometh up as a Flower: an Autobiography*. 1867. *The Athenaeum*, (2060), pp. 514-515.

¹⁸ *Anastasia Tinsley's Magazine, 1867-1892* 1 (Oct 1867): 308-316

The reviewer here resorts to metaphors of intoxication and addiction to liquor to describe her anxieties that sensation fiction dulls the cultural and aesthetic tastes and in so doing perverts her niece's ability to make sound moral judgement. Anxieties about sensation gave reviewers an opportunity to reflect on wider problems which they associated with reading.

Reading for pleasure or politics?

The emergence of sensation fiction unsettled, challenged and in some ways confirmed accepted views about the nature of fiction and of reading and its purpose and dangerous potential. As Lyn Pykett indicates in her introduction to *The Doctor's Wife* reading, and particularly women's reading, was often credited with making a woman, 'emotionally vulnerable and dissatisfied with ordinary domestic duties and her everyday life' (1998: xiv). Reading as a cohesive or divisive force was one of the primary concerns of many commentators. Kelly J. Mays states, 'Lectures and books, as well as the pages of periodicals, were devoted to answering the questions of how, why and what readers were and should be reading.' (Eds. Jordan and Patten, 1995: 165). The potential for sensation fiction to disrupt stable social norms eventually became seen as correspondent with these misgivings about reading.

Concerns about reading are examined with reference to sensation fiction. The failure of this attempt to control popular reading and effectively censure novel production prefigured late-century debates on reading which Mays also describes as an attempt, 'to define or "fabricate" a single healthy practice for middle-class readers' (166). As questions of for whom sensation novels were written and who should be reading them surfaced it became clear that ideological issues were a primary concern in the discourse surrounding sensation fiction. In an age of technology the whole gamut of publishing – writer, reader and production – was changing, and the discourse surrounding sensation fiction offered an opportunity to disseminate ideological attitudes. Issues such as serialisation appear, on the surface, to be concerned with practical production but a closer analysis

shows they were deeply embedded in questions about cultural approval, although eager and enthusiastic readers would not have been troubled by such concerns.

Despite critical objections readers were not discouraged. For example, critics objected hugely to what they saw as the persistent and overshadowing crime content of sensation fiction. Margaret Oliphant, despite much praise for *The Woman In White*, somewhat cautiously remarked that ‘Wilkie Collins [...] has given a new impulse to a kind of literature which must, more or less, find its inspiration in crime, and, more or less, make the criminal its hero’(BEM, 1862: 568).¹⁹ Another critic declared, ‘nothing is requisite to make a novel save a crime. It does not matter greatly what the crime may be – forgery, robbery, arson, murder – anything will do’ (TLR, 1862: 481).²⁰ These reviewers were alarmed by the proliferation of the crime content of sensation novels but such alarm and disapproval did little to subdue enthusiasm for sensation fiction. Negative reviews can simply work to encourage an interest and reader reaction was undeniably positive for periodicals and their content of serialised fiction and for cheaper editions often available at railway station bookstalls.

Readers were emphatic in their support, assiduously purchasing periodical numbers, three volume editions and cheaper reprints of the complete novels although it should be stressed that all books were expensive to purchase. Bachman and Cox talk about readers returning to purchase the next copy of *All The Year Round* which serialised *The Woman In White*, ‘And return they did. According to some estimates, the circulation of *All The Year Round* soared to as high as 100,000 copies a week, far surpassing the circulation of the periodical when Dickens’s own novel *A Tale Of Two Cities* was the featured work of fiction’ (2006:11). There are anecdotal tales recounted of commercial entrepreneurship linked to the *Woman In White* but it is the remarkable success of its sales which emphasises its popular triumph:

¹⁹ SENSATION NOVELS. 1862. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 91(559), pp. 564-584.

²⁰ THE LAST SENSATION NOVEL. 1862. *The London review and weekly journal of politics, society, literature and art*, Aug.16-Dec.27, 1862, 5(126), pp. 481-482.

Sampson Low's first printing of 1,000 copies of the expensive three volume edition (31s 6d) sold out on publication day, and a further 1,350 copies were sold during the following week [...] An initial print run of 10,000 copies was scheduled for the 'cheap edition' (in one volume, at 6s) in April 1861, with an expectation of 50,000 sales before the even cheaper editions at 2s (and less) were put into production. (Sutherland, 2008: 654)

Hughes and Pykett both remark on the dramatic and meteoric rise of sensation fiction. Hughes (calls it, 'a phenomenon, something in the nature of a travelling-circus exhibition – prodigious, exciting and agreeably grotesque' (1980: 5) and Pykett refers to 'a mushroom growth, a new kind of fiction which appeared from nowhere to satisfy the cravings of an eager and expanding reading public' (1994: 2-3). Whether or not this is overstating the effect of these new fictions there was no doubt that they created considerable interest in both critics and readers.

Edmund Yates, a popular sensation author in his day, and the major focus of the latter part of this study, first emerges in Margaret Oliphant's 1867 article considered below. He is an author nowadays very much at the periphery of the sensation genre with little said about him in recent criticism and little published about him apart from details of his life and work in P. D. Edwards's (1997) *Dickens's "young men": George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, and the world of Victorian journalism* and a chapter by Andrew Radford in *A Companion To Sensation Fiction* (Ed, Gilbert, 2011). The late-twentieth-century critical reevaluation of writers such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins and the recovery of other sensation writers has studiously ignored Yates. The neglect of Yates does lead to opportunities for inquiry into other areas, particularly masculinities and sensation fiction, which has been largely unexplored. My work develops the discussion of these areas in the following two chapters of this thesis.

Reading was always a contentious issue and negative attitudes to novel reading persisted for many years both before and after sensation novels arrived. Censure of what was on offer for readers was therefore not a new phenomenon. The inception of a new genre, though, soon provided alert

critics with ample scope for disapproving attacks. Such appraisals which began to proliferate in print were less interested in the genre as a literary form than its potential to destabilise social norms. Critics' interest and anxiety about the ideological effect of sensation rather than its formal aesthetic appeal was anxiety about maintaining class distinctions. In such a view popular culture corresponded to the base needs of the lower classes. The upper classes considered themselves more appreciative of the aesthetic qualities of literature. Reviewers took on a disciplinarian role attempting to police what the ever growing audience were reading and the ideology they were exposed to.

Two critical articles in particular form the basis of my investigation here. These articles are discussed at length as representative of reviews of sensation fiction which reveal objectives at some remove from discussion of literary quality. They show how critics used review articles as political platforms from which to voice opinion on moral and social issues. The first article is W. Fraser Rae's 1865 review article in *The North British Review*, 'Sensation Novelists: Miss Braddon'.²¹ The second is Margaret Oliphant's 1867 article 'Novels'²² in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* which caused a 'skirmish' in the periodical press although this was almost certainly deliberately prolonged to attract readers. Personalities encroached into the periodical world and this is a reference to Braddon's response to critical attacks in *Blackwoods* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Solveig Robinson's information on the event suggests that Braddon was also motivated by an on-going dispute between her husband, the publisher John Maxwell, and Frederick Greenwood, part owner of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Oliphant's article, chosen here, shows that both male and female reviewers opposed challenges to gender norms. Female opposition to sensation fiction was never quite what it seemed and has to be considered with regard to recent reassessment of antifeminist standpoints such as those explored in *Antifeminism and The Victorian Novel: Rereading Nineteenth Century Women Writers* (Wagner, 2009). Although I have called the outcry against sensation fiction a rage, critics

²¹ ART. VI.-1. Lady Audley's Secret. 1865. *The North British review*, 43(85), pp. 180-204.

²² NOVELS. 1867. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 102(623), pp. 257-280.

were keen to appear even-handed in their approach and a prime example is to be found in Rae's article from the *North British Review* in September 1865.

W. Fraser Rae, author and journalist, wrote a lengthy review of seven novels by M. E. Braddon. Although a minor literary figure of the period, his article is outspoken and is mainly remembered for his judgement on the way sensation fiction was crossing class barriers and corrupting the middle classes. It is, in fact, partly the contemporaneous 'moral panic' around sensation that defines the modern canon of sensation fiction.²³ This article reveals how critics could use what was essentially claimed to be a literary review to make wider statements on other issues, some of which are deeply entrenched in a moral outlook. Rae took great pains to point out that his critical review was objective and fair. It is a judgement, he reassures readers, that is based on the results of a test. There is a suggestion here of respect for the authority of scientific methods in his use of 'test'. In particular, he describes it as a test that is the application of, 'a purely literary standard' (Rae, 1865: 181) as if all other considerations had been put to one side. The objectivity and fairness he claims for his review article had, however, already been compromised in his earlier introductory paragraphs when he deliberately interweaves several discourses in a disdainful attack on Mary Braddon. This attack on Braddon can also be seen as an attack on the sensation genre. Rae's thinly disguised censure of the author and sensation typifies a critical approach which is actually rooted in the method he asserts that he has set aside: 'We shall purposely avoid applying a moral test to these productions' (181) he declares. Morality pervades the article as will be seen in the analysis which follows.

Rae applies a double standard approach to commercialism and art. He criticises the association of success with art and continually sneers at the commodity status of novels which have become, 'productions' and 'product' and 'issued from the press' (180-1). Serialisation, another industrial process as Rae sees it, is condemned: 'month after month she produces instalments of new novels' (180). Such is the mass output of fiction that Rae, acknowledging his own professional

²³ 'Class and Social (Im-)Propriety' in Radford (2009) provides a detailed analysis of cultural and class anxieties circulating in the 1860s around the rapid growth and popularity of Sensation Fiction.

position and expertise, suggests that readers may, 'have neither time nor inclination to peruse all the shilling monthly magazines, or the novels reprinted from them' (181). The inference is that readers would be better leaving judgmental issues to those who know best, for example the literary critics. Commercial haste and production which demeans the status of literature is further emphasised in Rae's remarks which draw attention to the agonising creative suffering of the 'true' artist. Scathingly, he tells the reader, 'Miss Braddon cannot reasonably complain that, in her case, striving merit has been suffered to pine and fret unheeded' (180). Here he conjures up a traditional and masculine view of artistic toil to produce great works of art. Men were traditionally associated with achievement in many areas. As Susan Casteras states 'powerful men [...] made events happen and [...] achieved unique status in the arts and other fields of endeavour, especially invention and exploration' (Shires, 1992: 116). What is at stake, he suggests, is not a struggle for artistic integrity but the promise that 'the magazine to which she contributes is almost certain to have a large circulation, and to enrich its fortunate proprietors' (Rae, 1865: 180). Not only does Braddon receive strong criticism but readers, often unwittingly, Rae suggests, are complicit in a lowering of standards in their association with such blatantly commercial enterprises, which he also attacks for their devaluation of realistic fiction.

Rae uses journalistic acuity both to criticise readers in general and at the same time to give his own readers a chance to disassociate themselves from those who eagerly buy and read sensation. For him readers are in many ways an homogenous, undifferentiated body which he variously calls, 'countless readers', 'the reading public,' and 'the unthinking crowd' (180). Cleverly, though, he allows his own readers the chance to align themselves with himself and those readers he describes as 'the reflecting reader' and 'the discriminating reader' (187). Rae suggests that sensation fiction and its authors are linked to a deliberate attempt to undermine and devalue the status of realist fiction. The language of mystique and magic is invoked to suggest that sensation fiction is deliberately delusive, confusing and unreal, especially to the general reader who has been

'bewitched' (180) and, Rae suggests, even to the critic who cannot comprehend its appeal and success.

Frequently, in his review, Rae resorts to comparisons of the highpoints of realism and the low quality of sensation fiction for which he uses Braddon's own character Sigismund Smith from *The Doctor's Wife* as an example of a writer whose stories are 'published in penny numbers' (197) and caustically suggests, 'To Miss Braddon belongs the credit of having penned similar stories in easy and correct English, and published them in three volumes in place of issuing them in penny numbers' (204). As Radford (2009), suggests, Rae's attack on sensation fiction is, despite his choice of 'tests', 'essentially a moral one' (2009: 16) and he continues, referring to Rae's condemnation of Braddon's unrealistic picture of life:

At stake here is the preservation of the fictional illusion, so dear to the realist reviewers, presupposing grand laws that operate to ensure the order and significance of 'life-as-it-is.' [...] For these hostile witnesses to the sensation phenomenon, 'truth' and 'human nature' are constants; not only do they have an objective existence that can be scrutinized minutely and imitated by artists, they also obey certain innate principles, predictable and immutable. The 'fault' of sensation fiction, as Rae sees it, is to undermine the prevailing Victorian worldview, irresponsibly tampering with the perception of 'reality' and so recalibrating its traditional meaning. (16)

Major threats to Rae's and society's perception of order are the way sensation fiction may disrupt traditional, dominant, and 'natural' organisations of gender and class and this so called 'moral free' test of sensation fiction hinges very much on the writer's efforts to underpin the status quo by belittling not only the literary quality of sensation fiction but particularly its lack of moral authority. Rae emphasises that, 'From a lady novelist we naturally expect to have portraits of women which shall not be wholly untrue to nature' (Rae, 1865: 189). Rae shows how Braddon and sensationalists contravene and flout 'natural' laws which determine gender specific roles for men and women. This may have been quite worrying to readers in the context of the contemporary outcry against

sensation. Some readers may have paid heed to critical warnings and comments but equally such comments may have worked to attract readers.

For Rae, and for many reviewers, the portrayal of women in sensation novels highlights both the weakness of character portrayal in such novels and, typically, in citing the *'unnatural'* behaviour of such women, he attempts to expose the writers as having no concept of what is proper and therefore moral in the way women are shown to act. Rae contends that Lady Audley is an impossible figure: 'at once the heroine and the monstrosity of the novel [...] a woman cannot fill such a part' (186). Again he shows his skill by condemning what he sees as unreal creations of women (the monstrosity) while at the same time ignoring any justified complaints women may have about the restrictions society imposes on them and subtly implying praise for woman as a being held sacrosanct (the heroine) by society, albeit a male-dominated society. Aurora Floyd's behaviour when she horsewhips a servant provides another example for Rae of the sort of unnatural behaviour associated with the lower classes. It is so foreign to Rae's perception of natural conduct in women that he is almost unable to comprehend its depiction in a novel: 'we are certain that, except in this novel, no lady possessing the education and occupying the position of Aurora Floyd could have acted as she is represented to have done' (190) he complains. The incredulity that Rae's experience of this novel has provoked is almost tangible and reflects the genuine anxiety felt by reviewers that cultural norms and expectations were under such virulent attack.

In a final flourish to his article Rae emphasises class issues at the heart of his moral objections. Leaving his readers again feeling uncomfortable if they can be associated with those who have found sensation fiction acceptable, he manages to equate class and intelligence and shrewdly insinuates a moral responsibility of a better class of readers to disassociate themselves from sensation fiction, stating that, 'the class that welcomed them was the lowest in the social scale, as well as in mental capacity' (204). Rae accuses Braddon of glorifying crime and criminals to rouse class antagonism, and has to concede that his attempt to simply use impartial literary judgement has failed, 'the impartial critic is compelled, as it were, to unite with the moralist in

regarding them as mischievous in their tendency, and as one of the abominations of the age' (203). In many ways this lengthy article with its indisputably gendered, class and moral response to sensation fiction typifies review articles in the periodical press such as 'The Popular Novels Of The Year' (Anon., 1863)²⁴ and Art, VII, Lost and Saved (Anon., 1863).²⁵ The article shows that while purporting to be a 'fair' critique it was an attack on the genre and a persistent support for maintaining dominant ideological perceptions of how society should be organised.

The analysis which follows of Margaret Oliphant's article of 1867 shows she supported dominant ideological positions. In her attacks on transgression in sensation Oliphant overlooks moral violations by men which I later refer to as trespass but not in terms of mere villainy. In my separation of transgression and trespass, which is used in the analysis of Edmund Yates's sensation fiction, trespass refers to the deliberate breach and evasion of moral codes. Oliphant refers to Edmund Yates in her article. Although virtually ignored today, Oliphant's inclusion of Yates shows he was considered prominent enough, in the literary field of sensation, to warrant comment by one of the leading critics of the day.

Oliphant's article, 'Novels,' for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in September 1867 was direct and forthright in its condemnation of sensation fiction. Its frequent references and inferences to female sexuality was a topic which she thought was sensation fiction's unmistakably evil influence. Oliphant, assured in her views, eventually calls her article a sermon using 'we' and 'our' to reference support from her editorial authority and to emphasise that these views are not hers alone. The article, outspoken and critical in tone, raised some of the issues Rae touched on but her main argument centred on the moral status of sensation fiction particularly with regard to its degrading influence on women readers. She harked back to a time, which she said had passed, when literature posed no moral threat to readers because novels were not considered the right and proper

²⁴THE POPULAR NOVELS OF THE YEAR. 1863. *Fraser's magazine for town and country, 1830-1869*, 68(404), pp. 253-269.

²⁵ART. VII.-1. Lost and Saved. 1863. *The Christian Remembrancer*, 46(121), pp. 209-236.

place, 'in which the darker problems of the time can be fitly discussed'(257). She lamented changes to novels:

The novel which is the favourite reading of the young – which is one of the chief amusements of all secluded and suffering people – which is precious to women and unoccupied persons – has been kept by this understanding, or by a natural impulse better than any understanding, to a great degree pure from all noxious topics [...] For there can be no doubt that a singular change has passed upon our light literature.

(257-8)

Oliphant carefully naturalises the inherent capacity of literate women to sanctify their choice of reading leading up to an attack on her perceived problem of lowered standards in available reading matter.

Before she fully engaged with her censure of immorality in sensation fiction Oliphant added comments on the broader cultural debasement of literature. Although she does not specifically mention the publishing industry and the commodification of literature she perceived a lowering of standards in, 'the flood of contemporary story-telling' (258). She suggests it may not be a passing phenomenon because sensation writers 'have taken, as it would seem, permanent possession of all the lower strata of light literature' (258). Her disdain for such writers is evidenced by the labels she placed on their work. In her eyes they were 'story-telling' and simply writing 'tales' (258) and, warming to her attack on immorality, she labelled their creators 'Writers who have no genius and little talent' and 'make up for it by displaying their acquaintance with the accessories and surroundings of vice, with the means of seduction, and with what they set forth as the secret tendencies of the heart' (258-9). Her primary concern is voiced here; her direct attack is on writers who, in her opinion, attempt to galvanise and vitalise mediocre work in an immoral way. First and foremost in her line of attack are women as both producers and consumers. It is perhaps worth noting here that recent moves to reassess antifeminist women writers have made some

accommodation for Oliphant's views²⁶ but the tone of this article could leave readers in no doubt where her opinions on female sexuality lay.

At this point in her assault on the dubious moral foundation of sensation fiction Oliphant eloquently, passionately and it could be said even sensationally vents her outrage on a view of women obsessed with sex:

What is held up to us as the story of the feminine soul as it really exists underneath its conventional coverings, is a very fleshly and unlovely record. Women driven wild with love for the man who leads them on to desperation before he accords that word of encouragement which carries them into seventh heaven; women who marry their grooms in fits of sensual passion; women who pray their lovers to carry them off from husbands and homes they hate; women who give and receive burning kisses and frantic embraces, and live in a voluptuous dream, either waiting for or brooding over the inevitable lover, – such are the heroines who have been imported into modern fiction. (259)

The heroines Oliphant describes and deplores here are possible fictional role models such as Aurora Floyd, Margaret Dacre and Nell Lestrangle whom she fears will have a ruinous effect on young women. Her own anger and outrage expressed so dramatically only make the narratives she censures sound more attractive. She is disturbed that contemporary popular literature suggests or implies that it is becoming acceptable for young women and women writers to admit to having physical feelings and even to describe them in literature which primarily, she suggests, is aimed at an unsuspecting, immature audience of young women:

were the sketch made from the man's point of view, its openness would at least be less repulsive. The peculiarity of it in England is, that it is oftenest made from the woman's side – that it is women who describe those sensuous raptures – that this

²⁶ Wagner, T.S., Ed. (2009) *Anti-feminism and the Victorian Novel* Amherst: Cambria Press. The section on Margaret Oliphant examines the continuing dispute over the depth of her conservative/radical views of women. The volume examines hard and fast categorisation.

intense appreciation of flesh and blood, this eagerness of physical sensation, is represented as the natural sentiment of English girls, and is offered to them not only as the portrait of their own state of mind, but as their amusement and mental food [...] that the books which contain it circulate everywhere, and are read everywhere, and are not contradicted – then the case becomes much more serious. (259)

Oliphant persistently repeats her objections, qualifying her opinions with some diplomacy: 'Most of our neighbours, we know, are very good sort of people [...] The girls of our acquaintance in general are very nice girls; they do not [...] pant for indiscriminate kisses, or go mad for unattainable young men' (Oliphant, 1867: 260). At this point Oliphant's comments lead her naturally into questions of responsibility for the situation that has given rise to such literature and her immediate reaction is to round upon women writers who, she suggests, have no idea themselves of what constitutes 'proper' behaviour:

It is thus that Miss Braddon and Miss Thomas, and a host of other writers, explain their feelings. These ladies might not know, it is quite possible, any better. They might not be aware how young women of good blood and good training feel. (260)

Personal invective is used here to support her argument that such writers encouraged and exploited what she saw as an unnatural interest in sexuality. In her references to 'blood' and 'training' Oliphant demarcates a class barrier she establishes between herself, young ladies and writers like Braddon with too much worldly experience²⁷.

Oliphant attempts to reiterate the seriousness of the moral threat she sees looming for the young women of the country even suggesting that 'we will, of course, according to our natural English course of action, take tardy measures of precaution' (260) by which time, she insinuates, the damage to moral decency will be done. Making her feelings against sensation novels powerfully obvious, despite her own foray into the genre's style in *Salem Chapel* (1863), Oliphant variously

²⁷ Mary Braddon's personal life was well known. Her theatrical background and 'affair' with Robert Maxwell, a married man, were talking points.

describes them as displaying a ‘very small amount of literary skill’. She calls them by inference ‘wicked’ and their content, ‘the vilest topics’ (261) and proceeds to attack the novels of several authors. Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, Ouida, Edmund Yates, and Annie Thomas are her targets. Radford identifies her critical emphasis in the moral nature of the attacks. He says:

At the core of all these attacks, pinpointed by Margaret Oliphant, was woman’s ‘one duty of invaluable importance to her country and her race which cannot be overestimated – and that is the duty of being pure. There is perhaps nothing of such vital consequence to a nation.’ If Oliphant’s ideal middle-class family is rooted in the cornerstone of womanly purity, then the equivocal and imprudent protagonists of the sensation novel not only compromise the worthy practice of reading fiction generally, but also scoff at the entire moral and social fabric of mid-Victorian Britain. (2009: 70)

It is precisely such ‘compromises’ and ‘scoffing’ that Oliphant feels so passionately about when she protests that, ‘this new and disgusting picture of what professes to be the female heart [...] is not in any way to be laughed at’ (Oliphant, 1867: 260). Reactions to her article, also in the periodical press, help to situate Oliphant’s strident comments within the sensation debate – a topical concern in the publishing world.

Although rejoinders to Oliphant’s ‘sermon’ are not numerous they provide varied and interesting reactions to her strident views. They demonstrate, manifestly, how the authoritative periodical press was one of the chief means through which topical debate functioned in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Today radio, television and the internet provide opportunities for airing views but this is an immediate capacity for response and reaction often in tandem with other listeners or viewers. Contemporary nineteenth century responses also raise questions about partisan interests and hidden agendas. Such intense and theatrical responses may have been a ploy to sell magazines or to keep up an interest in, and the sales potential of sensation novels. A critic like Margaret Oliphant probably had in mind her own agenda as an author. She was in the process of

publishing her *Chronicles of Carlingford* (1862-5) during the early success of sensation fiction. As remarked above, she uses sensation fiction as a point of reference for some incidents in *Salem Chapel*. The critic, Heather Milton (2009), argues that Oliphant's novel provides for women's, 'significant managerial roles in determining the financial, social and political future of the bourgeois family' (Ed. Wagner, 2009:211). This might seem rather inadequate and unconvincing considered against her powerful criticism of the ideology of sensation fiction where greater legal and moral rights were the objective of transgressive action. She was convinced that women's greatest powerful influence came from within the family. In her view transgressive women were making a grave mistake and undermining the legitimate authority of bourgeois women.

The London Review published an article in its 14th September edition 1867 entitled 'A Sermon Upon Novels'. The main thrust of this piece, while unenthusiastically in basic agreement with Oliphant, nevertheless takes her to task on issues of morality and the effect of reading. Recognising the moral 'alarm' raised by sensation this response concludes that the writer of the original review, here taken as a man, is too concerned. The writer here, unlike Oliphant, credits the reading public, especially women, with enough discernment not to be influenced and corrupted by such novels and criticises Oliphant saying, 'He lays too much stress [...] over the public morality [...] was there ever a woman ruined by perusal of one of these fiction-mongers who would not have ruined herself without him or her (LR, 1867: 293)?²⁸ The critic suggests that readers should simply be left to make their own choices and not be dictated to by moralising critics.

Uncompromising in his description of sensation novelists the writer nevertheless recognises that the threat is exaggerated and overdone. He suggests such 'spasms of terror are useful in their way. They compel an inquisitiveness into things that might otherwise suffer from neglect' (294), and adds also, 'At the same time they sometimes make great fools of us' (294). There is a suggestion throughout the article that this is an area that has been visited before, and that Oliphant is

²⁸ A SERMON UPON NOVELS. 1867. *The London review of politics, society, literature, art, and science*, 15(376), pp. 293-294.

merely raking up old concerns and that while labouring her point about a moral threat, which is somewhat exaggerated, offers no answer, 'It is a piece of declamation of which the point is not obvious. It indicates the bane, but it prescribes no antidote' (293). Eventually, the journalist here concludes that the answer lies in the hands of the astute reading public and with customary opportunism implies that the 'thoughtful public' (294) will of course be readers of *The London Review* and they will decide on the moral question by jettisoning sensation novels:

Let the public once determine to tolerate no more of such stuff as our contemporary decries, and we safely promise them that they'll get no more. Our catchpenny novelists deal in fair-haired women and over-spiced sentiments, simply because "they pay." (294)

Here the suggestion of commercial value to the reading public is only part of the answer as the journalist and his magazine proprietors, editors and staff realise they are all embroiled in a highly competitive market. A more passionate reaction was published the following month in a riposte by George Augustus Sala.

The background to Sala's reply has been comprehensively dealt with by Solveig Robinson (1995). Briefly, Sala seems to have been commissioned or willingly persuaded by Mary Braddon to write *The Cant Of Modern Criticism* published in *Belgravia* on 1 November 1867. Mary Braddon was the *Belgravia's* editor and Robinson cites evidence that she frequently encouraged her staff to represent her opinions. She would not have had to pressurise for Sala's cooperation too heavily in this case. Loquacious and experienced as he was, Sala took to his task with characteristic enthusiasm, turning all his journalistic talent to what Robinson describes as, 'the first volley in *Belgravia's* critical counter-attack [which] virtually demolished Oliphant's article'(1995: 115). Sala's rambling opening eventually leads to his statement of intent. Such a statement leaves no doubt about the strength of feeling generated in this literary altercation and professes a no-holds-barred approach as Sala rounds on the unknown critic:

I consider the paper in question – it is the first in the September number – to be eminently unjust, mischievous, and disingenuous, and that it exemplifies in a remarkably offensive degree the prevalence of the worst kind of cant, hypocrisy, and sophistry, as applied to literary criticism. An anonymous writer in *Blackwood* has thought it fit to preach a sermon on Novels; and, with the writer's kind permission, I will proceed to pick his sermon and himself to pieces; to rip him up and shake the bran and sawdust out of him and to make of his text a stirrup-leather, wherewith, Heaven willing, I will belabour him to my heart's content, if not to his own. (Sala, 1867: 47-48)²⁹

Robinson notes that this article by Sala and a further article, "On the 'Sensational' In Literature and Art" (*Belgravia*)³⁰ both deploy arguments to validate the position of sensation fiction in mainstream English literature. She emphasises that Sala, 'asserts the genre's legitimacy by showing that it derives from a long literary tradition that includes many of the nineteenth century's most important authors' (1995: 113). She also notes how Braddon positions the article within the context of her concerted defence of sensation fiction orchestrated by her as editor of *Belgravia*. Sala's use of links to literary tradition echoes the few voices previously raised in support of sensation fiction. Moral outrage, so central to critical condemnation in the reviews by critics like Oliphant, is downplayed in such articles.

A period of reflection, increasing publication of similar novels with recurring themes, the consolidation of genre status and widespread popularity across class denominations saw attitudes change towards sensation fiction resulting in such widespread attacks described above. Now the status of these novels had changed with reviewers and they were increasingly perceived as a threat. There were still few responses from writers of sensation. In hard financial terms they had no real

²⁹ SALA, G.A., 1867. THE CANT OF MODERN CRITICISM. *Belgravia : a London magazine*, 4, pp. 45-55.

³⁰ SALA, G.A., 1868. ON THE "SENSATIONAL" IN LITERATURE AND ART. *Belgravia : a London magazine*, 4, pp. 449-458.

need to respond as their books were selling well despite, or possibly because of, such sharp criticism. As criticism began to diversify, becoming more censorious with reviewers beginning to see the genre as an ideological threat, there were some, but not many attempts to support it. Support is manifest particularly in articles from *All The Year Round*, a cheap periodical which featured sensation fiction and where the tone is almost one of incredulity that such literature should cause a stir. Dickens's *All The Year Round* published two articles that hark back to traditional modes of narrative to sanction support for sensation fiction. It is more than apt that these articles, 'Not A New Sensation' (1863) and 'The Sensational Williams' (1864) should feature in a periodical which promoted serialised fiction, especially the sensational type. Both articles deprecate attempts to deride sensation fiction and to admonish their readers. In 'Not A New Sensation' readers are reminded of the days of intensely staged melodrama and gothic devices that, although sensational, were, 'with the public – so long as it has been a public [...] a constant taste' (AYR, 1863: 517)³¹. Although the writer strays into the realm of drama the connections are close and the point is made that reliance on these methods and their astounding, breath-taking and thrilling effects is not entirely new to the world of literature: 'such devices were popular years and years ago, and the dramatic "sensation," more or less modified, will always be with us' (517).

The melodramatic, literal and authentic appeal of sensation to corporeal reaction provided critics with other perspectives from which to attack sensation. Although pro-sensation critics argued that literature had always had an affective appeal, strong condemnation was attached to the sensation genre by other more censorious critics as a genre which was both addictive and diseased. Such objections are well rehearsed in recent years but it is interesting and noteworthy that the language and metaphorical rhetoric of original criticism is probably equally, if not more sensational and lurid than the novels it critiques. A small sample of such criticism illustrates the point. In his famous and lengthy analysis of sensation novels Henry Mansel, Dean of St Pauls, and therefore a

³¹ NOT A NEW "SENSATION.". 1863. *All the year round*, 9 (222), pp. 517-520.

voice for religious opinion, uses the following language at various points in his article, to denounce sensation's addictive appeal, 'corruption', 'cravings of a diseased appetite', 'stimulate', 'convulsive throes', and 'perpetual cravings' (Mansel, 1863: 482-5). Mansel later refers to 'something unspeakably disgusting in this ravenous appetite for carrion, this vulture-like instinct which smells out the newest mass of social corruption and hurries to devour the loathsome dainty before the scent has evaporated' (502). Such imagery of disease, corruption, sordid filth and addiction is a powerful indictment of sensation fiction. Excesses of indulgence, bestial taste and vulgarity were attributed to the lower classes and, although Mansel does not mention class, associations have been made from his words. This robust reaction to reading and popular culture reflects serious concerns about how such cultural innovations were affecting its middle-class participants.

Andrew Radford cites Mansel's criticism of sensation as, 'an index of a collective cultural nervous debility' (2009: 10). The fear was that reading materials such as sensation novels, suitable for the lower classes, were infiltrating upwards and becoming a threat both physically, mentally, culturally and ideologically, particularly to middle-class women writers and readers who were its main enthusiasts. Gilbert emphasises this gendered anxiety in *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* suggesting that:

"Sensation" became a thinly veiled literary euphemism for the action of disease upon the body: spurred on by economic and social anxieties, women's popular novels became re-presentations of the grotesque social body and critical discourse became the speculum with which to achieve surveillance and containment. (1997: 80-81)

Gilbert's own conspicuous and powerful reference to medical instruments here reminds present day critics of the continual pressure women were under to maintain standards of decorous conduct in all aspects of their lives and of the insidious presence of gendered and ideological vigilance over what was read in Victorian society. Such vigilance, manifest in the discourse surrounding reading, confronts the legitimacy of sensation on several fronts. Ultimately, these attacks are gender biased, indicating ideological concerns and an imperative to control and authorise reading, particularly

reading by women. Such efforts are combined in concerted attacks on serialisation of sensation novels, in anxieties about the genre's cheapening of culture, in efforts to privilege certain types of reading and readers, in the dangers of affect and in an overarching concern with gender. It becomes apparent in exploration of the burgeoning print culture of mid-nineteenth century that many complex and deeply interrelated questions arose and were linked to the appearance and development of distinctly alarming and hybrid genres such as sensation fiction.

References to means of production, that Mansel refers to as 'the manufactory' (Mansel, 1863: 483)³² are by association, in mid-Victorian times, a debasing force linking supply and demand and removing quality and therefore aesthetics from the equation. Also, as mentioned earlier, lurking behind references to serialisation in periodical articles is the suggestion that modern production has obviated the existence of a dedicated and striving artist for the sake of a formulaic output, constant demand and remuneration at a piece rate imitating industrial production. A lengthy article "The Popular Novels Of The Year" in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* sums up the problem in these terms:

One of the chief causes of this perverted and vitiated taste may be traced to the fact, that nearly every novel is first brought out in the pages of some periodical or magazine. [...] The reason why authors should vastly prefer writing for magazines is self-evident. They are paid and often exorbitantly paid, so much a page for their productions. The copyright probably remains in their own possession, and if the story has any merit at all, some publisher will then be found ready to offer a large sum for it. (FM, 1863: 262-3)³³

For critics the appeal of sensation fiction, described as: diseased, addictive, sexually perverse, and intellectually deficient, becomes their attempt to collapse its legitimacy as a viable, suitable and proper direction for the development of the novel and as a vehicle for recreational reading.

³² ART. VII.--1. Lady Audley's Secret. 1863. *The Quarterly review*, 113(226), pp. 481-514.

³³ THE POPULAR NOVELS OF THE YEAR. 1863. *Fraser's magazine for town and country, 1830-1869*, 68(404), pp. 253-269.

The novel as an authentic and valid art form was consistently being destabilised by its transgressive heroines and the distraction of moral disapproval for major protagonists. As previously remarked, evidence of actual reading practices and experiences is singularly lacking. Despite efforts to improve this situation by recent developments such as the Open University's Reading Experience Database (RED)³⁴ evidence remains sparse. Entries viewed had an anecdotal quality about them and consisted in several cases of simple reference to title and authors. This type of evidence would have been of little use in this thesis. The discourse on reading was constantly being drawn in different directions and was the subject of powerful, varied and contrary statements from many interested parties. Narrative experimentation, new techniques and emphases in sensation made the act of reading a more pro-active pursuit. Readers were often confronted by new demands on their perception of meaning in novels. Lyn Pykett refers to these demands, suggesting that narrative style involving the partial retreat of omniscient narrators and plot dependency and on, 'techniques of narrative concealment and delay or deferral' (1994: 5) placed greater responsibility on readers:

Whatever the technique adopted the result was the same: a modification, in some cases quite radical, of the omniscient narrator's role as the reader's guide, guardian and friend. Without this helping hand, and in the absence of all the facts of the case, the reader is left to make provisional moral judgements as the narrative unfolds. The result is a considerable degree of moral ambiguity. (5)

Here Pykett intimates that readers were being deliberately asked questions about the meaning and implications sensation novels had for them and for society at large, whereas domestic realism, with its readily defined, comfortable and unchallenging pattern of development encouraged and attempted to convince readers of the probity of the status quo.

³⁴ This database (1450-1945) is an on-going collection of data about the reading experience which is described on the website as, 'a recorded engagement with a written or printed text – beyond the mere fact of possession'. A full explanation of this project can be found online at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>

In sensation fiction readers were increasingly being asked to make choices rather than simply accept notional, authoritative prescription of what they should be reading. In sophisticated attempts by authors to appropriate their share of the market for novels, readers were subjected to deliberate attempts to affect their physical sensibilities by the authors' creation of thrilling somatic experiences that acted on their bodies; for example the sudden and unexpected appearance of the woman in white in the novel of that name. In attempts to discredit sensation such physiological reactions were designated dangerous and offensive. Andrew Radford sees attempts to focus on the somatic effects as a distraction. He describes Henry Mansel's attack, founded on metaphors of addiction as, 'a wilful misapprehension of the core themes and aims of sensation novelists' (12) and that '[i]n Mansel's opinion, writers such as Braddon and Collins merely assail "the nerves" of the "public"' (12).

Sensation writers' choice of proximate subject matter, their surprising, shocking and dramatic incident-packed novels provoked a multiplicity of reactions. Critics, who had been initially positively receptive to sensation later changed their opinions and joined the ranks of those who questioned the ideological direction of these novels. Fine lines of approval and disapproval were drawn by interested parties, many with more than a passing economic interest in the developing publishing industry. Without written testimony of readers of sensation opinion remains speculative but there is no reason for this not to have a reasoned and rational base. Karin Littau's (2006) *Theories of Reading, Books, Bodies and Bibliomania* offers some pertinent insights into the difficulty a genre such as sensation fiction poses for ideologically driven critics. It is worth quoting the passage at length:

To say that literature affects, and that reading is an affective experience, is very different from saying that literature has certain effects on our behaviour, can move or persuade a reader to take certain actions. In the broadest sense, one has to do with feeling and physical reaction, the other with persuasion and social action. One moves inward, the other outward. One is played out in the realm of private

sensations; the other manifests itself in public actions. While affect and effect worked in tandem in the rhetorical tradition of criticism, because both terms describe literature's ability to *move* its audience, a certain rift makes itself felt from the eighteenth century onwards between that which *affects* and that which has *effects*.

(2006: 89)

A fear of the effect sensation might have seems to be the overarching frame within which reviewers of the day attempted to contain the sensation genre. One author, Edmund Yates, principally a journalist, was drawn into writing sensation fiction almost accidentally. He attempted to moderate its effect and these attempts are the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter Four Edmund Yates

Recovering writers

In recent times the inventory of sensation writers has increased and it continues to grow as more writers who have faded from view are recovered and added to the list. Most of these are credible and creditable writers of sensation fiction. It should be noted that the very looseness and difficulty of strict generic definition of sensation has broadened the inclusivity of what are called sensation novels. Academic interest in exploring the fascination and unexplored depths of sensation fiction, so often written off as a sub-genre of transient impact, has seen a determined effort to recover writers whose work has faded from view in what Sutherland, in his *Companion to Victorian Fiction* (2009), variously calls the ‘subsoil’ and the ‘web’ of the vast amount of Victorian literature which has almost disappeared. Although Sutherland suggests that much of what is ‘lost’ is deservedly so the usefulness of recovered writers of sensation fiction outweighs what could have been their permanent loss. Examples of recovered writers such as Rhoda Broughton and Ouida have proliferated in recent years since the critical work of reappraising sensation fiction and its diverse and essential place in British literary history has become firmly established in the academy.

The object of this chapter is to consider the novels of Edmund Hodgson Yates, an erstwhile writer of sensation fiction who has slipped into an almost unknown status. Yates came into writing sensation almost by accident when a story was needed for *Temple Bar* which he edited but he proved adept enough to carry on writing during the 1860s and into the 1870s. Like many Victorian writers, Yates was eulogised on his death in 1894 and almost instantly forgotten afterwards. My intention is to show that by neglecting Yates’s place in the sensation genre criticism misses an important contribution to discussions of gender issues and to the ideological significance of sensation fiction. Discussion of the recovery of neglected writers and its importance to the sensation

project is followed by an examination of the work of Edmund Yates that shapes an approach to reading canonical sensation fiction in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Reasons for the recovery of sensation writers are worth considering in more detail. It is noticeable that in the field of sensation fiction, in recent years, works by women authors have formed the most prominent group deemed worthy of recovery. Some authors are often cited for one or two outstanding novels which are linked to the sensation school. Among lesser known writers who have been recovered by critics with an interest in sensation fiction and women's writing in general are Florence Marryat and Dora Russell. The proliferation of recovered works written by women emphasises a deliberate focus on gender issues. Harman and Meyer describe their choice of feminist readings in *The New Nineteenth Century Feminist Reading of Underread Victorian Novels* as partly due to the fact that, 'In addition to being frequently written by women, Victorian novels had an enormous female readership, and often focussed on the lives of – and thus the possible life choices open to – women' (1996: xxviii). Such women writers expounded the views of those nearest to what was actually happening. Finding neglected authors to promote and support feminist objectives is thus one major reason for such recovery.

Finding examples of subversive assaults on Victorian gender constructions no doubt helps to support and reinforce feminist arguments despite occasional problems of ambivalence and ambiguity. Feminist explorations of transgressive challenge have been prevalent but my research, as discussed in an analysis of Yates's novels, shifts into areas of what I describe as trespass. In the analysis of Yates's fiction I have identified a narrative construction based on masculinity and the idea of trespassing men as a prevalent strand of his fiction. In this chapter I discuss this feature of Yates's fiction and introduce a different view of gender issues particularly masculinity that was concurrent with sensation fiction associated with unorthodox women.

In an area that holds many possibilities for debate, reasons for recovery, apart from the major reasons indicated above, are quite varied. Significant among these are that the work is aesthetically commendable or more simply that it is worth reading. Recovery may only be

worthwhile if the texts have a particular relevance to the corpus of literature or thematic issues being discussed. Typically such work may have new relevance to political matters, to traditional ideas, to gender biases, to cultural interests and to new movements or particular literary movements that have gained increased and important recognition, for example, sensation fiction of the nineteenth century. In this study Edmund Yates's sensation fiction is seen to allow an opportunity to develop a different strand of investigation in which masculinities are the primary focus.

Although there were undoubtedly many concerns that affected women, masculinity was also at the centre of debates on gender issues. Masculinity is a concept which Tosh has called 'slippery' noting that, 'in the name of manliness Victorian men were urged to work, to pray, to stand up for their rights, to turn the other cheek, to sow wild oats, to be chaste and so on' (2005: 87). It must of course be reiterated that any investigation of masculinity cannot ignore femininity. Trespass is my way of describing errant masculine conduct and using it as distinct from transgression creates a useful trajectory for my analysis. Examining trespass, as I demonstrate, provides a useful method for critiquing masculinity which is often only temporarily assailable in sensation fiction before the status quo is restored.

The 'subversive argument' as Thompson (2000) calls it is not the only reason that can be advanced for the recovery of lost writers but it is a crucial reason in the case of sensation novelists. Thompson points out in her essay, *Lost Horizons: Rereading and Reclaiming Victorian Women Writers* that, 'Victorian women writers considered suitable candidates for critical rediscovery are usually those whose ideologies can be viewed as consistent with current feminist ideas or who can be interpreted as subversive in some way' (2002: 69). My research explores the fiction of Yates in terms of difference between transgression and trespass as a development of critical enquiry into sensation fiction. Janice Allan, introducing an edition of *Critical Survey* in July 2011 says:

The inequitable weighting of female over male authors reflects the on-going interest in women's sensation fiction but it is worth noting that several of the pieces suggest that the critical preoccupation with female characters, especially the female anti-

heroine, is beginning to give way to an exploration of sensationalism's representation of masculinity' (2011: 2).

Seeming to recognise the variety of opportunity sensation provides for such research Allan states, 'we are much more aware of the ideological complexities and contradictions that characterise the genre' (2). In my analysis of Yates's fiction I draw a distinction between transgression and what I have called trespass. The analysis of Yates's novels will refine this distinction which, in effect, seeks to reiterate that while transgression breaches ideological apathy, trespass breaches any class and any ideological framework. Transgression encompasses the possibility of liberatory implications but trespass, as I identify it in Yates's work, is unethical, immoral and simply wrong.

This chapter concentrates on the novels written by Edmund Yates during the period of the study's focus (1860-71). He is a writer whose work has almost disappeared but he was very much part of what was loosely called the sensation school in the mid-nineteenth century period. An article in *The Saturday Review* in 1867 described Yates as belonging to a 'school of novelists of which he is becoming a very conspicuous member and representative' (190)¹. In fact the whole review is fulsome in praise of the author. The reviewer draws a distinction between types of sensation novel suggesting there are forms more suitable, in their unrefined content, for the, 'cook and the knife-boy' (190) and others like *Black Sheep* (1867) by Edmund Yates that is described as, 'a good example of the more worthy sort of sensational art' (190). He qualifies the comment with more praise for Yates's industry, invention, patience and self-belief. It is interesting to note that this review was written just several weeks before Margaret Oliphant's indignant review of sensation – the third of her famous reviews of the genre in which Yates, while criticised, is not quite so badly treated as other writers. Praise for Yates, in this article, suggests that he was writing an acceptable type of sensation fiction. In terms of how he represented the type of dominant masculinity of which he approved in his novels, there can be little doubt why his work was described as 'worthy' by a

¹ *Black Sheep*. 1867. *Saturday Review of politics, literature, science and art*, 24(615), pp. 190-191.

contemporary reviewer. Although he adopted some of the formulaic content of sensation fiction, Yates displayed a comparatively conservative approach to his depiction of gender and this chimed well with mid-century reviewers who had reacted with consternation at perceived threats to traditional roles.

In a recent publication Yates was referred to as a writer who had suffered from ‘critical indifference’ (Ed. Gilbert, 2011: 321) despite the sustained critical interest in the sensation genre. Interest in the revival of sensation fiction has been of particular significance to feminist critics. In her introduction to *A Companion To Sensation Fiction* (2011) Gilbert says: ‘[t]his genre, dominated by women and viewed as transgressive, was quickly linked to the feminist concerns circulating broadly in the culture as well as being a precursor to the New Woman novels of the *fin de siècle*’ (2011: 6). Gilbert echoes Lyn Pykett’s depiction of these genres in which she says: ‘[b]oth the women’s sensation novel and the New Woman fiction registered and reacted to the unfixing of gender categories which accompanied the challenges of reformers and feminists (and the counter-challenges to them) from the 1840s onwards’ (Pykett, 1992: 10). The notion of challenge and resistance often seen in depictions of transgressive heroines and emphasised by critics such as Gilbert is relevant for this study and also its examination of Yates’s fiction. In this thesis I argue that Yates’s narrative organisation has made him less useful to a feminist approach. Although Yates adopted much of the fashion for sensation writing in his novels he departed from an emphasis on dominant, transgressive heroines. In terms of modern interest in the sensation genre which has been of central interest to feminist criticism Yates’s fiction is found lacking as a useful example. This is one of the major reasons why Yates has been almost totally ignored. In my examination of Yates as a sensation writer I show that disregard of him leads to a skewed view of gender issues in the mid-nineteenth century context. My examination of Yates’s fiction and its contemporary existence with those novels, which now form the modern canon of sensation fiction, clarifies perceptions of different ideologies that persist in the same genre and novels.

Although Yates came under the critical gaze of one of the period's most astute critics, Margaret Oliphant, he was able to write in the sensation genre and enjoy reasonable success as a novelist in his lifetime. At the same time he criticised faults he saw in society. It is useful to consider Yates as a sensation novelist scrutinised by Oliphant, a major critic of the time, in her familiar 1867 *Blackwood's* review in which she left no apparent doubt about her feelings on sensation fiction. It has to be stated that Oliphant's view can only be implied from a reading of the article and that her extravagant opinions may have been regulated by journalistic requirements. Oliphant's selection of Yates indicates that he was establishing a prominent reputation for his contribution to the literary culture of the period. The inclusion of Yates alongside other prominent female writers links Oliphant's association of him with a genre and with sympathy for transgressive views which were alerting critics to the threatening nature of sensation fiction.

Oliphant and Yates

Margaret Oliphant's 1867 critical assessment of sensation positions Yates within the broad context of the genre and reference to this significant article will help to establish a perception of his standing as a sensation writer. In Yates's novels I see his strategy as an emphasis on trespass. Transgression is the critical concept more often associated with sensation particularly in the person of wayward heroines such as Lady Audley, Madeleine Vanstone and Lydia Gwilt. Yates's handling of the genre suggests possible reasons for his exclusion from the canon of sensation fiction. He appears to control and contain the genre and thereby avoid the excessive and vitriolic criticism meted out to so many sensation writers; although he falls foul of Oliphant, she misses or chooses to ignore ideological significances in his work. The distinction between trespass and transgression is a narrow distinction and involves negotiation of class, economic and gender boundaries which are analysed in Yates's novels. In 1866 in a review of *Kissing The Rod* Yates was described as, 'the

compassionate defender of unhappy wives' (ATH, 1866: 828)² a comment which suggests he had a sympathetic approach to gender concerns and yet he has been omitted from most recent recovery work and critical analyses of the genre. Although Yates has what I call a sympathetic approach, his sympathy does not extend so far as a receptive acceptance and approach to transgression.

The familiar review *Novels* (1867) on sensation fiction by Margaret Oliphant, the third of a trio of reviews in the 1860s, mentioned Edmund Hodgson Yates. He was included in an acerbic attack on the sensation genre in *Novels* in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in September 1867 which included five novelists: Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, Ouida, Edmund Yates and Annie Thomas. Oliphant's inclusion and disapproval of Yates, in this group and in her article, indicates that she thought him worthy of critical comment directed at sensation writers. In her extensive article Oliphant disagrees wholeheartedly with the direction of the contemporary English novel. She singles out popular fiction, especially the sensation novel for her target, subjecting writers and the genre to a vitriolic, unrestrained and uncompromising assault. Oliphant vehemently attacks women writers for what she claims was immorality in their fiction; Edmund Yates was included in her critique. Her tirade against sensation fiction continued in this vehement vein as she moved from general criticisms of the novel to single out particular authors for direct censure which contains more than a little personal invective. She also, as noted above, suggests that such worldly-wise women could not understand the true meaning of what it was to be a lady. Whatever the writers knew they would certainly understand the strength of her condemnation in comments about being a lady and in her powerful and outspoken critique of women writers and Edmund Yates.

Oliphant makes her intention to depict Yates's novels as immoral clear from the onset of her section about him. Her article positions Yates firmly in a list of writers now associated with the feminist canon of sensation writers. In this review Oliphant chooses to critique two of Yates's novels, *Land At Last* (1866) and *The Forlorn Hope* (1867) and uses sexual symbolism linked to

² Kissing the Rod: a Novel. 1866. *The Athenaeum*, (2017), pp. 828-829.

women's hair to emphasise her point. She begins, 'Red is the colour chosen by Mr. Edmund Yates to characterise the heroine of one of his many productions, the Margaret of 'Land at Last'' (BEM, 1867: 269-70).³ Apart from the derogatory reference to 'many productions' Oliphant directly attacks Yates's major protagonist as promiscuous. The colour of Margaret's hair, Oliphant's focus here, is partly a reflection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings but is more closely linked, as Galia Ofek points out in her essay 'Sensational Hair, Gender, Genre and Fetishism in the Sensational Decade', to 'aggressive, bloody femininity; fleshly desires; and flaming sexuality' (Eds. Harrison and Fantina, 2006: 111). Ofek links red hair to Collins's infamous Lydia Gwilt from *Armadale* (1866) serialised in 1864 and Oliphant here is referring to Yates's Margaret Dacre a leading protagonist in *Land At Last* (1866) serialised in 1865. Both heroines had red hair and both were models 'of unconventionality that challenged prevalent models of femininity on aesthetic, literary and social levels' (2006: 112).

Oliphant dislikes Yates's sympathetic attitude to what she sees as immoral women. She says, 'but yet it is undeniable that the author throughout gives to this red-haired woman a lofty superiority over all the good people in his book' (BEM, 1867: 271). Oliphant regards Margaret as immoral from the start describing her as a fallen woman, 'picked up in the street by the artist-hero' (271). Again reverting to sexual symbolism she complains that Margaret is blatantly unrestrained, 'Mak[ing] great play with her hair like all the other ladies. If she does not take to sweeping it over her lover's breast all at once, she lets it over her own shoulders "in a rich red cloud"' (270). She talks to Geoffrey, her husband, with great frankness about her past and added to and intensifying her apparent sexual proclivity she is devoid of any decent ability to 'adapt herself to the dulness of a respectable life' (270). Oliphant suggests that the duty of women is simply to accept their domestic roles unthinkingly, without complaint and without any inclination to emotional or sensual susceptibility.

³ Novels. 1867. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 102(623), pp. 257-280.

Despite a grudging recognition that Yates has some skill in describing Margaret's confessional scene with 'considerable dramatic power' (270), Oliphant's continued interest in the immorality of Margaret thoroughly permeates this review. She is only partially satisfied when she can report the fact that Margaret is ultimately rejected by her former lover and legal husband, 'with a cruelty and insensibility equal to her own' (270) before she turns to a more direct attack on Yates himself. Oliphant attacks Yates's apparent complicity in sensational, provocative and lurid forays into immorality depicting, she indicates, a writer bedevilled with his own creation:

She – with the rich red cloud over her shoulders, her silence, her abstraction, the secret contrasts she is making in her own mind between the respectable suburban life and that of the illuminated *parterres* and iced drinks of her former state of being, and the profound disgust which fills her – is evidently, in Mr Yates's eyes, a creature much above the level of those dull women whose talk is of babies. She sails among them in sullen state, and he feels that she is a banished angel – a creature of a higher sphere. (271)

Yates is castigated for the salacious detail he provides about Margaret denying her any interest in domesticity yet sanctifying what Oliphant sums up as her inherent evil: 'the creature is a loathsome cheat and impostor (sic)' (271). She is disconcerted that Yates, a writer, 'greatly above the ordinary sensational average' (271), can adopt such an approach in his writing and has sunk to the level of the other authors mentioned in her article. Oliphant's persistent attack on Yates here is slightly tempered by her surprise that he has stooped to a level she finds intolerable in his portrayal of women. For Oliphant Yates's depiction of women is consistent with models of femininity which she has condemned. To her there appears to be only a monolithic, immutable configuration of gender but a more nuanced view can be located in Yates's fiction and in the subtle difference between trespassing and transgressive behaviour. It is this difference, which is also developed in Chapter Five, that has significance for my critical considerations of the modern canon of sensation fiction. Oliphant's review continues with her thoughts on *The Forlorn Hope* (1867).

This review is considerably shorter than Oliphant's seething and enraged dismissal of *Land At Last*. In her brief resumé of the main details of the story Oliphant quite rightly admonishes Yates's depiction of the relationship between doctor and patient: 'it goes utterly against all social morality to introduce lovemaking between a doctor and his patient' (272). Yet in her narrow and unbending critique of women in sensation novels she ignores the power relationship between doctor and patient. She reiterates this complaint later with: '[d]octors and patients have no right to fall in love with each other; it goes in the face of all proprieties and expediencies of life' (272). At this point Oliphant seems to misjudge Yates's sensitive concerns for women suggesting that:

Mr. Yates's sympathies evidently go with the physician, and it appears only natural to him that the golden-haired patient (pale gold in this case, which is angelic – not red gold, which is of the demons) should quite obliterate in Dr. Wilmot's mind the reserved and dark complexioned wife who wants for him at home. (272)

She seemingly implicates the patient in a deliberately seductive plan ignoring the misuse and abuse of masculine and professional power that is the doctor's devious motive. Oliphant is keen to situate Yates with other sensation writers in her general abhorrence and loathing for a genre she views as implicitly dangerous and with the potential to affect moral standards. T S Wagner reminds us in *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel* (2009) that Oliphant's criticism of society, in her novels, was through the use of strong domestic women who used their formidable power to effect change. She opposed the type of transgressive heroines popular in sensation fiction, who she found immoral and unworthy of any sympathetic understanding, as representatives of women in any form of protest or reform.

A brief consideration of the tenor of the review's attack on other writers emphasises that Oliphant closely linked Yates with these writers whose work is in turn assailed for transgressive heroines. Mary Braddon is the first on Oliphant's list of five writers to be attacked. Oliphant mockingly declares: 'Miss Braddon is the leader of her school, and to her the first honours ought naturally to be given' (265). She describes her as a plagiarist with only a little skill at story-telling

and the perverse invention of, ‘the fair-haired demon of modern fiction’ (263), a reference to Lady Audley in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. This is followed by Oliphant’s condemnation of Braddon’s popularisation of the bigamy novel. Rhoda Broughton and her novel *Cometh Up As A Flower* (1867) is her next target. Here Oliphant’s major criticism focuses on the familiarity of Broughton’s young heroine who tells her own story of sexual attraction: ‘those speeches about shrinking bodies and sexless essences are disgusting in the fullest sense of the word’ (267). Next Ouida’s novels are almost dismissed out of hand as ‘very nasty books’ (269). This is followed by the lengthier critique of Yates analysed above and finally Oliphant adds some slightly concessionary remarks on Annie Thomas. Unfortunately for Oliphant Thomas has recourse to plots which demand that young ladies spend the night with men however innocently. She says it is ‘a curious sign of the absence of all real inventive power in this kind of literature, that it should be so often employed’ (273). Her angry tirade ends with a robust and vigorous condemnation of women writers and their calculated forays into immoral literature. In a much cited passage Oliphant states:

Nasty thoughts, ugly suggestions, an imagination which prefers the unclean, is almost more appalling than the facts of actual depravity, because it has no excuse of sudden passion or temptation, and no visible boundary. It is a shame to women so to write; and it is a shame to the women who read and accept as a true representation of themselves and their ways the equivocal talk and fleshly inclinations herein attributed to them. There (sic) patronage of such books is in reality an adoption and acceptance of them [...] a woman has one duty of invaluable importance to her country and her race which cannot be over-estimated – and that is the duty of being pure. (275)

Oliphant’s anti-feminist position is clearly stated here in a view that posits no female autonomy over mind or body. Female writers are condemned by her for their transgressive heroines whose conduct she concludes is deleterious to decent standards and examples that should be the essence of ‘wholesome’ literature. Oliphant’s chief concern is that women understand their duties which, of

course, implies their subjugation to men. Yates is included in her 'literary trawl' although, as I show, there appears to be a significant difference in the way he uses the sensation genre to critique society.

Yates and trespass

Radford, in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011), compares Yates to Braddon and Collins, 'who transcended the sensation school they helped to create by consistently subverting their audience's generic and sentimental expectations' (2011: 321). Braddon and Collins have received a large share of modern critical responses to their work. They were both writers of sensation who were immensely talented and imaginative. In their use of sensational incident they displayed inventiveness and imaginative panache always likely to surprise a reader. By the same token Yates appears more mundane in his contribution as Radford, referring to contemporary opinions, remarks: 'Yates merely offered variations on the tawdry excesses of the sensational paraphernalia' (Ed. Gilbert, 2011: 321). My analysis, below, of Yates's novels during the dominant years of sensation suggests that he organised his novels differently and in doing so managed to offer a broad critical appraisal of a society that disappointed him in so many ways.

Yates's novels, while broadly belonging to the sensation genre, do exhibit some structural features that offer alternative explanations as to why he has been neglected in the modern revival of interest in sensation fiction. There is, for example, a meaningful difference in his novels from what has been established as the modern canon of sensation fiction and the way Yates uses his major female protagonists in sensational plots. Some women in his novels are strong characters such as the determined Gertrude Lloyd and Katherine Guyon who both leave their husbands, a move which shows strong character in a period of feminine dependency. Transgressive heroines however are not Yates's major focus. In his novels Yates displays a deliberate, different and distinctive methodology through which he critiques mid-Victorian society.

In my analysis of Yates's work I develop an emphasis on trespass not transgression as a principle feature of his novels. Andrew Radford (2009) refers to Cannon Schmitt's enlightening work on the gothic novel, *Alien Nation Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fiction and English Nationality* in which he refers to the difficulty of specificity in defining sensation fiction and its 'discursive hybridity' (Schmitt, 1997: 111). Schmitt suggests that:

Sensation novels stage the interpenetration of underworld and domestic world, the confusion between drawing room and asylum, the overlap of middle-or upper-class woman and lower-class criminal. Their effects depend upon figurative miscegenation at all levels. (111)

Radford concurs with Schmitt's incisive comment. Schmitt, he suggests, sees the hybridity of sensation fiction as a mixture of various elements which deliberately and unavoidably expose the 'overlap of patrician and criminal trespasser' (2009: 75). Radford's interesting use of the word trespasser here suggests a different emphasis from the word 'transgress' and its various derivatives which now appear frequently in contemporary critical works on sensation fiction. At this point it is useful to establish the difference between my application of the word trespass to Yates's fiction and the use of transgression as more generally applied in modern criticism of sensation fiction. The potential imprecision of transgression and trespass suggest diverse possibilities for interpretation. Analyses of the actions of heroines in sensation fiction, so often described as transgressive, have interpreted and valorised them as unselfish, crusading efforts to improve women's lives. Thus, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley's deliberate scheme to improve her life, after desertion by her ineffectual husband, is viewed as typical of one of the few ways a woman could effect self-improvement in an age of such unequal social conditions. Madeleine Vanstone's efforts, in *No Name*, to recover her property are viewed as a stand against the inequities of the country's property laws. Nellie's tragic recognition, in *Cometh Up As A Flower*, that she has simply been 'sold' to buttress her family against mounting debts speaks volumes for women as victims in a highly dubious marriage system. Such examples show women crossing what can be read as unacceptable

boundaries or limits; Lucy's bigamy, Magdalen's cavalier and manipulative attitude to men, marriage and the law, and Nell's self-association with prostitution in a marriage made for money are instances of intensely transgressive acts.

The use of trespass is recognised by Schmitt and Radford as applicable at 'all levels'. Yates's fiction does not feature transgressive acts which can be seen as emancipatory or oppositional. My use of trespass to describe Yates's sensation denies the actions, for some of his major protagonists, of any democratic or equitable motives. Trespass might recur but it contests no limiting barriers of gender or ideological restrictions. In an attempt to analyse Yates's sensation I use trespass to describe the actions of major protagonists. Trespass, often referred to in dictionaries as archaic, has no support as a literary theory. The distinction made here is that trespass, indicating in the same way as transgress the crossing of thresholds, is a deliberate impingement on boundaries but simply for personal gain and without any ultimate liberatory dimension. The distinction between Yates's trespassers like Gilbert Lloyd, and, for example, Braddon's transgressor, Lady Audley is that there is no possible way that male trespassers could be said to be acting for the greater good. They were, in plain terms, often simply satisfying their sexual lust or monetary greed. They were not in desperate need of material gains, nor for that matter, enhanced life chances nor had they a cause to struggle for. In the case of patrician trespassers, who are considered later, they were trespassing codes of conduct and class barriers.

Trespass recognised by Schmitt and Radford as applicable 'at all levels' is seen as a way of referring to boundary infiltration but for personal advantage only. It is viewed, in my analysis, as a form of moral and ethical breach inconsistent with acceptable conduct and more sinister than mere villainy. It should be noted that interpreting characters such as Lady Audley as victims of patriarchy and figures of resistance does make it difficult to sustain a distinction between characters whose erring ways are seen as forms of protest and characters whose inclination for self-preservation leads them to personal gain. The fact that Lucy quickly settles into her new life and role complete with status, fine accommodation, fashionable clothes and endless shopping expeditions and would

probably have been content to remain so is often overlooked by feminist critics although the domestic realm was a woman's principal experience of life through which she might be able to effect change. It could be argued that Lucy's marriage leaves her as Eagleton says of Jane Eyre a 'self [...] free to be injured and exploited, but free also to progress, move through the class structure, choose and forge relationships, strenuously use its talents in scorn of autocracy or paternalism' (Eagleton, 2005: 26). Yates's novels though sympathetic towards women were not a strenuous voice for radical change in their circumstances.

Adopting trespass, as a way of describing errant masculine conduct, in my analysis, follows a useful trajectory for exploring masculinities. Yates used sensational plots, characters and incidents to criticise mid-nineteenth century society. He does have sensational incidents: sudden deaths, suicide, murder and bigamy starkly and suddenly revealed. Yates's reader, I suggest, is never quite held as breathless in utter desire to find out what comes next as Braddon's or Collins's reader. For example, I refer to the reader who waits impatiently for the next chapter of *The Woman In White* to find out who the escapee from the asylum is or whose footsteps in *Lady Audley's Secret* are approaching Audley Court as Lady Audley waits in terrified anticipation the evening after she has set fire to the inn at Mount Stanning. Yates had a different approach.

He attacks the self-serving, self-first, selfish attitudes he encounters through characters whose actions amounted to social trespass. His protagonists move upwards, downwards and even across social groups so that impingement on boundaries is not always from below so often the cause for anxiety in those of higher classes. The 'overlap' that Radford describes is more subtle and consequential than fears of the upper classes about social mobility. Yates organises his novels to suggest questions about society. He asks what it means for upper-class individuals to be mixing with lower groups or for professional men to be cavalier about standards of professional behaviour. He also seeks to scrutinize an ideology which is supported and authorised by a rigid class system whose upper-classes often flout moral principles which they seek to impose on others.

In my analysis of Yates's novels I discuss examples of what I have, following Schmitt and Radford, called trespass. Class is not Yates's only concern. As may be expected courtship and marriage plots are as prevalent in his sensation fiction as they are in most other mid-Victorian novels. Yates suggests an egalitarian/companionate attitude to marriage wherein his feminine protagonists are not always featured as proto-feminist campaigners. He recognises partnership as a condition of the marriage relationship. Yates's examples of courtship and marriage demonstrate ways that he uses the sensation genre to explore, critique, and suggest a moral corrective in a society that was in a constant state of flux. In general, sensation novels written by women authors, are seen to offer a radical critique of society. Yates's sensation exposes ethical/moral faults in his male protagonists that he would like to see remedied but within the existing ideological framework. Transgression as a liberatory tactic in sensation fiction demands radical change at the ground roots of social organisation. Trespass, exposed in Yates's novels, requires personal change without a radical ideological overhaul.

Yates's Novels

The dissimulation yet plausibility of the leading protagonist in *The Forlorn Hope* (1867) are features of trespass which are apposite to my analysis and therefore this novel serves as a useful starting point. In this story a career minded man in the medical profession, Chudleigh Wilmot, takes a short break in Scotland, without his wife, to visit his old tutor and mentor Sir Saville Row. His medical expertise is called for when Madeleine, the daughter of an aristocrat, is taken dangerously ill with an unknown fever. Wilmot attends the young lady and against all professional codes falls in love with her. He delays his return home to nurse his patient through her illness and during her convalescence. Meanwhile, despite Wilmot's letters home, rumours circulate about his absence. Eventually on his return he finds that his wife has died suddenly. The shock of this sudden loss is increased by Wilmot's discovery of poison missing from a locked medicine cabinet and his wife's seal ring in the cabinet; evidence that points conclusively to her suicide. This narrative, barely

sensational in terms of continual and frequent alarming incidents, nevertheless serves as evidence of the type of insidious misuse of position and trust that I refer to as trespass.

The essential deception is established so innocuously that early details about Chudleigh Wilmot appear simply to confirm his status, respectability and repute and allow him access that will eventually lead to expansive abuse. Used as an example of trespass this section of *The Forlorn Hope* deals in detail with Wilmot's relationship with his patient and with his wife and emphasises the depth and intensity of emotion his self-centred masculinity provokes. It should be noted that, despite professional ethics and his own family situation, a large age difference which should preclude any dalliance is established. Wilmot is thirty eight years old, considerably older than Madeleine whose precise age we are not given but who is so continually referred to as 'poor child,' 'pet daughter,' 'girl,' 'girlish,' 'young person,' 'innocent' and 'childish' (TFH, 1867, i: 20, 43,47,51,63,71) Everything that the reader hears about Dr Wilmot establishes and strengthens his integrity and at the same time masks his covert feelings and his trespass.

In the nineteenth century professions were evolving continually in various ways. Such was the case for the medical profession which was gradually being modernised from a fragmentary, chaotic organisation as M. Jeanne Peterson points out in her monograph *The Medical Profession in Mid-Victorian London* (1978). Summing up the situation after the passing of the Medical Act of 1858 Peterson declares:

The Mid-Victorian period saw the first steps toward autonomy and self-regulation in medicine. [...] In the institutions of elite medical life, the foundations existed for the extension of professional control over practitioners. In the realm of medical education, by circumstances and design, the elites of the profession began to build a system of autonomy and central control that would eventually build a profession. (1978: 39)

This was the world inhabited by Dr Wilmot. As Peterson's comment implies and emphasises it was a professional, autonomous world with its associated responsibilities and ethical code. This chimes

well with Victorian ideals of personal responsibility. Dr Wilmot's character agreeably concurred with stereotypical images and general gossip about doctors. Sir Duncan Forbes, a late arrival at the house-party at Kilsyth, had met Dr Wilmot earlier. He was confirmed, by Forbes and in general gossip about doctors as, 'the great man of the day [...] the great authority on fever, and that type of thing' (TFH, 1867 i: 22) and socially as a, 'delightful fellow' (22). A consummate professional, friend of a former physician to the late King and more than socially acceptable Dr Wilmot was just the sort of expert needed in the crisis at Kilsyth, where the local doctor had voiced his opinion that Madeleine had scarlet fever, a dangerous and often fatal disease in the nineteenth century.

Dr Wilmot epitomises society's acceptance of the legitimacy of both a man and a professional physician. He was sent for and on his arrival immediately went to the sick girl. The impression of his unshakeable professionalism, and unswerving dedication is confirmed as he corroborates his colleague's assessment, gives orders and assumes command of the sick room which he places in immediate isolation taking up a vigil there until nursing care arrives. Here, apparently, was a man of action and determination, a man of science and knowledge who could act for good and was a legitimate and plausible expert in a time of crisis. Here also was Yates's trespassing man as his early first remarks reveal. Talking quietly to himself Dr Wilmot remarks about his patient, 'Good heavens, how lovely she is! What a mass of golden hair falling over her pillow, and what a soft, innocent childish manner!' (71). This remarkably unmedical and personal comment begins to suggest that Dr. Wilmot might be less than a paragon of professional medical excellence. His mentor and previous tutor's dubious counsel encouraged him to cultivate the society of, 'Youth', 'Beauty' and High Life' (40). Here another dimension of trespass emerges whereby selfish personal power and aggrandisement replace ethical concerns. Dr Wilmot's carefully constructed and unimpeachable character is at the same time being undermined by his own actions. His conventional plausibility camouflages true motives. Actions which were partly hidden in the privacy of the sick room were at the same time publicly known, recognised and accepted as the

doctor's professional responsibilities. In an insidious manner his professional responsibility and expertise augment usual masculine dominance allowing him free access to Madeleine

Such responsibilities, Dr Wilmot's prompt and efficient assumption of medical control, mask what is really happening: his private and furtive loss of control over his emotions, render his growing dissemblance a devious trespass and defiance of both moral and civil law. Not only is he a doctor he is a married man but a married man to whom double standards apply. Dr Wilmot's obsession with his patient, because that was what it has become, make it imperative that he remain at Kilsyth despite the needs of his regular patients in London. He tells Lord Kilsyth, "I shall stay here, sir, until your daughter is out of danger. There are many who can replace me in London in Foljambe's case; there is no one who can replace me here in Miss Kilsyth's" (95). Yates allows readers access to Dr Wilmot's mental struggle:

Chudleigh Wilmot was a man accustomed to act promptly on a resolution; and perhaps, like many more of a similar temperament, likely to act all the more promptly when the motives of that resolution were not quite clear or quite justifiable before his own judgement. In the present instance he certainly did not act with perfect candour towards himself. He made very much to himself of his apprehensions concerning the result of Madeleine's illness, and his absolute want of confidence in Mr. Joyce. He resolutely shut his eyes to the long and substantial claims of Mr. Foljambe to paramount consideration on his part, and he determined to "see this matter out," as he phrased it, in his one-sided mental cogitation, by which he meant that he was determined to invest the temptation in his way with the specious name of duty, and try to persuade himself that he had the assent of his conscience in pursuing a course opposed to his judgement. (96-7)

In this passage conventional masculine associations surface as we witness Wilmot's struggles between action and judgement, candour and hypocrisy and self-centred immoderation and duty. Dr Wilmot's identity as a professional man and as a gentleman becomes the site for his inner struggle

and recalls the counsel of Samuel Smiles in *Self Help* (1859). Temptation is regularly perceived as a trap for the incautious and in his final chapter, 'Character: The True Gentleman', Smiles warns against ignoring one's conscience, 'Without this dominating influence, character has no protection, but is constantly liable to fall away before temptation; and every such temptation succumbed to, every act of meanness or dishonesty, however slight, causes self-degradation' (Ed. Bull, 1986: 235). More than likely Dr Wilmot would have been aware of such moral advice but his private mental struggle becomes simply a strategy for self-justification which was only ever going to have one outcome.

It is, as Yates's narrator describes, a 'one-sided mental cogitation' (TFH, 1867, i: 97). The outcome is evidence of how encroachment, so often feared and resented as an improper incursion or imminent threat from below as a class menace, could also be stealthily realized from within. That, in fact, problems of social mobility so often feared and inextricably linked with class were symptoms, at the basest level here, of nothing but lust and – even more damning – of sexual predation of the most alarming kind. Yates exposes the failure of a class system which privileged and conjoined surface features, in Dr Wilmot's case his professional status, to character. Smiles had stated, 'Riches and rank have no necessary connection with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman – in spirit and in daily life. He may be honest, truthful, upright, polite, temperate, courageous, self-respecting and self-helping – that is be a true gentleman' (Ed. Bull, 1986: 240). Dr Wilmot's secret passion for his young attractive patient was a trespass motivated solely by self-interest which fell short of the parameters described by Smiles.

Further appraisal of Dr Wilmot's ministrations to his patient substantiate that his actions are unprofessional, unethical and verging on the immoral. This is a view which Margaret Oliphant's mention of *The Forlorn Hope* in her 1867 article *Novels* touched upon but with far less vitriol than that which she usually reserved for sensation writers. Oliphant condemns the doctor patient embroilment, but later lets Yates down gently humorously suggesting that Madeleine's poor choice of husband was too late to rectify by the effectiveness of recourse to medical help: 'how far it is

expedient to call in the right man, who you have not married, as your medical attendant, may, we think, be questioned' (BEM, 1867: 272). By the time of Madeleine's rapidly approaching death Wilmot, now a widower, discards all traces of dissemblance which he had used so cunningly at Kilsyth and declares his undying love for her. In the sickroom at Kilsyth the doctor continues to disguise his personal feelings and attraction under the guise of medical management, suggestively moistening his patient's lips, rearranging her hair and defying usual practice by refusing to have her tresses cut off:

"Cut off her hair!" said Wilmot [...] "Well, sir," said the nurse, "it's mostly done in fevers. Wherever I've nursed, I've always done it first thing." Wilmot turned red and hot. Why should he shrink from ordering the sacrifice in this case, as he had done in a thousand others without a thought of hesitation or regret? (TFH, 1867, i: 100-101)

Cutting off her hair would, of course, have desexualised her and diminished her appeal as somebody more than a patient in Wilmot's eyes. The trespassing doctor's concern is to improve his patient's health whilst maintaining her sexual appeal. He, of course, has ultimate power and authority in the sick room as both man and doctor and the inextricable intersection of gender and professionalism serve to intensify the trespass which he commits.

Wilmot continues in this manner, devoting himself entirely to his patient, even undertaking minor medical tasks far beneath the remit of a doctor of his standing: 'acting as a combination of physician, apothecary, and nurse, dispensing the necessary medicines from the family medicine chest, sitting up all night, concocting soothing drinks, and smoothing hot and uneasy pillows (126) all to keep him close to Madeleine. Personal self-interest, which should have been the least of a doctor's priorities, became his chief concern: 'Now, when it was too late, when every barrier of honour, of honesty, of duty, and of principle stood between him and the object of the long deferred, but terribly real passion which took possession of him' (116). Wilmot had done his medical work as a trusted professional meanwhile using this as a façade to disguise his dissemblance, intrusion and trespass. It is interesting to note the standards of conduct which Yates lists as qualities which should

have acted as constraints on Wilmot and were so often expressions of the type of conduct expected of a gentleman. The major constraints on Dr Wilmot's behaviour should, of course, have been the fact that he was a doctor, a married man and old enough in relation to Madeleine to be accused of a potentially abusive relationship. The circumstances of his marriage which surface during the early part of the novel cannot excuse Wilmot's conduct but they are an essential element in displaying Yates's disapproval of indifferent and desultory marriages. Further analysis of this marriage reveals, in Yates, a powerful and sympathetic voice for a more equitable and loving basis on which to establish a lasting relationship and supplies more support for the way trespass is used to highlight Yates's critique of masculine attitudes to women. Yates does not appear to support a move to new social organisation; he sees a strengthening of men's conduct in line with older chivalric attitudes as a way forward and this is reflected in his description of Wilmot's marriage.

The strength of Wilmot's indifference to his wife, Mabel, begins to be revealed early in the novel when Sir Saville asks him about her. He had married more out of expediency than for other reasons. Wilmot remains adamant that he is happy and that Mabel 'does' for him but when Sir Saville pursues the matter it becomes clear that what his friend is referring to is the strength of the love that existed between Wilmot and his wife, a matter that did not seem to have crossed Wilmot's mind. Sir Saville qualifies his seemingly straightforward question, 'are you in love with her?'(35) explaining that he meant:

Are you always thinking of her when you are away from her? Are you always longing to get back to her? Does her face come between you and the book you are reading? When you are thinking out an intricate case, and puzzling your brains as to how you shall deal with it, do you sometimes let the whole subject slip out of your mind, to ponder over the last words she said to you, the last look she gave you? (35)

It is unfathomable to Wilmot, steeped in dominant patriarchal ideology, that he should encompass any disruption in a life he led almost unaware of the liaison he had entered into with Mabel. Sir

Saville, hypocrite as he is, reveals in this dissection of deep and unselfish love, the barren deficiency of contemporary dominant ideology as a foundation for marriage.

Ironically the marriage, its problems and the shocking results it eventually leads to are ignored by Oliphant in her zeal to attack the doctor patient relationship and link it to her personal campaign to undermine sensation fiction's claim to any serious status. The circumstances of the marriage of Mabel and Wilmot are described as an event that simply seemed to happen without any strong emotive passion. Mabel was from a good family, she had a small fortune, and was reasonably attractive; medical discourse suggested that a wife was a good idea for a doctor, economics supported this and Wilmot's mother liked the young lady. It was a marriage of convenience for Wilmot who got what he wanted in the broadest sense and was able to devote himself unstintingly to his work while convincing himself that his blinkered devotion to work was all that mattered for the ultimate health of his marriage. Yates's sensation, linked by Oliphant to other popular writers of the time, has a serious but different focus. He shows a serious and deep concern about the conduct of men within marriage. This reverberates throughout his novels where I identify Yates's frequent use of trespass to expose and critique the shortcomings of men in what was seen as the foremost institutional buttress of patriarchal society.

Here Yates presses a case for the romantic and loving foundation of marital relationships. Wilmot's ambitious, personal motivation was all he thought necessary for him to contribute and the marriage would prosper:

He would be an eminent physician, a celebrated and rich man; a good husband too; and his wife should never have reason to find fault with him, or to envy the wives of other men – men who might indeed be more sentimental and demonstrative, but who could not have a stronger sense of duty than he. Thus he thought, thus resolved Mabel Darlington's lover; and very good thoughts, very admirable resolves his were. They had only one defect; but he never suspected its existence. It was a rather radical defect too, being this: that they were not those of a lover at all. (77)

Clearly demonstrated here are Yates's strong views which run counter to Wilmot's trespassing conduct. Yates favoured an equitable basis for marriage; a partnership of shared intentions and emotions. At every turn, though, Dr Wilmot's concern is for himself, his own desires, career and future and it is *this* type of self-interest which leads to his trespass. Trespass is grounded in self-interest and in this novel Yates concentrates on the acute problems of such a one-sided, loveless marriage which in this case was all about Wilmot but was a cause for Yates's general concern.

A detailed analysis of this arranged marriage suggests reasons for the almost inevitable break-up but not the depth of the disastrous consequences which occur as a result of Mabel's mental agony and loneliness inside a marriage that offered her no intellectual or emotional fulfilment. The suggestion is that many other women suffer and tolerate the same desperate and silent fate. As husbands go, and in terms of reference to mid-century domestic ideology, Wilmot would surely have provided little justification for a wife's dissatisfaction. On the surface, 'She had, at the period with which this story deals, a handsome house, a good income, an agreeable and respectable social circle; a handsome, irreproachable husband, rapidly rising into distinction;[...] one intimate friend and a broken heart' (78). Their lives epitomise the extremes of a separate-spheres existence: 'she lived in a world of which he knew nothing, and he in and for his profession' (87). Mabel is not described as a wife without faults but despite Wilmot's cleverness and intellectual capabilities he remains unaffected by her emotional frailties and provides no support because, as Yates so bleakly emphasises, 'He did not love her. The whole story was in that one sentence' (88). At the same time Wilmot's infatuation with Madeleine, motivated by self-interest, flies in the face of moral and marital responsibility which, by ideological implication, should be his chief concerns.

As remarked above Yates's sensation differs in the manner in which it operates. Although there are often no emphatic and intensely heart-stopping, hand-on-shoulder moments in his novels Yates allows an increasing tension to develop between different locations and protagonists. He is commended in an Athenaeum review for the novel's 'impressively dramatic and, pathetically

suggestive' (ATH, 1867: 218)⁴ qualities but the reviewer's highly ambivalent sympathies obviously lie with Wilmot despite his unethical and almost adulterous conduct. It is a stereotypical 'blindness' to men's faults such as reviewers' denial of Talboy's desertion of Lucy in *Lady Audley's Secret* which is detailed later in this work. Accepting that Mabel has been neglected and that she, 'suffers not without cause' the reviewer still describes her as, 'maddened by baseless suspicions and cruel rumours of her husband's devotion to Miss Kilsyth' (218). Mabel's feelings, which could be extrapolated to most women's feelings, are only ever secondary; she barely commands the centre of attention and only then as an ingrate to a husband who thought he had supplied everything. Men's secretive and extra-marital relationships are transposed by the reviewer in the *Athenaeum* so that typically women are viewed as the offenders and men as the wounded parties.

Compounding the depth of Mabel's despair, passing without comment and yet astounding to twenty-first century readers is the revelation that Mabel was pregnant at the time of her death. She was unloved, ignored, and yet 'used' by Wilmot who, superior doctor that he may be, was unaware of her condition, her apparent illness as she herself described it, and what we as readers are privy to through the narrator's revelation of Mabel's interior solitary life. As she sits in front of her mirror resenting his neglect and attraction for another her thoughts are worth quoting at length:

I have lived in his sight all these years, and he has never sacrificed an hour of time or thought to me. And now he leaves me without hesitation, though I am ill. I have not talked about it, to be sure; but what is his skill worth, if he did not see it in my face [...] I was not a *case* – I was only his wife; and he never thought of looking, never thought of caring whether I was ill or well [...] I wonder if he knew what I suspect, what I should once have said I *hope* is the cause; but that is a long time ago. Would it have made any difference? I don't mean now; of course it would not *now*; nothing makes any difference to a man when once his heart is turned aside, and quite filled

⁴ The Forlorn Hope: a Novel. 1867. *The Athenaeum*, (2051), pp. 217-218.

by another. I don't think I ever touched his heart; I know only too well I never filled it. (TFH, 1867, i: 152)

It is almost impossible to understand the intensity of Mabel's despair that the ultimate prospect of a family, the core of Victorian ideology, would not alter what she suspected from her husband's protracted absence, his curtly dismissive letter and rumours that would have been circulating all compounded by the continuous indifference she usually experiences. Here Yates's heartfelt cry must have struck a chord with many of his readers. Yet, of course, the anticipation of rumour and gossip that might occur would have been offset by the doctor's own plausibility through which his reputation is established by public and especially male recognition.

Yates allows Mabel's anguish to evolve into bitterness as he describes her early hopes crumbling into sadness and anger: 'She had borne her grief valiantly until now; she had only known the passive side of it. But that was all over for ever' (153). Alarming her friend by her slide into deep resentment Mabel rejects with dramatic vehemence any inference from her friend that she had not told Wilmot everything, 'O Wilmot! Much he knows and much he cares about me! Don't talk nonsense, Henrietta. If I were dying, he would not see it while I could keep on my feet' (154). The revelation of her pregnancy to Henrietta – 'Mabel Wilmot told her friend intelligence which surprised her very much,' (160) – does not calm her friend's anxiety that the marriage breakdown had gone too far. Henrietta privately remarks:

"This will make things either better or worse," she said to herself that night. "If he returns, and receives the news well, all may go on well afterwards; but if he stays away for this girl's sake much longer, I don't think even the child will do any good."

(160)

For plot expediency here, Wilmot does not rush home to his pining wife, instead only choosing to leave Scotland when he realises that he is at risk of provoking obvious suspicions of his motives by lingering when his patient has sufficiently recovered. On his return home he discovers that his wife has died suddenly and later finds incontrovertible evidence that she has committed suicide.

In this novel, which Oliphant saw fit to include in her outburst against sensation, it is patriarchal dominance and trespass which reveal dominant ideological flaws. Yates's sensation fiction shows how masculinity, which should support, encourage and strengthen home and family, according to prevalent ideological values, fails because it is constructed on the 'needs' and desire of one group and their unwavering determination to prevail even if it means that they are compromised by trespass. Yates's different emphasis places it outside sensation fiction recovered to support feminist causes. Although Oliphant classes it with other mainstream popular fiction Yates had a more conservative view of gender than she credits him with. His view of mid-century gender constructions was premised on masculine revision not on sweeping transformation. My claim is that he demonstrates this in his novels through exposure and condemnation of trespassing male protagonists. He shows how dominant masculinity had abused the responsibility of power. The emphasis on trespass attempts no reversal of dominant gender positions but it shows that gender issues were being debated from different standpoints at that time. Yates's fiction identifies a facet of sensation fiction's interaction with gender constructions that has been neglected and one that has implications for our understanding of the genre as a whole. I use other examples for emphasis and to point towards my discussion of how the literature of trespass is an important and requisite mechanism for a complete awareness of the interplay of complex gender issues in mid-nineteenth century sensation fiction.

Yates's critique of trespassing masculinity is the central concern in my analysis of *Kissing The Rod* (1866) where once again men resort to any means necessary to further their own selfish desires. Trespassing has a deeper significance in this novel than Guyon's criminal dissembling and fraudulent efforts to survive. Yates again emphasises the unsavoury aspect of sexual politics, greed and power centred on the lives of the upper-middle classes, of financial dealers, their business dealings, and their personal lives. The central female character is Katharine Guyon the beautiful daughter of a feckless and insolvent upper-class ne'er do well, Ned Guyon. Guyon's principal concern in life is to enjoy good food, wine and company and indulge his passion for gambling on

the horses. Katharine is in love with a young man, Gordon Frere, who has limited prospects while other men, especially Robert Streightley, a hugely successful City man, are besotted with her. Ned, never one to miss an opportunity, sees the financial advantages which could accrue to him from a marriage between Katharine and Streightley. With the connivance of Lady Henmarsh, Katharine's chaperone, Gordon Frere, Katharine's young, handsome but penniless suitor, and Katharine herself are duped into believing the worst of each other. Ned concludes a secret deal with Streightley and to persuade his daughter into the marriage, of which she wants no part, he points out to her the harsh realities that face young women in her precarious position in mid-nineteenth century England. In effect, Ned Guyon uses his daughter as collateral in his shabby attempt to make money.

Kissing The Rod (1866) casts a different emphasis on trespass within class. I use class as a loosely defined term here. In terms of class demarcation although Ned Guyon and his daughter pursue the affluent lifestyle of a leisured upper class they are relatively poor and Streightley is rich by comparison. The novel reveals faults which are encouraged, endorsed and even sanctioned by a gendered ideology that leaves women helpless, powerless and economically vulnerable. Yates uses the novel to expose and depict the shallow and insincere morality of a society motivated by money and gendered supremacy. In his portrayal of the relationship between the rich banker and the impecunious upper-class gambler Yates negotiates and exposes the moral inconsistencies of rigid class barriers. Tensions between older, outwardly aristocratic pretension and modern, industrious marketplace acumen and success merge as both parties, desperately seeking their own goals, reject and jettison moral standards which, on the surface, are upheld as the foundation and buttress of their society. The skilful synthesis of discourses of class, business, respectability, gambling addiction, debt and desire allow the novel to critique contemporary debates about social class and morality. This novel is structured to offer an appraisal of trespass as representative of the moral deficiency of the dominant ideology. Trespass differs radically from transgression and is exposed, in this novel, not for its support of the marginalised but for its buttressing of gendered dominance which allows

women to be treated as commodities. In the early part of the novel that traces the courtship of Katharine Guyon, the moral flimsiness of Ned Guyon and Robert Streightley is revealed.

Streightley was eminently successful and epitomised mid-century endeavour, working unceasingly to improve and maintain the long established and successful business of money-broking and scrip-selling he had inherited. He had no interests other than his work and was described as, 'a straightforward, honourable business-man' (KTR, 1866, i: 7) who, 'lived but for his business, nothing else' (8). The depiction of Robert Streightley as a hard-headed, thoroughly professional and honourable business man has much in common with that of Dr. Wilmot in *The Forlorn Hope*. Reputation went before him and he was accordingly visited by various members of a powerful elite: bankers, stockbrokers, MPs, and managing directors all seeking business appointments and all kept waiting at Streightley's pleasure except the most powerful, 'the City editors of the various newspapers' and the 'private secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer' (5). He was a rich and powerful businessman used to making successful decisions, confident in his ability, unquestioned and without parallel:

The keenness of his business intellect was astounding. He seemed to sift a proposition as it was being laid before him; and as soon as the proposer ceased speaking Robert Streightley closed with or pooh-poohed the offer, with incontrovertible reasons for his decision. He spoke out plainly and boldly before the oldest and youngest who sought his advice; he was neither deferential nor patronising; and never sought to please – simply for the sake of pleasing – any of his clients. (5)

This unerring aptitude for business has been cultivated in him from childhood so much so that he is quite lacking in imaginative and romantic or sentimental feelings: 'Such little fancy as he possessed [...] had been ruthlessly eradicated, and all the nascent tendencies of his mind had been directed into one strong channel of fact' (7). Everything to him is business and everything has a price. Here, also, the conjoining of power, wealth and influence seem to sanction and presage unabashed trespass and

an outcome that will eventually find its dubious moral sanctity in prevailing ideology. Modern parallels could readily be drawn from Yates's examples of the corruption of power and the trespass to which it leads.

Notice of an outstanding debt prompted Katharine Guyon, worried about her father's profligacy, to visit Streightley's office. She is ignorant of money matters and reveals her class attitudes when she mistakes the use of the word 'bill', a term for an outstanding loan, and associates it instead with tradesmen's bills, feeling that it is beneath her status to deal with such vulgar affairs. Streightley, at once captivated by her beauty, simply uses the outstanding debt to supply him with an excuse to visit her father in the hope of further acquaintance with Katharine. To present himself favourably but not too obviously, Robert offers Ned advantageous terms for repayment while reminding him that it is a business transaction:

I think the Bank rate is three and a half just now [...] we money-brokers charge one per cent in advance of that. So that you see I make something of you after all [...] Perhaps you'll give me a call in the City in a day or two, and we'll put this matter on a business footing. (43-4)

Before making this generous offer we are privy to Streightley's thoughts, which reveal the first flaw in his scrupulous business standards: 'If he were ever to be received upstairs, it must be through the father's influence' (42-3). Emotion, normally no part of Streightley's corporate dealings, has disturbed his previously immutable professional standards and as it turns out it is just the weakness which an opportunist like Ned Guyon is ready to exploit despite his self-avowedly gentlemanly status:

you endeavour to make light of an obligation; but I'm too much of an old soldier not to know the service you have rendered me. And I thank you for it – I thank you for it! For in these levelling days, when a gentleman meets a gentleman, they should close ranks and march together. (43)

Even here, in his recognition that Streightley will prove invaluable as a possible ready cash resource, there is a slight hint of disdain from Guyon who considers himself more firmly positioned as a gentleman. These transactions reveal the insubstantial nature of masculine codes of honour-based conduct as each man seeks his own objective and eventually resorts to opportunities to trespass. Despite eventually resorting to a devious accommodation, they are keen that an observable level of honour appears to be maintained. Guyon's most urgent concern is to cultivate the friendship of Streightley and make sure his daughter meets him again; he demands that she, 'make[s] [her]self agreeable to that person [...] for he has done me a great service, and is likely to do me several good turns, and to be a very useful acquaintance'(63). Ned Guyon's self-interest allied to Streightley's infatuation and rigorous business background by which he is used to getting what he wants become the motivating forces which move relationships onto a different level. They also reveal flaws in the mid-century concept of what it was to be a gentleman especially as their devious plans for Katharine evolve.

Katharine is reduced, like many other Victorian women, to commodity status where her marriage would be the transactional means of providing monetary respite for her father and security for herself. Through his duplicitous and unscrupulous double-dealing, Guyon manages to mislead his daughter on her erstwhile lover's sincerity and prospects dismissing her young suitor as not being a viable husband. Streightley, somewhat troubled by underhand methods but blinded by his passionate, emotional and genuine love for Katharine, abandons any ethical business principles and treats the process almost as a perfunctory commercial matter. In an uneasy interview with his daughter, Guyon confesses his indebtedness to Robert Streightley and manages to turn the conversation to the prospects of her marriage. Ignoring his own responsibilities for his daughter's present position and reflecting his long held personal view that Katharine is a 'valuable possession' (166) Guyon points out the harsh realities facing any young women in her position. He tells her, 'You've no fortune, Kate; and a girl who hasn't can't choose for herself' (322). After dismissing the notion of romantic love, he follows up with a bleak description of the future which Katharine faces:

It's all nonsense thinking about love-matches in these days; and indeed at any time [...] If you don't marry Streightley [...] listen to the alternative [...] I see nothing for you but becoming the companion to a lady – which I take it is the most infernal type of white slavery going – or being dependent on the charity of Lady Henmarsh. (323-4)

Katharine's prospects are indicative of the stark reality facing her and countless other women whose life-choices were restricted and narrowly dependent on ideological premises that, in fact, allowed men to trade in women. Again this is emblematic of trespass through which men are prepared to objectify and commoditise women as they maintain a social system in which marriageable women have little or no choice in terms of life choices.

Guyon and men in general cannot envisage change which will create a more equitable society where gender has a less devastating influence on life chances. Attempting to emphasise the positive prospects of marriage, Guyon suggests 'the other side of the medal' or the advantages that would accrue to Katharine and, of course by implication, to himself. Guyon's list emphasises the monetary advantages: a rich and increasingly successful husband, freedom to choose her lifestyle and indulge her tastes and, slipped into the list, the possibility that she might even become close to Streightley. These are choices that many women would have been pleased to have but Katharine understands what has happened. She asks if Streightley, who she hardly knows, thought that she has any emotional attachment for him and tellingly her contempt for the obvious business arrangements between her father and Streightley painfully suffuses her next question and comment: 'And he is willing to purchase me on those terms? It is well the bargain should be distinctly understood' (327). Katharine is in an almost impossible position but does not answer with the simple 'yes', that her father so eagerly wishes for, agreeing only to see Streightley the following day.

The details of the interview between Streightley and Katharine are not revealed to the reader and the wedding takes place conventionally to all observers except those closest to the events. For Ned Guyon, as the couple prepare to depart on honeymoon, there is a palpable sense of relief, 'the

contract had been carried out, the price paid, and the goods delivered into the carriage' (KTR, 1866, ii: 14), so he has his temporary financial relief. For Robert Streightley there is a sense of foreboding, 'a sad depression and sense of failure at his heart' (15) because he knows that he has cheated Katharine and that she does not love him. Yet despite the temporary misgivings Streightley has, he expects the marriage to function 'normally'. Streightley's willingness to accept his part in the deal and hope for eventual normalisation in a marriage based on his deceitful and scheming conduct indicates the insidious nature of trespass. For Katharine herself, as the narrator speculates in a poignant description of her pretending to read in the carriage, there is a continuous reference to her discernable unhappiness, 'outwardly cold as a statue, inwardly raging with slighted love, hurt pride, horror of the past, and dread of the future, [...] friendlessness and despair' (KTR, 1866,ii: 16). Katharine's absolute dejection at the process by which she has become commoditised is not relieved by Streightley's naive insistence on continually showering her with presents on their continental trip.

Even her evident pleasure at her new home is misconstrued by him as a sign that she has softened towards him because as she reflects on the luxurious security she now has it only serves to reinforce the bitterness she and by extension other women feel for the parlous state to which society has condemned them. She is in no doubt that her position has been the result of, 'the reckless selfishness of men' (37) and that her husband is in her eyes a man, 'ready and willing to pay any price for the gratification of a fancy' and that, 'he loved her for his own sake, not hers; it was a selfish passion, and he was rich enough to buy its object; that was all' (37). Katharine's position is hopeless and despite her strength of character she has to survive. She is an interesting protagonist compared with Lady Audley. Both women are attractive, both are objects of desire by powerful men, and while they came from completely different backgrounds their sexual attractiveness compels men to desire them and to prevail in what amounted to a moral trespass in each case. In both cases writers provide examples of women as consummate victims of men forced into dependency by a system which allowed them few life choices.

Katharine has found herself in a similar position to other female protagonists in sensation fiction like Helen Talboys. In *Lady Audley's Secret* Helen/Lucy's first husband, a young, handsome, junior officer in the cavalry has come to an arrangement with her father: 'He was a drunken old hypocrite, and he was ready to sell my poor little girl to the highest bidder. Luckily for me, I happened just then to be the highest bidder' (Braddon Ed.Houston, 2003: 59). In Rhoda Broughton's *Cometh Up As A Flower* (1867) Nellie Lestrangle suffers a similar fate where monetary considerations to rescue her family's precarious financial situation see her, a young and pretty woman, forced into agreeing to marry Sir Hugh De Vere: a much older neighbouring landlord for whom she has no emotional attachment. When the deal is struck and the engagement made Sir Hugh calls on Nellie and she describes his visit:

His arm is round my waist, and he is brushing my eyes and cheeks and brow with his somewhat bristly moustache as often as he feels inclined – for am I not his property? Has he not every right to kiss my face off if he chooses, to clasp me and hold me, and drag me about in whatever manner he wills, for has he not bought me? For a pair of first-class blue eyes warranted fast colour, for ditto superfine red lips, for so many pounds of prime white flesh, he has paid down a handsome price on the nail without any haggling, and now if he may not test the worth of his purchases poor man he is hardly used! As for me, I sit tolerably still, and am not yet actually sick, and that is about all that can be said of me. (Broughton, Ed.Gilbert 2010: 269-70)

None of these women are ill-treated by their purchaser husbands but the morality of a system which allows them to be used, bought, possibly having to comply with sexual demands (though this is not clear) is damning and repudiated by the authors concerned. My distinction between trespass and transgression places (irre)responsibility in men's hands in Yates's novels. Braddon allows her protagonist a measure of control as she bides her time waiting for the best offer.

The outcome of Katharine's obligatory marriage would be a cataclysmic shock to Streightley such as Wilmot received when he eventually returns from Scotland. Guyon persists in

making demands on his son in law, a fact that even has the servants gossiping, ““the old ’un was a-comin’ of it a deal too strong, and he’d find Streightley wouldn’t stand it much longer”” (KTR, 1866, ii: 226). Streightley has, in fact, already told Guyon there is to be no more borrowing after he has discovered that Guyon made free use of his name to endorse the passing of cheques even to the amount of one hundred pounds:

“Do I understand you to say that you have drawn a bill on me for a hundred pounds, Mr Guyon [...] “That is a liberty which I permit no one to take, and which must never be repeated [...] I must ask you to put a stop entirely to what seems to have become a habit with you – the reliance on me for money. I cannot make you any further advances, at least for the present. (123-4)

Denied funds from Streightley but unable to control his gambling and heavily in debt Guyon risks all that he can muster, betting recklessly on a race, losing all and suffering an apoplectic fit which proves fatal. Katharine, when sorting out her father’s papers, discovers letters that incriminate her father and Streightley in deceit and deception fraudulently causing the rift between her and Frere and clearing the way for Guyon and Streightley to force the issue of her marriage. Appalled, shocked and disgusted by the behaviour of her father and her husband, Katharine takes extreme action and deserts Streightley leaving a damning note showing she knows their combined guilt and resolutely declaring:

I take nothing with me but my mother’s jewels, to which I suppose I have a right, and the unalterable determination which I have formed; and that is, in this world or the next, living or dying, never to forgive you, Robert Streightley, for your share in my degradation, and never to look upon your face again. – K. S. (293)

The marriage, never on a secure footing, breaks down irrevocably and Streightley like Wilmot is left alone to ponder his actions.

Such incidents as those described above, from two quite different novels, expose a system of sexual politics whereby men – in this instance professional, educated men – are prepared to forego

moral principles and ethical considerations to attain their own ends. Here Yates uses trespass to show the lengths to which men were prepared to go in order to have their own way. Both men, Wilmot and Streightley, gentlemen, educated, and professional are prepared to trespass conventions of conduct to achieve their wishes even if it means that they act dishonourably within the social milieu within which they move. Reaction to their dissimulation may possibly have brought them condemnation for ungentlemanly conduct but it would not have provoked an outrage and anxiety that the whole basis of society was under threat and interrogation. Yates's use of sensation fiction in both instances shows a distinct difference from forms of the genre which link women to transgressive roles. There is no widespread criticism or reaction to the two Yates's novels referred to above. Margaret Oliphant makes unconvincing attempts to link Madeleine, in *The Forlorn Hope*, to her fears for the health of the English novel which she asserts is losing its, 'sanity, wholesomeness and cleanliness' (BEM, 1867: 257). But Yates does not comply with any model or blueprint of sensation fiction which features transgressive heroines. Madeleine is sickly and ineffectual and despite Katharine's outraged reactions, in *Kissing The Rod*, she flees the scene and almost the novel. Symbolically the deaths of major male protagonists somewhat severely emphasise Yates's rejection of flawed masculinities. Yates's sensation fiction is seen as a response to debates on masculinity. He tries to reinforce and reiterate a version of deserved masculine ascendancy somewhat compatible with the behavioural model which Samuel Smiles endorsed and edged with the ethical zeal of muscular Christianity. Yates adopted the current vogue for sensation and used it to promote his own social critique, further evidenced in his treatment of patrician trespass that forms the focus of my analysis in the next section of this chapter.

In the introduction to this chapter I commented on the prevalence of the use of transgressive women in sensation fiction. This aspect of the genre not only created much excited interest in readers but also a sharp and castigatory body of criticism amongst contemporary reviewers. Critical focus in the early days of revived academic interest in the genre concentrated, as Gilbert points out, almost exclusively on feminist issues, but has 'moved beyond the early critical binary in which

these works were either seen simply as reinforcing or transgressing traditional gender roles, or were considered only in relation to the history of feminism' (2011: 6). At present, Gilbert suggests, there is a wider diversity of areas being explored. In the light of such recent and on-going developments the 'critical indifference' to Edmund Yates that Andrew Radford mentions in his chapter in *A Companion To Sensation Fiction* (2011) has been a significant omission. Acknowledging the growth of wider interest and potentiality in sensation fiction has resulted in many critical papers and monographs exploring such areas for example as modernity in Nicholas Daly's *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s* (2009), science in Laurie Garrison's *Science, Sexuality and Sensation Novels* (2010) and work on cultural implications in Deborah Wynne's *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (2001) to name but a few examples. Masculinities in sensation fiction is an area which can benefit from a further exploration of the work of Edmund Yates.

In the final section of this chapter the analysis of Yates's novels continues to focus on protagonists who trespass against acceptable values sometimes crossing class boundaries but always with motives of self-gratification. These protagonists from Yates's novels are both major and minor characters and are men. Yates, unlike so many sensation writers, does not significantly feature transgressive heroines. His concentration on particular types of male characters, identified in this section, indicates a concern for the status of masculinity, a concern which has not been the major substance of scholarship on sensation novels. It is not that masculinity has been totally ignored. Rather, male characters and their lack of masculinity have often been used or seen as ways of emphasising new and more active roles for women. This has been epitomised, for example, in male characters who are viewed as degenerate figures, such as Philip Fairlie in *The Woman In White* or Noel Vanstone in *No Name*, or men who have yet to prove their masculinity, like Walter Hartright again in *The Woman In White* and Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*. I use examples below to demonstrate that Yates not only criticised his male contemporaries but attempted to suggest a conservative revision of masculinity rather than a wholesale and radical change in the lives of women. I show that Yates's personal sequestration of the sensation genre belies its frequent

configuration as a purely feminist form, though this remains a vital and important approach to understanding sensation. As remarked above Yates was recognised as an advocate for respectful and courteous treatment of women. A brief scrutiny of an incident from *Doctor Wainright's Patient* (1871) reveals his contempt for the sexual objectification of women.

In *Doctor Wainright's Patient*, a tortuous, convoluted story published in three volumes, Yates introduces Colonel Orpington a representative figure of the type of character who had, by this time, become a regular feature of Yates's fiction. In the novel a young beautiful, lower-class woman is the object of the romantic fascination and attentions of several men. Two of these men are honourable and worthy suitors for the young lady's hand but Colonel Orpington, the third interested party, has other intentions.

With the aid of Madame Clarisse, a high-class milliner and covert procuress, her young shop assistant, Miss Stafford, the beautiful woman mentioned above, is introduced to Colonel Orpington who visits the shop with his daughter on a seemingly legitimate shopping expedition. Madame Clarisse's experienced eye has seen something more in Fanny Stafford than just her skilful shop management. She calls her 'Fanfan' in recognition of her simmering sexuality: 'Madame had discovered the existence of the volcano beneath the icy exterior [...] the girl was full of feeling and passion' (DWP, 1871, i: 266-7). Fanny, like many other young women in the Metropolis, is keenly aware of the increasing materiality of contemporary society. Like many other girls she dreams of a life without constant hard work and of having the wealth to indulge her desires. Madame Clarisse sees her opportunity, shrewdly encouraging Fanny's daydreams and constantly reminding her that she could use her natural gifts to great advantage: "Youth and beauty!" cried the girl, "If I have them, what good are they to me? Can they drag me out of this life of slavery, take me from that wretched garret, give me gowns and jewels, horses, and carriages, and a position in life?" [...] Madame Clarisse eyed her enviously, "Yes," she said, after a minute's pause; "they can do all this." (272-3) Madame Clarisse knows exactly how Fanny could achieve what she desires and knows too

the value of her interest in the young lady's ambition and this is where Colonel Orpington becomes involved.

He is a wealthy, middle-aged man well-experienced in the pursuit of young women to use and discard at his will: 'he had but little care in life beyond how to please her who for the time being was the object of his devotion' (DWP, 1871, ii: 37). By devious flattery and disingenuous suggestions that he could help Fanny to rise above her humble position and become an independent business woman Colonel Orpington attempts to set her up as his mistress. Although tempted by the offer, Fanny is also cautious and astute in her dealings with men. Declining to accept his offer immediately but keeping her options open she tells the Colonel, "It sounds like a fairy tale; but it is in fact a mere business-like proposition skilfully veiled. You wish me to be your mistress" (245). Despite Colonel Orpington's protest, 'I never had a mistress' (245), this is was one of the most obvious and blatant exposures of a character type that appeared frequently in Yates's novels.

Patrician, sexual predators who trespass class boundaries choosing to move in classes often lower in the social scale than their own to exploit male dominance in sexual and economic politics are frequently critiqued by Yates's form of the sensation novel. I use other examples to demonstrate Yates's attack on prevalent sexual double standards wherein women, not always as resolute as Miss Stafford, are both sanctified and seduced. In my analysis I show that it also becomes apparent that Yates's critique of sections of society discloses a conservative attitude which is quite contrary to Oliphant's attempt to classify him in a similar vein to other sensation writers in her far reaching review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in September 1867. Yates's tantalisingly seductive protagonist Margaret Dacre, for example, is mistakenly seen by Oliphant as the immoral and central focus of the novel *Land At Last*:

To his taste it is evident that the wickedness of the woman, her heartlessness and self-indulgence, and utter blindness to everybody's feelings but her own, render her profoundly interesting; and his good women are very dull shadows by her side.

(BEM 1867: 271)

Generic expectation could so easily have persuaded readers that the erstwhile heroine of *Land At Last* is another *femme fatale* in the style of Lady Audley or Lydia Gwilt. Margaret Dacre, though, is part of Yates's broader scheme to expose the deficiencies of a section of the male population and to construct or reconstruct models of masculinity which maintain some form of hierarchical precedence and chivalrous respect for women. Yates's ideological stance promotes a conservative residue of the dominance of former years. At the same time that Yates attempts to reassert masculinity based on principled, moral, and honest conduct by rejecting the behaviour of male trespassers his sensation fiction denies opportunities for which female protagonists have been acclaimed and recognised in recent scholarship on the genre. The repositioning of Yates's male protagonists is a deviation from what had become an almost obligatory format for the sensation novel. Yates deliberately unsettles readers' expectations by transforming the emphasis from female to male protagonists and their roles. *The Rock Ahead* (1868) is an example of a novel which manifests Yates's use of sensation fiction to promote masculinity rather than subvert existing ideology.

The *Saturday Review* published this comment on the novel in its comprehensive evaluation: '*The Rock Ahead*, then, has plenty of those peculiarities which shock the taste of cultivated English readers, but evidently attract the supporters of sensation literature' (SR, 1868: 659).⁵ Despite the typical, almost essential criticism of readers here, it is indeed a sensational story borne out by murder, a marriage break-up and revelations showing that Gilbert Lloyd, is a thoroughly despicable man who has persuaded a young, naïve and impressionable girl to elope with and marry him. The story describes the progress of their lives after their marital break-up featured early in the prologue and provides a constant reiteration of the flawed character of Gilbert Lloyd. He has adopted this name after being dismissed from his father's estate for reasons, which in true sensation style, are deferred until late in the novel. Gilbert has a brother, Miles Challenor, whose honourable character

⁵ THE ROCK AHEAD. 1868. *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, 25(655), pp. 659-660.

acts as a foil for his wickedness. Although the brothers do not interact in the novel they are used by Yates to articulate his fears for a morally declining and weakening masculinity which shows itself in the trespass of Gilbert whose predatory sexual instincts lead him to see a young boarding schoolgirl as fair prey.

In telling the story of Gertrude and Gilbert's brief marriage and Gertrude's later redemptive relationship, Yates uses her plight to emphasise and criticise the breakdown of a chivalrous masculinity which he sees as missing in the conduct of men such as Gilbert Lloyd. There was no love between Gilbert Lloyd and Gertrude and their marriage soon founders. Their early, brief meeting in the Brighton lodging house where Gilbert's racing friend has died suddenly from a short illness is a wordless affair. Later, matters come to a head in the hotel where Gertrude is to spend the night. Gilbert's anxieties about his friend's death, murdered by him we later learn, and Gertrude's inopportune arrival increases his anger. The scene is best quoted in full as it acts as a telling indication of Gilbert's character and marital violence which occurred in the higher classes of society that, though often hidden, was, as Marlene Tromp so manifestly illustrates in *The Private Rod* (2000), all too frequent. Enraged by his wife's almost casual indifference to events, as he saw it, Gilbert turns on her:

“You suppose not! Why, of course not! By heavens, it's enough to drive a man to desperation to be tied for life to a white-faced cat like this, who stands opposite him repeating his words, and shows no more interest in him than – By Jove,” he exclaimed, shaking his fist at her, “I feel as if I could knock the life out of you!”

To have been struck by him would have been no novel experience on Gertrude's part. More than once in these paroxysms of temper he had seized her roughly by the arm or shoulder, leaving the livid imprint of his hand on her delicate flesh; and she fully expected that he would strike her now. (TRA, 1868, i: 52)

This type of attack on a wife with its abusive language and ominous threat of physical assault and the shocking revelation that in this marriage and in other middle-class marriages it was

commonplace practice was also becoming increasingly revealed in testimonies from injured parties after the 1857 Divorce Act. Here Gilbert condemns himself through his own words. This is compounded by disclosure of his actual violent conduct by his young wife. He undermines any claim he might have had to an ethical and moral masculinity. Violence in marriage was considered to be behaviour resorted to by lower, uneducated classes but sensation authors like Wilkie Collins had begun to reveal its embarrassing presence in marriages and in the conduct of husbands in the higher strata of society. Tromp mentions the 1860s and 1870s as a 'time of growing concern about behaviour in marriage' (2000: 3). In *The Private Rod* she cites sensation fiction as a dominant site of discourse surrounding marital violence. She remarks, 'I found voluminous material about all the unseemly, improper issues of this study – marriage, violence, resistance in the sensation novels of the 1860s and 1870s' (10). Violence, in so-called respectable marriages, was hidden within the privacy of the home. In *The Rock Ahead* Yates draws attention to such violence in his exposure of Gilbert Lloyd. In a lengthy endnote explaining her use of the term marital violence, Tromp describes it as a 'phenomenon that often went unnamed' (248 n.10). It was extremely difficult for such abuse to be exposed in all the stark reality, of its physical and sexual extremes.

Marriage, again exposed as a sham, was Gilbert's despicable attempt to legitimate his predatory sexual desire for Gertrude. Continuous remarks are made about fleeting passion and marriage is referred to by Gilbert as a 'blunder' (TRA, 1868, i: 63). Yates allows remarkably coarse and outspoken comments about the relationships within this failed marriage as it is spoken of in terms of a transaction in which Gilbert, in an obvious sexual comment states: 'I don't think I've had the worst of the bargain' (58). Such revelations about a middle-class marriage seem surprisingly powerful, condemning abusive language, violent conduct and overtly demanding sexual indulgence. Yet these provoked little comment in contemporary reviews perhaps a comment itself on patriarchal culture at the hub of Yates's critique. Yates allows Gilbert to continually refer to the law and his legal status as husband despite his foul behaviour. It seems that Yates's priority is to condemn

men's dishonourable and depraved conduct as personal shortcomings to be solved without recourse to law.

This forlorn picture of marriage has to be set against the fact that Gertrude was just nineteen. Gilbert Lloyd had used his undeniably personable skills to flatter and persuade Gertrude of his good intent, masking his sexual interest in a young lady who the narrator constantly reminds us is extremely young. On her first appearance Gertrude is described as 'a very young lady, a girl of not more, and possibly less, than nineteen' (12-13). Later as she sits pondering her future she is again described as 'The girl – for she was but a girl' (44) and again this emphasis is repeated at the hotel where she is preparing to leave: 'she was too young and handsome to pass unnoticed (65). At this point the emphasis on the fact that she is 'uncommon young' (66) is linked to her being without a male escort by both the chambermaid and the waiter. They simply reflect public concern about solitary women travelling alone but Yates uses this continual stress on Gertrude's age as a comment on the objectionable nature of Gilbert's interest in her. He later comments that Gilbert was sufficiently deceitful that he 'knew well how to lull suspicion' (90). Gilbert Lloyd's glib attitude to the serious nature of the relationship he encourages, his conduct in marriage and his patriarchal reference to his lawful rights as a married man, initiate opportunities for Yates to suggest ways to revise and reverse the trends of masculinity of which he disapproves.

Although Gilbert Lloyd was a criminal, his major offences were kept hidden until late in the novel. As readers our suspicions of him are aroused but judgements we make of him as a man have to be tempered, in the interim, by what we see in other characters' behaviour and by what we understand of mid-Victorian attitudes to masculinity. Gilbert Lloyd's sexually predacious behaviour and his violent conduct towards Gertrude in their subsequent marriage indicate his dubious morality and his objectionable attitude to women. Apart from this aspect of his life the majority of details Yates gives us about Gilbert are details of his life as racing manager to Lord Ticehurst: a minor but wealthy aristocrat. Yates also uses Gilbert's brother Miles as a foil to provide a positive and reassuring model of masculinity. The treatment of Gertrude by both brothers underscores not only,

as Roper and Tosh clearly state, that ‘masculinity has always been defined in relation to ‘the other’ (1991: 1) but that often women are defined in terms of victimisation or dependency.

There was, at this time, an almost unspoken perception that men would act as providers and breadwinners, a role which Yates skilfully uses to indicate Gilbert’s further shortcomings. According to Tosh men were expected to be ‘dutiful husbands and attentive fathers, devotees of hearth and family’ (1999:1). He remarks on the construction of masculinity ‘in three areas – home, work and all male association’ (2) allowing that these areas impinge on each other. Gilbert fails here firstly by not providing a home other than a rather seamy lodging house, secondly by the inadequacy, irregularity and unreliability of his dubious work and thirdly by overindulging his male sociability. Yates, who had always been in paid employment as a civil servant and writer espouses a work ethic corresponding to a Carlylean attitude. Citing Thomas Carlyle’s memoir of his father Norma Clark in *Manful Assertions* (1991) records:

Carlyle invested his father with the qualities of exemplary manliness. James Carlyle’s ‘great maxim of Philosophy’ Thomas Carlyle recorded with love and pride, was that ‘man was created to work, not to speculate, or feel or dream’. The shovelling and sliding of dreams and feelings could not be incorporated into the postures real work demanded. (Eds. Roper and Tosh, 1991: 29)

Unlike Carlyle’s model and example, Gilbert Lloyd was a ‘speculator’ literally and a ‘dreamer’. Disgraced and ejected from his family for reasons kept secret, he made his way in life as a ring man on the barely legal side of the betting industry attached to horseracing. Yates, probably through his journalistic experiences, reveals a close knowledge of the racing world and what Itzkovicz calls its ‘raffish world of sporting characters’ (1988: 14). It provided him with a rich, male dominated background against which to situate and construct an image of profligate masculinity. Soon after his separation from Gertrude, Gilbert has an opportunity to move up in the racing world when he becomes racing manager to Lord Ticehurst. It is an opportunity he craves, thus cementing his place in a world which is seen as ‘recreation rather than work’ (28):

There were betting-men and betting-men; and Gilbert Lloyd knew that his birth and education fitted him more for the society of the “swells” who looked languidly on from the tops of drags or moved quietly around the Ring, than for the companionship of the professionals and welchers who drove what was literally a “roaring” trade outside the enclosure. (TRA, 1868 i: 226-7)

Despite his more respectable position in the racing fraternity Gilbert Lloyd also finds opportunities to make extra cash in the dubious racing world, ‘for Gilbert had a book of his own in addition to the “operations” in which he had a joint interest with Lord Ticehurst’ (TRA, 1868, iii: 153). Gilbert is represented through his underhand dealings in disreputable gambling as a thoroughly dishonourable man. Similarly, his marriage is represented as a total travesty of a masculinity in which, as Tosh reiterates, ‘*establishing* a household creates the conditions for a private life, but it has also long been a crucial stage in winning social recognition as an adult, fully masculine person’ (1999: 2-3).

In contrast Miles Challenor, Gilbert’s brother, is continually portrayed in the novel as a gentleman with all the nuances, briefly mentioned above, that that title carried in terms of Victorian society. Like many aspects of gendered behaviour defining and particularising details of what made a man a gentleman was fraught with contrary opinions. Changing society brought changing definitions as certain factors such as birth, for example, began to assume less importance and occupation and education became more pertinent. The ‘moral component inherent in the concept,’⁶ as David Cody puts it, is the most important factor which Yates uses to situate Gilbert and Miles in his novel. Gilbert never has the appellation gentleman granted to him but Miles is constantly referred to as such in terms which fix him as honourable and moral: ‘He was a gentleman. You could not say much more of him than that; but what an immense amount is implied in that word!’ (TRA, 1868, ii: 16). His conduct is proper and unfailingly well-mannered. Though he is reluctant to manage the family estate:

⁶ Cited from David Cody ‘The Gentleman’ <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/gentleman.html>

There was an uneasy notion abroad that Miles did not take much interest in the old place, that he cared overmuch for books and “Lunnon” and was rather degenerately ignorant in matters appertaining to agriculture. (TRA, 1868, i: 132-3)

Nevertheless he does not neglect his duty and responsibilities. Though his interests are in other matters and he defers the running of the estate to his steward he is well regarded at both Rowley court and in London society where he is described as, ‘A fine honourably-minded fellow, and rather clever than otherwise; and the few who knew him well would have said substantially the same thing in more numerous and perhaps stronger words’ (TRA, 1868, i: 153). Even though it becomes obvious that Miles is not suited to country life and will probably give it up, it is remarked late in the novel that, ‘he has tried his very best and hardest to live the life of a moral English squire’ (TRA, 1868, iii: 252). He had, in fact, tried to do what was expected of him and be the dutiful heir to the Rowley estate showing, in his own way, a willingness to work.

Yates points to a moderate acceptance here of a type of masculinity which is respected for its model of working on the estate while at the same time he disparages the leisured worthlessness of Lord Ticehurst and his constant pursuit of the racing circuit. Yates, perhaps defensively, also accepts the suggestion of intellectual interests in Miles as a worthy masculine ideal. Miles is also well-liked by the ladies, ‘and women who found him a very impracticable subject for flirtation were ready to acknowledge that his notions of friendship were peculiarly exalted and practical’ (TRA, 1868, i: 153). Although Miles is unaware of his brother’s relationship to Gertrude, his attempts to woo her also provide Yates with an opportunity to exemplify all that is worthy in a man. Although Gertrude knows the impossibility of her situation, she loves Miles and constantly refers to him as a gentleman and to ‘the tranquil stability of Miles Challenor’s character’ (TRA, 1868, iii: 56) which reminds her also of Gilbert and how she had been brought, ‘into such close contact with crime, meanness, [and] degradation’ and, ‘had passed from girlhood to womanhood, on the border of respectability’ (TRA, 1868, iii: 57).

Eventually, despite earlier setbacks, Gilbert Lloyd's suicide allows Gertrude and Miles to marry. Yates uses the situation he creates in this sensation novel to reaffirm a conservative attitude to men and in particular to men as gentlemen in the mould of honourable and chivalric subjects. Although Yates appears to reiterate the conservative status of men, he does, on occasions, indicate a more equitable attitude to women as partners in marriage. His own dedication in *Recollections and Experiences!* (1884) is 'To My Wife my constant companion, my wisest counsellor, my best friend': clear recognition of marriage as a companionate relationship. In *A Righted Wrong* (1870), another of Yates's convoluted novels, there is one statement that exemplifies Yates's attitude when Gertrude Ritherdon, towards the end of the novel, is described as 'a happy woman [...] A happy wife, loved, trusted, honoured; her husband's companion and his friend' (ARW, 1870, iii: 285). Yates's attitude is complex. He upholds a strong, honourable, chivalric model of masculinity, reminiscent of the past, while acknowledging that a more equitable association is preferable for a satisfactory relationship: an outlook which is forward looking. In *The Rock Ahead* (1868) Gilbert Lloyd's sexual trespass, for that is surely what it is in terms of Gertrude's age, status and naivety, depicts him as victimizer and Gertrude as innocent victim. The subsequent abuse of his wife and desperate allusions to his legal rights over her further demean him. He is undermined by his dubious working career and ultimately by his criminality. Miles, who succeeds where Gilbert fails, indicates a model of masculinity which Yates avers. Yates carefully manipulates the sensation novel altering the usual model to move away from possibilities of subversive undermining of dominant ideology to a careful and sympathetic restatement of traditional roles and values. Other brief examples are indicated below to substantiate evidence that Yates used popular sensation fiction to promote a conservative revision of the status quo.

Although P. D. Edwards comments on the, 'variety and individuality' (1980: 16) of Yates's female characters, his novels' central object is to re-establish and reinforce a paradigm of masculinity which may or may not have been threatened in the contemporary vogue for sensation novels. Such sensation novels which featured transgressive heroines and their apparent threat to

male authority have been a valuable and effective resource for feminist critique and interpretation. Yates's contrary use of the genre underscores the complexity of the hybrid nature of sensation fiction and its availability to multifaceted interpretation. It also demonstrates both the opportunistic deviation of Yates from his major journalism into novels and popular culture and his chance to air what appear to be sincerely held and equanimous views on the condition of society.

There is nothing startling or unusual in Yates's method of using contrasting characters to make his point. In *A Companion To Sensation Fiction* (2011) Andrew Radford, like P.D. Edwards had done previously, groups several of Yates's male characters into what, echoing Edwards, he calls a familiar 'type' (Edwards, 1980: 21). Neither critic elaborates in great detail on these characters but they are examples that are used by Yates to suggest his support for a conservative revision of masculinity. In the two examples which follow I demonstrate this reading of Yates's novels. In *Land At Last* (1866) Lionel Brakespeare a minor aristocrat seduces the beautiful, vulnerable young heroine Margaret Dacre overcoming her resistance by marrying her under an assumed name. He has no moral scruples having committed bill forgery and been disowned by his own family. He discards Margaret and after a brief flight to Australia returns and looks for opportunities to repeat more of the same behaviour but for more profit. Margaret is rescued by and married to Geoffrey Ludlow a rising artist of the Bohemian Titian Sketching Club. Unable to settle into domesticity, even after the birth of a son, Margaret, in a hugely melodramatic but effectively powerful scene, rejects Geoffrey and rushes off to return to Brakespeare. Margaret meets absolute rejection from her legal husband. Having discovered his whereabouts she goes to his hotel room where she is immediately and heartlessly spurned:

“I know you fast enough – though what you do here I *don't* know. What do you do here?”

“I came to see you” [...]

“Well” he repeated – “having seen me – having fulfilled the intention of your visit – had you not better – go?” (LAL, 1866, iii: 43)

Despite Margaret's desperate pleading she is part of a past with which Brakespeare is resolutely determined to dispense and is even prepared to resort to violence if necessary to be rid of. He warns her in uncompromising fashion:

Shaking his fist at her, – “drop it I tell you, or it will be the worse for you. Let me hear you saying another word about your being my wife, and, so help me God, I'll be the death of you! That's plain isn't it? You understand that?” (52)

The violence of these scenes in their language and threats are more reminiscent of the type of anecdotal stories linked to the behaviour of the lower and commonly considered brutal classes.

Yates shrewdly introduces a reference to the relatively recent Divorce Act of 1857 to strengthen opinion against the disreputable character of Brakespeare. This is reminiscent of Gilbert Lloyd's frequent allusion to marital rights under the law despite the body of evidence which suggests his complete moral obliquity. Margaret's powerful emotional and physical appeal is ignored as Brakespeare remains dispassionately unmoved. He treats his legal wife with contemptuous scorn pretending misunderstanding on her part and denying any obligation on his. He even suggests that his own course of action to alleviate and improve his own position will be, as he said, 'by making a good marriage' (50). Despite all reminders and appeals Brakespeare issued an ultimatum:

If you open your mouth on this matter, if once you hint that you've any claim on me, or send to me, or write to me, or annoy me at all, I'll go right in at once and find out all you've been doing, and then see what they'll say to you in the Divorce Court.
(53-4)

Yates exposes masculinity which is based to a degree on legal sanction and support. He does not indicate a desire for further change in the law but endorses masculinity founded in a personal morality and honour qualities totally lacking in a major male protagonist of Yates's second novel *Running The Gauntlet* (1865).

Charles Mitford is a major protagonist in *Running The Gauntlet*. He is first encountered in a coffee house, a dissipated and forlorn figure frequenting the lower ranks of society as a result of his own dishonesty and his association with petty criminals. By an amazing turn of events Charles Mitford receives an undeserved inheritance and marries his childhood sweetheart Georgina Stanfield the naïve, trusting and faithful but spirited daughter of a rural clergyman. Georgie, as she is known, stands by Charles Mitford despite her father's warning and strict orders to finish the relationship. In a narrative organisation which becomes a familiar method Charles Mitford is revealed as the scoundrel he is all along, 'a sinner, not merely against religious ordinances, but against the laws of his country' (RTG, 1865 i: 103). Having been guilty of bill fraud and possibly other crimes Charles's upturn in fortune allows his marriage to proceed and personal standing in society to rise. Within a short time of his marriage, however, he becomes sexually infatuated with Laura Hammond, a married woman of dubious reputation. Colonel Alsager is introduced as a foil to Mitford. An ex-soldier he has an almost flawless character and is given a detailed biography which contrast powerfully with the details of Charles Mitford's squalid life:

they walked like him, they grew their whiskers as nearly like his as they could [...]

The *deux-temps* valse had just been imported in those days, and Alsager danced it with a long quick swinging step which no one else could accomplish; he played the cornet almost as well as Koenig. (RTG, 1865, i: 24-5)

Alsager is also a consummate horseman and later bravely saves Georgie's life in an incident with runaway horses. He could act and draw, was well travelled and most honourably defends Georgie and her husband when they are the speculative subjects of raunchy gossip at the Maecenas club. Here Yates defines two models of masculinity in a structure which, as indicated above, is regularly repeated in his work. Predictably the way is cleared for Alsager, representative of honourable masculinity, to replace Charles Mitford who is fatally wounded in a duel over Laura Hammond: a duel of honour which ironically affirms Charles's dishonour.

Undoubtedly Yates's sensation fiction has a different focus from many of the examples which have been central to feminist readings of the genre. As mentioned above limiting critical exploration of gender issues to a purely feminist approach is under review by critics and in this thesis as engagement with masculinities in sensation fiction becomes more common. This discussion of Edmund Yates's neglected sensation fiction tries to particularise his approach to the genre. An attempt is made above to draw a distinction in Yates's sensation fiction by describing his focus on masculinities within the broad compass of the word trespass used to connote a distinctly selfish and self-indulgent attitude. Yates uses trespass not to suggest a liberatory tactic but to make his personal critique of an area of society he views in need of reform through personal action.

The importance and relevance of the recovery of lost and forgotten writers to the critical domain of sensation fiction highlights the omission of Edmund Yates. While it must be admitted that his writing lacks the quality of such significant sensation writers as Braddon and Collins, for example, there is a noticeable and significant difference in the narrative organisation of a writer who was considered very much part of the 'sensational school'. I have determined that there was a narrow but significant difference in the way that transgression, so important in critical terms in canonical sensation fiction, was not the main narrative thrust in Yates's novels and the way trespass could be invoked to describe the different focus which he placed on his emphasis which centred on men and masculinities rather than on centrally transgressive women.

My analysis of several of Yates's novels has offered one trajectory, indicating men's professional misconduct, and the other patrician misdemeanour. In Yates's sensation novels, as in other more canonical sensation fiction, responsibility for events and their successful conclusion is placed in the hands of men. There is, however, a significant difference. Yates does not simply accept the status quo. He suggests a conservative revision of masculinity as a resolution for what he sees as social problems deeply entrenched in and influenced by the conduct of men not in the lack of greater autonomy for women. He uses male protagonists to highlight what he sees as the failure of dominant ideology. Moral inconsistency, violation of professional duty, violence,

commodification, sexual exploitation and flawed attitudes to power, wealth and influence are all critiqued in Yates's individual use of the generic formula of sensation fiction. The mid-century concept of masculinity perceived in gentlemanly conduct is also the focus of Yates's critique. This highlights aspects of plausibility pertinent to the next chapter which attempts to assess the relevance of Yates's use of trespass when applied to examples of canonical sensation fiction.

Chapter Five Edmund Yates and the modern sensation canon

Previous chapters in this study of sensation fiction have focussed on masculinity in the contextualisation of the genre in its serialised form, anxieties about readership and the marketplace, and the sensation novels of Edmund Yates. I have argued that containment of the genre was taking place consequentially through the work of discourse and paratexts, and intentionally in the condemnation of sensation fiction by critics. Containment is at work, as I have indicated previously, in prevailing discourses which surrounded serialised instalments of sensation fiction as it appeared in popular magazines. I argue that masculine ideology is both threatened and contained within serialised sensation fiction and that surrounding articles uphold and maintain a strong masculine discourse that is also prevalent in the tenor of contemporary reviews.

Although it became rapidly popular, sensation fiction eventually met with a generally hostile reception from reviewers and the establishment. Margaret Oliphant, a leading critic of the day, moved from a relatively positive acceptance of the genre, which in terms of fictional production she called ‘a most striking and original effort, sufficiently individual to be capable of originating a new school in fiction’ (1862: 565),¹ to a bitter attack several years later. Her change of attitude now revealed that she was highly condemnatory of the effects and influence of a corpus of literature that she complained was overwhelmed with, ‘stories of bigamy and seduction, those *soi disant* revelations of things that lie beneath the surface of life’ (258). What exactly prompted her change of heart is difficult to know. The flood of sensation novels available to readers and their formulaic repetition of certain themes, such as bigamy, prompted morally sensitive critics to raise a voice against the content of novels that was contrary to dominant codes of acceptable behaviour. There was a substantial fear that readers would be influenced by the transgressive behaviour about which

¹ SENSATION NOVELS. 1862. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 91(559), pp. 564-584.

they read. Henry Longueville Mansel, the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, condemned sensation fiction as a cultural production that was both morally harmful and culturally inferior. Radford, in one of several summaries of Mansel's lengthy and expansive polemic against the genre, says that, 'While he treats the sensation novel as ephemeral output, mechanical and manufactured writing' he asserts that, 'it paradoxically exerts a formidable and agitating influence over the populace, 'preaching to the nerves' its message of moral atrophy' (Radford, 2009:10). Responses which attacked and vilified sensation fiction were abundant: *The St James's Magazine* suggests that in sensation novels 'The main object seems to be to excuse criminality, or to render vice interesting' (SJM, 1862: 343)²; *Lady Audley's Secret* is credited by *The North British Review* with a 'thick unhealthy atmosphere of crime and madness' (NBR, 1863:189)³; and novel readers are urged by *The Reader* to 'imitate lovers of poetry, reading only first rate books [...] and so cut off the demand for, and preventing the supply of, the needless trash that every season, nay every week, is brought into the market'(TR, 1863: 477)⁴. These are deliberate and obvious attempts to contain and suppress the genre. They are direct and conscious pronouncements by reviewers and other authoritative bodies, such as the Church, who viewed sensation fiction as a potent and disturbing force – a threat to dominant ideology and to the status of the novel as a respectable literary form.

Yates was moderately welcomed in positive reviews and also received his share of criticism and, as suggested earlier, it was noticed that he was sympathetic to female protagonists. Although differences were sometimes commented on there did not seem to be a marked discrimination between sensation writers at the time. Yates himself, as the example above shows, came under the critical attention of Margaret Oliphant. Yates switched the narrative force and emphasis of his sensation fiction to focus the dynamics of narrative tension on questions of masculinity rather than

² PHILOSOPHY OF "SENSATION.". 1862. *The St.James's magazine*, pp. 340-346.

³ ART. VI.-Novels and Novelists of the Day. 1863. *The North British review*, **38**(75), pp. 168-190.

⁴ TWO MORE OF THOSE NOVELS. 1863. *The Reader, 1863-1867*, (20), pp. 476-477.

female autonomy. Yates's deliberate realignment becomes a containing force: defusing provocative plotlines which featured transgressive women as the leading protagonists and thereby moderating opportunities for outraged reaction.

In this chapter I argue that despite the apparently successful containment of subversive elements in sensation fiction, namely its transgressive women, trespassing men still remain to destabilise dominant gender positioning. Yates's focus on trespass is a rejection of conduct he disdained and this type of conduct, though often well-disguised, is present in canonical sensation fiction. It is also worth mentioning that the invisibility and disguise of abusive masculinity is apposite to situations which occur at present and in cases which reach back into the 1980s and the time of resurgent interest in the sensation genre. Yates's work is significant because its conservative tendency inadvertently reveals how deficient masculinity destabilizes its own authority. It is an insidious forceful yet often invisibly powerful masculinity, as seen in recent contemporary reports, and often appears shadowy, obscure and covert. To distinguish this masculinity from transgression, so often used in describing female protagonists in sensation fiction, I have described it as trespass.

Although I have highlighted gender contestation here, there were other sites of disagreement and concern. Chapter Three, for example, focuses on anxieties from reviewers about fiction and about reading. The maintenance of class demarcation is always present and racial issues also feature in sensation fiction as I indicate later in this chapter where I establish links between my analysis of Yates and *The Moonstone*. Authors, out of necessity, and with an eye on the marketplace, were themselves often complicit in containment, closing down controversy in secure and acceptable endings so that a writer like Mary Braddon could petition at the end of *Lady Audley's Secret*, 'I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 446). Inherent in Braddon's statement and readers' acceptance of its relevance is what Alan Sinfield, in *Faultlines*, describes as plausibility:

The strength of ideology derives from the way it gets to be common sense; it "goes without saying." For its production is not an external process, stories are not outside

ourselves, something we just hear or read about. Ideology makes sense for us – of us – because it is already proceeding when we arrive in the world, and we come to consciousness in its terms. As the world shapes itself around and through us, certain interpretations of experience strike us as plausible: they fit with what we have experienced already, and are confirmed by others around us. (1992: 32)

Such plausibility, the plausibility which inherits Braddon's plea for reader tolerance above, despite its loaded irony, makes, as Sinfield acknowledges, '[t]he stories they endorse [...] more difficult to challenge, even to disbelieve' (33). I suggest that in some examples of the modern canon of sensation, trespass, identified above in Yates's narrative method, can be used to explore both explicit, subtle and virtually imperceptible deceptions in men's conduct. Such trespassing motivated by power and self-interest secures almost unquestionable dominance for men in a range of issues such as gender, class and race.

My reading, now applied to modern canonical sensation novels, foregrounds an emphasis on trespass and the censure of dishonourable male conduct. Trespass is viewed as a form of conduct which is self-seeking, self-promoting, in fact, totally self-centred. It cannot be read as a form of protest or liberatory stance possible in perceptions of transgressive actions but it could be regarded as overstepping social and moral boundaries. In Yates's novels trespass is ultimately replaced by a reaffirmation of positive masculine models with the added suggestion of a little more equality but no radical realignment of power. Yates's conservatism in closing down his novels with acceptable though not always typically conventional endings is very much consistent with endings in other sensation novels. In Yates's novels, as I have indicated above, men are often punished and a return to traditional masculine codes is advocated. This reading is applied and adapted below in an analysis of *Lady Audley's Secret*, *East Lynne*, *Cometh Up As A Flower* and *The Moonstone*.

Above I highlighted how Yates identified and exposed negative and disturbing aspects of masculinity including: violence, procurement, sexual predation, and the commodification of women. These are examples of what I call trespass. In Yates's stories he removes 'trespassing' men

whose main concern is simply their own self-gratification. In these novels a succession of men and their willing accomplices are side-lined or eliminated: Dr. Wilmott, Robert Streightley, Ned Guyon, Gilbert Lloyd, Lionel Brakespeare and Charles Mitford. On the whole they are replaced by Yates's conception of a more chivalric, gentlemanly and equitable masculinity although, as indicated above, these conceptions are broadly based and have their weaknesses and limitations in view of the ongoing debates about masculinities in mid-Victorian Britain. Despite the need for a cautious acknowledgment of Yates's construction of his exemplar of masculinity, contemporary readers are left to celebrate what appear to be stable and happy relationships and ideological foundations that are secure. This is effectively engineered by Yates's control over his female protagonists and manipulation of masculinity. A reviewer in *The Reader* on 25th November 1865 commenting on *Running The Gauntlet* declares: 'though its author more than once crosses dangerous ground, he has written nothing against good morals and correct taste' (TR, 1865: 595)⁵. Yates seems to have managed to adapt the sensation formula to propose a conservative revision and promote a concept of masculinity as a remedy for at least some of society's ills. Yates's containment of sensation fiction's notoriously subversive tendencies through his realignment of narrative roles is apparently achieved without alienating the moral sensitivity of critics.

Alan Sinfield draws attention to: 'the strategic organisation of texts – both the modes by which they produce plausible stories and construct subjectivities, and the faultlines and breaking points through which they enable dissident reading' (1992: 9). Yates's successful calming, suppression and revision of male corrupt behaviour suggests that weaknesses in ideological coherence are, or can be, successfully resolved not only in individual cases in particular novels but in a general application in wider society. Application of the reading of Yates's 'trespass' to canonical sensation fiction would appear to reinforce the inevitability of complete containment via the removal of morally suspect women and weak, defective or unsatisfactory men and the elevation of deserving and worthy men. Yates's answer appears to be a panacea that comprehensively offers a

⁵ Running the Gauntlet. 1865. *The Reader, 1863-1867*, 6(152), pp. 594-595.

solution to the social problem of gender politics which he has identified as a challenge that sensation fiction is engaged with. This fits persuasively with theoretical views of subversion and containment, which suggest that 'subversion is always produced to be contained within the text' (Brannigan, 1998: 114). It also suggests that despite residual elements in Yates's suggested re-organisation of masculinities this is an area of analytical attention that has been neglected in modern criticism. In *Lady Audley's Secret* the removal of Lady Audley appears to be the major factor that restores and sustains ideological coherence, leaving behind prime examples of masculinities that, by implication, deserve to prosper as representatives of a coherent and plausible ideology.

Yates, in the above analysis of his revisionary agenda, constructed quite uncomplicated binaries using composite constructions of 'bad' and 'good' men to build his case. Generally Yates's deplorable men were comprehensively weak, for example, Gilbert Lloyd, in *The Rock Ahead*, was dishonest, violent, foul-mouthed, indolent, negligent and blatantly criminal whereas his brother, Miles, epitomised a combination of positive masculine traits. The deliberate construction of a clear-cut good versus evil narrative model, with its supporting sub-plot to extend the novel to the requisite three volumes, assists Yates in achieving his reactionary purpose. Such a distinctive division achieves what Yates wishes. Unpicking other writer's sensation novels involves more complex frameworks where power and domination reside not in one body but in various characters and situations. Even a significantly minor protagonist, such as Luke Marks, almost excluded or ignored in terms of hegemonic masculinity, is shown by Heinrichs (2007) to act humanely in his rescue of George Talboys and therefore to morally transcend hierarchical organisation. Such exposure of the lack of ideological coherence reflects human frailty and complexity as it evolves in the novels. Reader acceptance of plausibility, of 'it goes without saying,' is generally secured by a common sense appeal which sustains, for example, Sir Michael's consistent appearance as an English gentleman and obscures his breach of morality to secure his own ends. The following analysis reveals how Yates's straightforward criteria disqualifies major male protagonists, in the

modern canon of sensation fiction, from the invulnerability and acceptability they appear to achieve by the end of such novels.

Lady Audley's Secret .

In Yates's novels, referred to above, ideological coherence generally appears to be secured by the end of the story when most trespassing men, men whose self-interests dominate their actions, are removed. Men who 'triumph' in the long term are deserving and worthy. Even some men who have erred quite badly while not ultimately rewarded by Yates find some sort of solace or redemption; so Dr Wilmott, in *The Forlorn Hope*, eventually devotes much of his time to helping to improve social conditions for soldiers and their families and Robert Streightley, in *Kissing The Rod*, dies quietly in the knowledge that he has been forgiven. Even in these novels readers' sympathies are ultimately directed away from suffering women to undeserving men. Harmony is often achieved by the removal of the threat of the transgressive woman. The remaining men have changed, developed, matured or even suffered but they are, for the most part, portrayed as deserving and estimable men. Deserving and honourable men survive traumatic events and thrive in comfortable endings to canonical sensation novels.

Lady Audley's Secret, a seminal work of sensation, is a useful if well examined starting point for scrutinising and uncovering the misrepresentation of masculinity. One of the earliest sensation novels, *Lady Audley's Secret*, is intricately plotted and layered, and bedevils an unambiguous interpretation with its central male characters superficially upholding the ideological foundations of contemporary society. As Gilbert has noted critical emphasis so often focuses on Lady Audley: 'critics expressed outrage over the portrayal of the alienated woman and entirely missed the much more subversive portrait of alienated patriarchy' (1997: 94). The fact that so little comment was made of George Talboy's desertion of Helen, his young wife, underlines this claim. In contemporary reviews George's desertion is sometimes ignored or cursorily mentioned as in the *North British Review*: 'Another person who figures in this novel is George Talboys. He deserts his

wife, lived there (Australia) for three years and a half, then returned to England with £20,000' (NBR, 1865: 184)⁶. This perfunctory statement simply reports a fact from the novel without opinion or judgement. George's ill thought-out plan and conduct here are used to suggest honourable and courageous ideas of risk and possible self-sacrifice for the future benefit and welfare of his family: a noble and manly action. Where judgement is passed George Talboys is often made to appear as the aggrieved party:

When the last shilling is neared, taunts and reproaches are heard from the lips of the young wife. In despair George Talboys the upbraided husband, rushes off to the gold fields of Australia, and in three years realises a handsome fortune. He returns full of love and joy and hope. (TCR, 1862: 179)⁷

And in a similar vein:

Having soon come to the end of his slender resources, the lovely Lucy vents her disappointment in tears and reproaches, drives her husband from her in despair; and while Talboys goes to Australia to replenish his purse his wife seeks her fortune as a governess, and pretending to be unmarried, soon inveigles a rich elderly baronet and succeeds in shortly becoming Lady Audley. (FM, 1863: 257)⁸

Here it is the impatient and unsympathetic wife who harasses her husband and forces him from the domestic hearth; she is the very opposite of ideological submissiveness anticipated from the so called *Angel of the House* (1854) epitomised in Patmore's poem of that name. Here Talboy's desertion is misrepresented as a bold initiative to rescue the family finances while Helen/Lucy, his wife, is cast as the impatient and ungrateful woman.

⁶ ART. VI.-1. Lady Audley's Secret. 1865. *The North British review*, 43(85), pp. 180-204.

⁷ LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET. 1862. *The Critic*, 25(631), pp. 178-179.

⁸ THE POPULAR NOVELS OF THE YEAR. 1863. *Fraser's magazine for town and country, 1830-1869*, 68(404), pp. 253-269

Throughout the novel major male characters such as Sir Michael Audley, his nephew, Robert Audley, Harcourt Talboys and his son George Talboys act within the bounds of traditional masculinity although Robert had his early eccentricities. They are legitimised by conduct which conforms to the usual expectations of men and would have survived Yates's purging of male trespassers. A closer examination reveals that they had defects which devalued their legitimacy and more importantly the legitimacy of a system in which men's interests always take precedence. These male characters found at the heart of *Lady Audley's Secret* are appraised for evidence of weaknesses which destabilise traditional ideological coherence. Throughout the novel such men are portrayed as acceptable examples of conformity to tradition which to them is authentic, irrefutable and enduring. Masculine attributes supported in these protagonists are: strength and physical prowess, integrity, truthfulness and honour.

During an extended visit to Audley Court, Robert's enquiries and Lady Audley's increasing anxiety eventually lead to the first mention of honour in relation to the Audley family. Lady Audley's subtle and false inferences of improper attention to her by her nephew lead Robert into accepting Sir Michael's reluctant and 'delicately hinted' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003:160) suggestion that it would be better if he left the court. In an emotional exchange Robert:

Turned to the baronet, and grasping his hand, exclaimed – "God forbid, my dear uncle, that I should ever bring trouble upon such a noble heart as yours! God forbid that the lightest shadow of dishonour should ever fall upon your honoured head – least of all through any agency of mine!" (160-1)

Here Robert invokes reference to tradition and to an honour-based patriarchy reflecting the Audleys' deeply rooted base in outworn conventions of rank and privilege secured through inheritance. The Audleys are fearful for the loss of prestige and respectability and for the forfeiture of honour on which their masculine status depends. For families such as the Audleys, the loss of their 'good' name would diminish their reputation, respect and ultimately power and was an ignominy to be avoided at all cost and even more so if it was the result of an inappropriate marriage.

Honour as a traditional tenet of masculinity was gradually being outweighed as new masculine codes of behaviour evolved. Tosh draws attention to such developments. He says:

Writers on manliness were essentially concerned with the inner character of man, and with the kind of behaviour which displayed this character in the world at large. (1994:183)

Emphasising the vital qualities of restraint and endeavour Tosh continues:

The dominant code of Victorian manliness with its emphasis on self-control, hard work and independence, was that of the professional and business class and manly behaviour was what (among other things) established a man's class credentials vis à vis his peers and subordinates. (183)

As the novel proceeds honour is synecdochically used to describe patriarchal ideology in its entirety and Robert's task becomes more than a search for his missing friend. It becomes a symbolic and important reaffirmation of patriarchal norms within which the Audley family operate.

Alan Sinfield's informative study of dissident reading, *Faultlines*, provides a useful reference point in an examination of Sir Michael Audley particularly his description of how stories are told to endorse and support reputation. Sinfield refers to Othello and his 'constant performance of his story' (1992: 29) to support his identity. In *Lady Audley's Secret* there is a similar repetition of Sir Michael's 'story' although, in this case, much of the rehearsing of the story is done by the narrator. It is, however, sufficient to establish what Sinfield calls, '*the conditions of plausibility*' that 'determine which stories will be believed' (30). Approbation and esteem for Sir Michael are established by direct affirmation from the narrator, verbal witness of other characters and as the product of ideology by which readers would expect a country squire to behave as he did. Sinfield explains that his idea of 'stories' refers to the 'production of ideology', to the system, 'that produces, makes plausible, concepts and systems to explain who we are, who others are, how the world works' (32). Braddon shrewdly combines 'stories' from her narrator with ideologically descriptive 'stories' to authorise readers' approval of Sir Michael. Indeed such is the overwhelming

plausibility attached to Sir Michael throughout the novel that it becomes difficult to challenge his position. It is also worth reiterating here that although Sir Michael is presented as an almost faultless protagonist he remains just one element in the whole ideological system, dominated by men and their values, which ultimately fails Lucy and by implication all women. Construction of Sir Michael begins early in the novel with estimations of his character that prove ultimately ironic in view of what happens later in the novel and through a more searching examination of his character. These estimations of Sir Michael's character are in the 'stories' told by his family and friends and which authenticate his masculinity.

Sir Michael's public persona is largely constructed for him by others: principally family, friends, and in the first instance neighbours. The nearest neighbours of Sir Michael both geographically and socially are the Dawsons. Mrs Dawson is excited by her governess's marital prospects exemplifying how, at a superficial level, the ideology of marriage is uppermost in women's social outlook: 'Of course it would be a magnificent match; he has a splendid income, and is one of the most generous of men' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 50) she tells Lucy, agreeing with her husband that it would be 'something more than madness in a penniless girl to reject such an offer' (51). The Dawsons appreciate Sir Michael's wealth and position. 'Your position would be very high, and you would be enabled to do a great deal of good' (50), Mrs Dawson advises Lucy, but financial considerations aside they also esteem Sir Michael greatly as a man as we see much later in the novel. In a private conversation with Robert Audley Dr. Dawson declares Sir Michael, 'one of the noblest men in Christendom' (240). Here Dr. Dawson echoes concepts of nobility, honour and Christian nationhood through which Sir Michael's image is publicised and which needs to be considered. Such comments, which help to construct Sir Michael's public character, reflect the opinions held by those around him and may possibly be overlooked by readers.

As shown above there are frequent references in the novel to Sir Michael's honour and nobility, somewhat intangible qualities, but indicative of what Samuel Smiles saw as qualities inherent to his depiction of character although Smiles does not lay great store on nobility of birth. In

his 1871 polemical publication, *Character*, Smiles equates notions of honour and nobility with moral integrity as opposed to status acquired by birthright and therefore implies that it is available to all. Throughout *Lady Audley's Secret* readers are constantly reminded that Sir Michael is a man of honour and nobility, a gentleman and therefore a man of unquestionable integrity. Persistent, almost obsessional references are made to protecting Sir Michael's honour by his nephew reinforcing readers' image of Sir Michael. In a heated exchange with Lady Audley Robert remarks, 'Heaven forbid that either you or I should ever bring grief or dishonour upon my uncle's generous heart!' (168), he tells Dr Dawson, 'You cannot respect my uncle or my uncle's honour more sincerely than I do' (240) suggesting the durability of family ties inextricably bound up in masculine notions of honour-bound patriarchy.

Frequent references to Sir Michael in terms of honour and nobility reinforce a public image of the baronet that is further consolidated by what we learn about him as genial country squire, as kindly uncle, and as loving husband. Although there are signs of decay in parts of the estate at Audley Court, and some commentators link Sir Michael to decay and stasis, the estate has endured for generations and Sir Michael is deeply rooted in a weakening class system of inheritance, privilege and power. He plays his nominal role, 'chiefly occupied in agricultural pursuits and manly sports which kept him away from home' (138-9) or occupying his library where he, 'liked to sit reading or writing, or arranging the business of the estate with his steward' (294). He is very much in control of affairs at the Court and active in terms of his sphere of influence epitomising a system and ideology that changed, survived and adapted with continuing resilience.

Although his appearance ages him we also know that he was considered handsome, strong, active and altogether a manly man, 'He was a big man, tall and stout, with a deep sonorous voice, handsome black eyes [...] he was as active as a boy, and one of the hardest riders in the county (46). He is significantly configured as an aging Byronic/Rochester figure concealing his deeper sexual desires and male predilection for power. There is no doubt about his popularity as witnessed in his house-party for Christmas where at the end of festivities he was sought by everyone:

Sir Michael was in request everywhere. Shaking hands with the young sportsmen; kissing rosy-cheeked girls; sometimes even embracing portly matrons who came to thank him for their pleasant visit; everywhere genial, hospitable, generous, happy, and beloved the baronet hurried from room to room, from hall to the stables, from the stables to the court-yard, from the court-yard to the arched gateway to speed the parting guest. (153)

This is a depiction of a man of immense popularity and good humour whose profile is further cemented in his presentation as the consummate family man; father, uncle and husband paradigmatic models of Victorian masculinities. He is, if taken at face value, the stereotypical paterfamilias, the dominant ideal, the centre of moral authority and traditional head of the family the most important social unit in mid-nineteenth century Britain. As such he should both rule and protect both morally and physically for the benefit of all but closer examination reveals flaws in his character.

A widower for many years he is the indulgent father who spoils his young daughter and despite occasional interruptions treats his nephew like a son urging him to stay on at Audley Court after the Christmas celebrations are over. It is, though, in his role as husband that we are presented with the embodiment of Victorian ideology and particularly the readers' earliest view of Sir Michael and his wife together. It is a scene that invokes a visuality predominant in Victorian paintings of family scenes:

Often in the cool of the evening Sir Michael Audley would stroll up and down smoking his cigar with his dog at his heels, and his pretty young wife dawdling by his side; but in about ten minutes the baronet and his companion would grow tired of the rustling limes [...] and would stroll back to the white drawing-room, where my lady played dreamy melodies by Beethoven and Mendelssohn till her husband fell asleep in his easy chair. (45-46)

It is verbally and visually a perfect scene to emphasise the significance of ideological certainty and readers' conviction and confidence in that system. Sir Michael leads, he walks purposefully 'up and down' (49) while both the dog and his wife have their significant places: the 'dog at his heels and his pretty young wife dawdling by his side' (49). A simple stroll in the grounds exhibits manifestations of power such as the cigar and the sudden ending of the walk at which point Lady Audley, as expected, dutifully provides suitable and significantly high-cultural entertainment at the piano until Sir Michael falls 'asleep in his easy chair' (49). Such compatibility is multiplied and reiterated continuously as the marriage is depicted, for the most part, as the perfect match which the Dawsons predicted. Despite the submissive and compliant part played by Lucy much of the happy state of affairs in the marriage and the family is attributed to Sir Michael.

He is constantly portrayed as the strong man who protects his weak and delicate wife and is solicitous at all times for her welfare and happiness: 'this fragile creature, whom it was his happy privilege to protect and defend' (111). Apart from his desire to protect and shelter his wife readers are left in no doubt that despite certain misgivings they may have about the sexual infatuation of an older man for a much younger and beautiful girl, for that is how she is described, that Sir Michael loves his wife

It is impossible for me ever to tell the purity of his generous love – it is impossible to describe that affection which was as tender as the love of a young mother for her first-born, as brave and chivalrous as the heroic passion of a Bayard for his liege mistress. (295)

Sir Michael's authenticity as the honourable and noble Victorian man, who is strong, masculine, kind, father, uncle and loving husband, in short his total credibility and plausibility are clearly established.

In terms of my reading and understanding of Yates's writing and its models of honour and tradition, and in the use of 'trespass' to describe self-centred and selfish men, it would seem almost impossible to find Sir Michael anything other than the type of man and masculinity which Yates

saw as an alternative to discredited men and transgressive women in his novels. Here, however, it is worth first mentioning Sir Michael's counterpart Harcourt Talboys. Harcourt, like Sir Michael, is rich and prosperous but he represents a more aggressively conforming and authoritarian figure of patriarchal ideology. He brooks no compromise, disinheriting his son for marrying beneath his class, and never in Robert Audley's words being, 'too indulgent a friend to his only son' (185). Harcourt Talboys's masculinity, while ultimately a no more reactionary and hidebound patriarchy than Sir Michael's, is openly obdurate and uncompromising as can be witnessed not only in his treatment of his son but in his domestic rule where his almost contemptuous treatment of his daughter sees her hardly daring to move. She is banished to a window seat to her 'work' and receives a harsh rebuke for simply trying to retrieve a dropped cotton reel, "'Sit down, Clara," said the hard voice of Mr. Talboys [...] "Sit down, Clara," he repeated, "and keep your cotton in your workbox"'(211). Characteristically, the domineering patriarch, Harcourt only tolerates a woman's silent presence, 'hardly acknowledging her at all in his interview with Robert Audley where he confirms the unerring stamp of a masculinity that may even have troubled Edmund Yates's definitive distinction of what was acceptable and what was undesirable. Harcourt Talboys would have found Sir Michael's marriage to a governess difficult to understand in terms of his own partisan views. Although he is an extreme example of dominant masculinity he does serve to underline the difficulty that the overarching benevolent plausibility of Sir Michael is to expose.

Two scenes in the novel expose Sir Michael's inability to resist dominant ideology which situates him near the apex of a political and economic system that maintains and sustains masculine power and privilege. The first scene describes the awkward and clumsy proposal of Sir Michael for the hand of Lucy Graham, governess at the local doctor's house. Sir Michael, having already been married as part of, 'a dull, jog-trot bargain, made to keep some estate in the family' (48), desperately wants to found a relationship on his own romantic view of love. He appears to be completely transparent and honest in his appeal to Lucy that love should be the overriding factor which determines progress into marriage. Nevertheless, despite his apparent openness and honesty,

Sir Michael cannot transcend ideology and let his avowed love speak. He has to remove obligation and onus for a successful marriage from himself yet at the same time underscore his own personal happiness and self-interest in much the same manner that was exposed in Yates's examination of the conduct of his trespassing male protagonists:

“I scarcely think there is a greater sin, Lucy,” he said solemnly, “than that of the woman who marries a man she does not love. You are so precious to me, my beloved, that deeply as my heart is set on this, and bitter as the mere thought of disappointment is to me, I would not have you commit such a sin for any happiness of mine. If my happiness could be achieved by such an act, which it could not – which it never could,” he repeated earnestly, “nothing but misery can result from a marriage dictated by any motive but truth and love.” (51).

Here, the occasion of the most sincere avowal of love that Sir Michael can make, is punctuated by references to women's susceptibility to sin, to ulterior motives and deception. Also taking prime place in the proposal is Sir Michael's happiness and his recurrent use of 'me', 'my' and 'mine'. It is a marriage to be made for his happiness but the integrity and legitimacy of it will depend on Lucy.

Unsuccessful in securing a commitment of love Sir Michael's determination to have his own way and to marry Lucy permits no obstacles. In a rapid reversal of his previous statement Sir Michael quickly compromises on love and accepts that she will obviously only marry him for 'the advantages of such an alliance' (52). Even in his concessions Sir Michael tries to dismiss his very powerful earlier emphasis on love to an old man's fancy, “I dare say I am a romantic old fool; but if you do not dislike me, and if you do not love anyone else, I see no reason why we should not make a very happy couple. Is it a bargain Lucy?”(52-3). Having already derided his previous marriage as a mere convenient bargain, and single-minded in his determination to marry Lucy, he is prepared to negotiate to achieve his desires. Ultimately his power must prevail.

The Baronet's sudden and rapid shift from romantic suitor to pragmatic contractor exemplifies masculine determination to maintain and use power. Nor does Sir Michael appear to be

compromised; he has not done anything dishonourable, acting with significant propriety yet acting within the flexibility that a flawed ideology allows. Sir Michael uses the ultimate advantage he knows that he possesses over Lucy. His wealth and power secure her hand but cannot prevent his immediate sense of deflation as he leaves the Dawson's house. Readers' sympathy and acceptance of Sir Michael is cultivated in this scene despite his ambiguous attitude to love and marriage. This ambiguity, despite its apparent ready acceptability, contributes to an overall lack of ideological coherence. Lack of coherence referred to here is a system which delineates roles for men and women that are naturalised to validate and authenticate them. Woman is eulogised as 'the ideal of domestic ideology [...] defined primarily in terms of her reproductive and domestic functions within the developing bourgeois family' (Pykett, 1992: 12). Man supposedly held his place in competitive economic, professional and political roles providing home, support, love and steadfast protection for a supposedly passive, dependent and chaste woman. Sexual passion was denied as part of a woman's natural interest and encouraged as a reinforcement of masculinity. Such separation of ideas and its gendered associations lacks unity, denies equality and reinforces a denial of women's human rights. It foregrounds one group's ideological domination and exploitation of another. In Sir Michael's case he resembles a quasi-Gothic protagonist subtly predatory but maintaining a distinguished honourable facade. This veneer of honour is further threatened by Sir Michael's self-regarding reaction in the second pivotal scene in which he features.

The eventual and painful exposure of Lady Audley and her subsequent confession provoke many questions not least being those concerning the conduct of Sir Michael. In the second scene referred to, Sir Michael, whose vanity had earlier led him to promise himself he would protect her like a father, 'by generous watchfulness, by a love which should recall to her the father she had lost, and by a protecting care that should make him necessary to her' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 49), suddenly reneges on these personal affirmations and ultimately the even more binding promises he would have made on his marriage. In the Chapter entitled 'My Lady Tells The Truth' Lady Audley is forced into a confession of her behaviour and Sir Michael, physically and mentally traumatised

by what he hears, first sinks into a chair listening intently then finally after the intense and detailed revelations made by his wife leaves the scene. At the earliest disclosure by Lady Audley of her relationship with George Talboys the narrator comments on Sir Michael's ambivalent love for Lucy:

I do not believe that Sir Michael Audley had ever *really* believed in his wife. He had loved her and admired her; he had been bewitched by her beauty and bewildered by her charms; but that sense of something wanting, that vague feeling of loss and disappointment which had come upon him on the summer's night of his betrothal, had been with him more or less distinctly ever since. (360)

What had remained with him was the fact that he had compromised his own integrity and honour by agreeing to marriage as a transaction in which he had gained what Elaine Showalter recently described in *The London Review Of Books* (2012), as a 'trophy wife'. Realising that his 'trophy' is now a threat to his very existence as a respected and honoured member of society Sir Michael summarily dismisses the relationship leaving his nephew to deal with the matter refusing to acknowledge his wife as she cowers prostrate before him, 'Will you take upon yourself the duty of providing for the safety and comfort of this lady, whom I have thought my wife?' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 366). Sir Michael enacts the final stages of Lucy's and by extension women's exclusion into anonymity but in his apparent generosity, even at this turn in events, he remains to all outward appearances, the honourable gentleman. Lucy is simply a 'crouching figure' (366) as Sir Michael departs but he has shown that despite endless references to his honour and nobility he can be emotionally detached when necessary to protect that honour and that he can depend on his nearest and dearest to be complicit with him in prevailing against threats to the dominant ideology.

In suggestions of repositioning of critical focus on sensation fiction, particularly in regard to *Lady Audley's Secret*, masculinities has become a topic of slowly increasing interest. Male protagonists have been scrutinised more thoroughly for the roles they play in the novel. Nevertheless, as I have commented, interest in masculinities in sensation fiction still remains a

largely neglected area. In particular Robert Audley has become the focus for significant investigations into male homosocial and homosexual behaviour and attitudes. Nemesvari's "Robert Audley's Secret: Male Homosocial Desire In *Lady Audley's Secret*" (1995) and Jennifer Kushnier's "Educating Boys To Be Queer: Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*" (2002) are prominent examples of such investigations. Despite the concentration of inquiry into Robert's sexuality and recognition, also, of the novel as a bildungsroman, focussing on his development into a useful member of society, this section will scrutinise the role he plays as chief ally to and collaborator with Sir Michael in their ideological struggle to save face, expunge threat and maintain hereditary patriarchal self-interest.

In this section Robert Audley is scrutinised as a trespassing man. Despite alternative views he is a triumphant figure at the end of the novel: employed, successful, married, reunited with his friend and victorious in eradicating threats to his family and by extension to the fabric of society. He is, in fact, one of the protagonists of sensation fiction who survives Yates's reactionary modification of the genre. He is an example of the way in which Yates's simple division of men into trespassers and non-trespassers leads into a deeper examination of character. Robert's earliest appearance provides contentious and speculative clues to his character which, as remarked earlier, has been interpreted as sexually ambiguous because of what is considered his disproportionate concern for a disappeared male friend. He is also self-consciously a dandy: unconventional in his cultural preferences for yellow-backed novels and strong tobacco, his open aversion to work and his languid and leisurely approach to life in general. Robert is an engaging and apparently harmless and ineffectual character. His deep, unambiguously traditional allegiance is foregrounded in his eventual actions and, as I argue, in trespass. Through these means he maintains his right of inheritance to wealth, position and power while at the same time exceeding moral justification for his actions.

Although it is difficult to disagree with critical representations of Robert Audley's possible homosocial/homosexual feelings for George Talboys, Richard Nemesvari, citing the work of Eve

Kosofsky Sedgwick, urges caution in acceptance *per se* that Robert is homosexual. He says, ‘In outlining her exploration of potential reader responses to evocations of homosexuality Sedgwick is careful to make clear how tentative any conclusions drawn from such generalizations must be’ (1995: 519). Robert’s deliberate self-fashioning and possibly hazardous implications for him in nineteenth century society may also be interpreted as a single-minded determinedness to be his own man. Robert is an egotist and flaunts his egotism in deliberate and disdainful self-absorption as shown early in the novel by his extravagant dress and his unconventional habits and conduct which distinguish him from the crowd:

Sometimes when the weather was very hot, and he had exhausted himself with the exertion of smoking his German pipe, and reading French novels, he would stroll into the Temple Gardens, and lying in some shady spot, pale and cool, with his shirt collar turned down and a blue silk handkerchief tied loosely about his neck, would tell grave benchers that he had knocked himself up with overwork. (Braddon, Ed.Houston, 2003:71)

At this point Robert is carefree, young and not ready to take on the few responsibilities his life of privilege will entail. This apparent lack in Robert of any motivation or urge to work and his easy-going, blasé manner coupled with a heartfelt concern for his friend is, I think, mistakenly construed as a lack of normal heterosexuality.

Robert’s *laissez-faire* attitude and lack of purpose is accepted by older members of the lawyers’ community with tolerant amusement. To his senior colleagues he is in transition to useful masculinity:

The sly old benchers laughed at the pleasing fiction; but they all agreed that Robert Audley was a good fellow; a generous-hearted fellow; rather a curious fellow too, with a fund of sly wit and quiet humour, under his listless, dawdling, indifferent, irresolute manner. (71)

Such a description emphasises the exaggerated self-image which Robert has deliberately cultivated. He is not seriously engaged in work, has never had a case to consider, is privileged and comfortable although not wealthy and still reasonably young. He enjoys his self-imposed lassitude and unconcern for life. Robert's flamboyant dress and exaggerated irreverent attitude to his profession draw the attention of senior members of the Inns of Court who, while amused are clearly not threatened or disturbed by his dandyish theatricality. They know that he will eventually grow out of this interim period of his life. Sir Michael, importantly, loves Robert very much and urges him to stay at Audley for as long as he wishes. He indicates his deep feelings saying, "Stay, my dear boy; stay, my dear Bob, as long as ever you like. I have no son, and you stand to me in place of one [...] make the Court your home as long as you live" (154). Although inheritance is never discussed in the novel there are powerful indications in Sir Michael's regard for his nephew, who calls himself, 'heir-presumptive to my uncle's title' (187), and in what was often customary practice in cases of bequeathing estates to male relatives where there was no son, that Robert may well have been regarded as eventual heir to Audley Court; this provides him with a powerful motivation to cast off his casual and irresponsible attitude to life.

Alicia, Sir Michael's daughter, tolerates Robert but is often disappointed and infuriated by his apparent nonchalant apathy to life and towards her:

His pretty, gipsy-faced cousin might have been over head and ears in love with him, and she might have told him so, in some charming, roundabout, womanly fashion, a hundred times a day for all the three hundred and sixty-five days in the year; but unless she had waited for some privileged 29th of February, and walked straight up to him, saying, "Robert, please will you marry me?" I very much doubt if he would ever have discovered the state of her feelings. (98)

Here the narrator draws attention to the fact that Robert's self-centredness blinds him to what is going on around him and even though he is not deliberately unkind his apathy to Alicia is felt very deeply and jealously. Alicia complains at one point saying: "since Pythias, in the person of Mr.

Robert Audley, cannot exist for half an hour without Damon, commonly known as George Talboys” (119). As the narrator indicates, all such feelings are wasted as Robert simply persists in his egocentric behaviour defying all custom and expectation at Audley court, ‘show[ing] no inclination for any [of these] outdoor amusements’ (146-147) and annoying Sir Harry Towers, Alicia’s suitor, who calls him ‘that sneaking lawyer’ (155). Robert Audley is portrayed as the dandy James Eli Adams describes from Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833): ‘the grotesque icon of an outworn aristocratic order, a figure of self-absorbed, parasitic existence’ (Adams, 1995: 21). To become an admired and approved hero Robert needs a Herculean task through which his plausibility, his integrity, reliability and credibility as a man can be established. George Talboys’s disappearance conveniently supplies this. Eventually this task, locating a missing person, is refined into a deeper and more significant mission and purpose in Robert’s life.

Robert continually links his newly found earnestness and disciplined industry to his attempt to find his missing friend: ‘He had learned what it was to have an honest purpose since the disappearance of George Talboys’ (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 173) we are told. At the same time he has doubts about his fixated obsession in searching for George and anxiety about his increasing suspicions of wider implications that the search has: ‘Am I to be tormented all my life by vague doubts, and wretched suspicions, which may grow upon me till I become a monomaniac?’(174) he asks. Here he worries about his own mental health and stability as it slowly begins to dawn on him what his ‘wretched suspicions’ may, indeed, involve. Robert’s previous self-conscious egocentricity was a matter of personal choice, a relatively harmless lifestyle choice which affected no-one very deeply. Now a very serious but personal involvement in the search for his missing friend leads him to moments of profound reflection as he seeks to justify the escalating scope of his search. Rachel Heinrichs lucidly examines Robert’s classic posturing as he sits in his barrister’s rooms having discovered irrefutable evidence of a break-in and the removal of vital evidence. She suggests that:

Robert attempts to transform himself before the readers’ eyes. His posture is initially lazy; he rests his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands under the weight of

the task that has been “forced” upon him. Then he redefines himself as a “Christian,” assumes a sense of “duty,” and realizes his “task”. Accordingly his posture changes, he “raises his head,” his previously languid eyes become “bright” and “determined” [...] As he defines his purpose he seemingly redefines his masculinity and grounds it in Christian morality (with a touch of Old Testament “thunder”) [...] sets out his purpose [...] and identifies the living victim that will justify the task. (2007: 107 [my brackets])

Significantly through the narrator we witness Robert’s self-conscious and apparently selfless transformation into a crusader for his uncle’s honour. Heinrichs links this demonstrative transformation and Robert’s subsequent frequent references to a hand which leads him on, to his appearance at the beginning of the novel: ‘Inherent to Robert’s sacrifice is a theatricality that is consistent with his dandyish performance. The hand both enables and undermines the idea of selflessness that Robert aspires to fill’ (Heinrichs, 2007: 108). Heinrichs does, in fact, stress doubts readers may have about Robert’s changing motives which have become symptomatic of trespass as they move from concern for his friend to concern for his uncle and his own inheritance.

Yates, in my analysis outlined in Chapter Four, generally presents his non-trespassing men as uncomplicated, and straightforward in their motivation towards good or bad conduct. In Braddon’s novel the complexity and purpose of actions is more nuanced. Motivation, self-interests, and almost impenetrable dedication of purpose evident in Robert Audley’s continued questioning and self-justification for his apparent altruism and selfless search concurs with Alan Sinfield’s notion that, ‘even to misrepresent, one must present’ (1992: 48). What Robert feels he needs at this point are allies who endorse his most obvious cause: the search for George. He seeks this, optimistically looking for a change of heart and endorsement from Harcourt Talboys, George’s father. Ironically Harcourt’s deeply ideological estrangement from his son and his own intransigence prevent him from offering support but if Robert had been more honest about threats to his own family name and honour Harcourt Talboys would in all likelihood have been more

responsive. Full of self-doubt yet fortified by an unusual and unpredicted alliance with Harcourt Talboy's daughter, Clara, Robert continues his investigation eventually attempting to recruit associate professional help to support his exposure of Lady Audley. Several factors: Robert's immaturity, his emotional involvement and the serious outcomes his actions hold in store for Lady Audley make his choice of action a difficult and complicated burden for which he needs support.

As Robert Audley builds his fragile case largely dependent on circumstantial evidence he now has two objectives in view. He remains constant to finding George, after all, even his body may provide incriminating clues to person or persons he suspects are involved in his disappearance. More importantly he has realised exactly what is at stake if he fails to re-establish the primacy of patriarchal power at Audley Court. He understands that his duty to expose Lady Audley will have serious implications for his uncle's position and happiness but duty must take precedence over personal feelings. Robert's maturation into an active, resourceful and hegemonic masculinity is almost complete and as he eventually presses Lady Audley into submission and 'mercifully' removes her from Audley Court he attains the plausibility which allows Braddon's duplicitous inclusion of him in her collective, 'good people all happy and at peace' (Braddon, Ed. Houston 2003: 446).

Also included in Braddon's happy and deserving group is George Talboys who has been mentioned previously in this chapter and, as remarked earlier, seemed hardly censured or denounced by contemporaneous critics for his desertion of Helen. George's appalling behaviour and his spurious, facile incompetence and insensitivity are so apparent they hardly need mention in modern criticism. His treatment by contemporary reviewers and in theatrical adaptations reveals a slightly different imperative, again working to allow his questionable plausibility to survive outright condemnation. A degree of untoward sympathy necessarily resides in the fact that he has been the victim of an attempted murder but it hardly justifies a lack of wholesale condemnation for his economic incompetence in providing for a young family – surely one of the tenets of sufficient and responsible masculinity in any period of history. While obviously necessary to the exigencies of the

plot, George's desertion was readily deflected from outright condemnation to effectively acceptable conduct in terms of normal ideological expectations. George was, after all, simply trying to provide for his wife and family and any previous incompetence was easily disregarded.

George's conduct is usually justified and in only one review encountered was there a reasonably comprehensive censure of George's negligence. *The London Review* November 1862, was vehemently opposed to the novel calling it, 'utterly undeserving of the popularity into which it has been pushed' (TLR, 1862: 482)⁹, it describes Talboys with powerful scorn indicting him together with Lady Audley:

A husband but a year married, and loving his wife we are assured devotedly, having spent all his money, thinks that he best consults for his wife and child by running away, leaving a little note that if he makes money in Australia he will come back again but if he doesn't he won't. That a young woman thus left to starve, in a state of very unpleasant uncertainty as to whether she was a wife or a widow, should give herself the benefit of the doubt when a wealthy baronet was at her feet, may be reprehensible. But it surely does not justify high moral indignation on the part of the runaway husband, nor does it certainly indicate a disposition which will commit theft, forgery, arson, and wholesale murder without a pang. (TLR, 1862: 482)¹⁰

Even this review manages to deflate its criticism of George by positioning Lady Audley's criminality alongside it.

Other reviewers, quoted above, echo earlier examples showing George as either ineffective or acting courageously to brave the perils of the Australian Gold rush and provide financial security for his family. It should be noted that the reading public would more than likely be aware of conditions in Australia from accounts given by returning travellers. Such reported hardships would imbue George's desertion with a certain amount of heroic credibility allowing a reviewer in *The*

⁹ *The London review and weekly journal of politics, society, literature and art*, Aug.16-Dec.27, 1862, 5(126), pp. 481-482.

¹⁰ *The London review and weekly journal of politics, society, literature and art*, Aug.16-Dec.27, 1862, 5(126), pp. 481-482.

National Magazine licence to suggest where readers' sympathies might be due, 'The anxious loving husband, returning from his voluntary exile, looking forward to his meeting with that wife who at the same moment is planning his misery, and whose hand will compass his destruction' (TNM, 1862: 48)¹¹. George is the main focus here and any hardship his wife has suffered is pushed aside to vindicate his conduct. Such manipulation was also evident in theatrical adaptations.

Theatrical adaptations seem concerned to show George in a much more positive light than he really was. There were three early and popular stage productions by C.H.Hazlewood, W.E.Suter, and George Roberts not all of which were received well by the author who did in fact unsuccessfully contest the publication of Suter's version. Roberts remained faithful to the original destination for George Talboys but Hazlewood and Suter both change his destination from Australia to India. In *Looking At Lady Audley: Symbolism, The Stage, and The Antipodes* (2006) Henderson notes that, 'The inexplicable alteration of George's destination in other adaptations appears to be about increasing sympathy for the character – to India for proper mercantile experience rather than to Australia for quick gain' (2006: 20). In Hazlewood's script George also mentions that he sent for his wife to join him when he was sufficiently able to support her. Suter's alterations are of a similar nature. Once again the suggestion appears to be that George, and it could be argued men in general, should appear in a favourable light. In Suter's version George says he did not leave her to 'hopeless poverty, for she had still her jewels, her trinkets' (2006: 6). He also emphasises his own wretched treatment toiling for low wages but all for his 'darling' and yet heroically managing to amass a fortune of £20,000. Audience sympathy is specifically directed towards George at this point. The effect of such changes to the original can only be a matter for speculation but the reasons for some changes are surely a direct attempt to disguise and deny George's inadequacy and weakness as man and husband.

¹¹ THE MONTHLY MIRROR OF FACT AND RUMOUR. 1862. *National magazine*, **13**(73), pp. 46-48.

In Edmund Yates's uncomplicated reshaping of the sensation genre his broad criteria seem, at face value, to have been met in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Men who survive at the end are, despite individual idiosyncrasies, the acceptable face of a plausible masculinity. They are not evil or coarse in a vulgar sense, they appear morally just, proper and considerate with regard to the opposite sex, their friends and family and their obligation to society in general, even George Talboys escapes severe censure. Yet as has been shown surfaces conceal more than they reveal and here it is appropriate to examine the character, Luke Marks, whose stereotypical boorish, lumbering lower class facade also hides a depth of humanity which manifests itself in his treatment of the injured George Talboys. Luke Marks is dying, probably from smoke inhalation, and wants to see Robert Audley to reveal his knowledge of George Talboys's fall into the well. Luke Marks does not survive the novel yet his actions, as Heinrichs (2007) perceptively shows, are of a deeper moral significance than the veneer of decency that the surviving male protagonists exhibit.

Luke Marks is a conspicuous rogue. He has no pretensions, provides no excuses for his criminality, and admits he will get his just desserts, telling Robert Audley: 'whatever I done I'm a goin' to answer for' (Braddon, Ed. Houston, 2003: 414). Although he has little to recommend him and will be 'removed' from the novel, just as Yates's trespassing men are removed, he has a sense of honouring a debt to Robert. He knows what happened to Robert's missing friend but is only about to disclose this because of what Robert had done for him, 'ketch me a tellin' of it to him if it warn't for what he done for me the other night' (414) he grudgingly admits still trying to maintain his enfeebled masculinity. He continues in this attempt to preserve his naive and ingenuous dignity and in attempting to justify his attitude to 'gentlefolks' his remarks reveal that in his own simple and unaffected manner he has seen through the hypocritical and bogus charity he has sometimes received:

I'm not grateful to folks in a general way, p'raps, because the things as gentlefolks have given me have a'most allus been the very things I didn't want. They've give me

soup and tracks, and flannel, and coals; but, Lord, they've made such a precious noise about it that I'd have been glad to send 'em all back to 'em. (416)

It is interesting that Luke rails against such charity so ostentatiously given, particularly religious tracts. As Luke continues his protracted description of the rescue of George from the well, Robert's theatrical invocation of Christian morality to endorse and vindicate his quest to find George is mirrored and cheapened by Luke Marks's practical replication of Christian teaching in the Gospel of Matthew (25:1-46). His act of rescuing, clothing, feeding and caring for George embody a purely humanitarian, selfless and straightforward act of goodness despite the fact that he is a villain.

Luke Marks is criminal but he defies Edmund Yates's simplistic revision of sensation fiction which was described by a reviewer as inoffensive to, 'good morals and correct taste'¹². He acts with artless, sincere generosity to help George Talboys. He has no need of or recourse to philosophical justification for his simple acts of kindness for another man. He has no thoughts about what image of himself his actions portray. The rescue and sustenance he provides are a genuine and natural human response without a thought, for once, of remuneration. Heinrichs who makes much reference to Ruskin's comments in "Of Vulgarity", suggests that if Luke had, 'helped George for profit or to fashion himself into a hero, [he] would indeed remain in the realms of vulgar masculinity' (2007:117). While she rightly views the rescue as a redemptive act for Luke Marks, in terms of Yates's attempted conservative revision of the sensation genre, he deserves his fate. Despite Luke's criminal tendencies and the taint of his lower-class background he is the only major male protagonist who is capable of action unfettered by self-conscious mindfulness of dominant ideological considerations. He serves to demonstrate and emphasise the codification of behaviour in other men that supports patriarchal society and is also easily used to compare with paradigms of masculinity that undeservedly survive and prosper by their almost undeniable plausibility. Luke does not fit into Yates's simplified binary division between good and bad or trespassing and non-

¹² THE MONTHLY MIRROR OF FACT AND RUMOUR. 1862. *National magazine*, 13(73), pp. 46-48.

trespassing as I have labelled his narrative organisation but he is a thought provoking addition to the critique of society in Braddon's work.

Braddon was a resourceful and shrewd author with an intelligent and perceptive appreciation of commercial requirements. In her remarks about 'good people' and her specious scriptural reference Braddon maintains a deliberately ambiguous hold over her readers. Yates's revisionary methods would indeed see a man like Luke removed and men such as Sir Michael and Robert Audley, Harcourt and George Talboys prosper as they did in Braddon's conclusion. A closer interrogation of these men, their motives and methods reveal their ideologically driven fallibility. To a degree Sensation fiction's survival in the marketplace depended on authorial complicity in weakening the effect of their transgressive female protagonists and reducing obvious criticism of men. Other examples are offered below to suggest how in other more canonical sensation fiction seemingly irreproachable men are obligated by the ideological considerations of patriarchy and to a degree by authors' recognition of market sensibilities. .

East Lynne

The discussion above, in the first section of this chapter, presents a detailed analysis of masculinities in *Lady Audley's Secret* showing that major male protagonists in the novel are plausible, ideologically orthodox and therefore acceptable. On closer examination of attitudes and conduct it is also apparent that these very same men exemplify wider doubts, misgivings and concerns which question dominant ideology. The Audleys and the Talboys have deeply rooted allegiances to ideological dogmatism but detailed analysis shows they are trespassing men. These characters meticulously and thoughtlessly adhere to ideological strictures and are supported both within and outside the text despite the fact that the prevailing ideology is flawed. This is principally because it supports the domination of one group over another. Examples added below suggest that patterns of control and management of women so often evident in Sensation fiction acquiesce in one-sided, biased containment and at the same time allow ideological inequities to prevail. In an

earlier comment of Alan Sinfield which refers to ‘the strength of ideology’ (1992: 32) namely his use of ‘it goes without saying’ (32) and his links of such references to the ‘common sense’ (32) appeal of ideology, a simplistic division into a typology of trespassing and non-trespassing men is difficult to critique. Trespassing men are often easily identified. Non-trespassers regularly fulfil our expectations of them. They act as common sense tells us they should. Non-trespassing men are so often above reproach that it seems almost hypercritical to find fault with them. Further analysis of masculinities below suggests that although recent critical appraisal of sensation fiction justifiably validates a variety of women’s struggles and resistance, men often escape warranted censure.

Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne* is appropriate for inclusion here as it represents effectively the difficulty ideology poses, with its in-built potential for containment. In this novel it seems almost impossible to find fault with the major male protagonist, Archibald Carlyle, whose personal life prospers with burgeoning success despite the difficulties of his failed first marriage. The shocking desertion of her upstanding and respectable husband by Isabel strengthens positive opinion in favour of Archibald Carlyle whose universal esteem in the small provincial town of West Lynne is without parallel. Contemporary reviews of the novel describe Carlyle in language which typifies a man of unassuming heroic standing equivalent in many ways to the model propounded by Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841). *The Athenaeum* calls him ‘a clever and sensible young lawyer, and one of the best and kindest of men’ (ATH, 1861: 473)¹³, and several reviews of *East Lynne* are recalled in a memoriam in the *Argosy* (1887) to Mrs Henry Wood particularly a review from the *Times*, wherein Archibald Carlyle, her creation, is commended as, ‘consistently heroic, so sensible and just, and yet so loveable [...] a brave, noble and truthful gentleman’ (Ar, 1887: 438)¹⁴. The *Saturday Review* in 1862 had called him, ‘the god like

¹³ East Lynne: a Story of Modern Life. 1861. *The Athenaeum*, (1772), pp. 473-474.

¹⁴ WOOD, C.W., 1887. MRS. HENRY WOOD. *The Argosy : a magazine of tales, travels, essays, and poems*, 43, pp. 422-442.

attorney' (SR: 187)¹⁵ although the reviewer later comments on the novelty of a country attorney becoming the hero of a popular novel. These comments, nevertheless, reflect and echo the continual re-iteration of the agreeable character of Archibald Carlyle in the novel.

Archibald Carlyle can seemingly do no wrong. The continual endorsement of his virtuous character, almost tedious in its repetition, influences and even manipulates readers' attention away from any of his shortcomings. Carlyle is a successful solicitor. We are told:

The name of Carlyle bore a lofty standing in the country; Carlyle and Davidson were known as first-class practitioners; no pettifogging lawyers were they. It was Carlyle and Davidson in days gone by; now it was Archibald Carlyle. (Wood, Ed. Maunder, 2000:78)

Success had seen his name and reputation spread and business was apparently business to him at all times so that even an official visit by his close friend and confidant, Barbara Hare is conducted with strict professional propriety: 'Barbara could not avoid noticing how different his manners were in the office, from his evening manners when he was "off duty."' Here he was the staid, calm man of business' (82). His was an earnest and disciplined approach to work and he enjoyed the fruits of success which followed, without a disproportionately grasping attitude to money and always displaying an ethical attitude:

many and many a dispute, that would have brought him in pounds and pounds, had it gone on to an action, did he labour to soothe down; and had reconciled his litigants by his plain, sincere advice. (87)

Carlyle's attitude epitomises masculine codes of hard work and self-discipline and the reputation he had established links him neatly to Yates's category of non-trespassing men.

Although not obsessed with accumulating a fortune he was wealthy enough to purchase East Lynne, thereby keeping up a stylish house, providing a comfortable living for his dependents and

¹⁵ EAST LYNNE. 1862. *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, **13**(329), pp. 186-187.

continuing his ambitious rise up the social ladder. On his first appearance readers are told that his face is, 'the index of an honourable sincere nature' (44) and that, 'he had received the training of a gentleman, had been educated at Rugby, and taken his degree at Oxford' (44) credentials which underline his masculine acceptability and suggest links to masculine character of the type espoused by Rugby's reputable Headmaster Dr. Thomas Arnold and extolled in Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857). Much later in the novel when alone on the continent and an English visitor arrives, Isabel speculates that it could be her estranged husband when her maid describes the male visitor as, 'A tall, brave English gentleman, proud and noble looking like a prince (354). Isabel's thoughts are, "'Tall, brave, noble!" could that description apply to any other but Mr. Carlyle?' (354). Isabel's visitor is her uncle Lord Mount Severn, who had come to find out her reasons for quitting a marriage to, 'a good husband, in every sense of the word' (357) and as he says: 'an upright and good man; one of nature's gentlemen: one that England may be proud of, as having grown upon her soil' (360). Here again praise for Archibald reaches heroic proportions as he is elevated to a quasi-national status.

Carlyle's personal standing continues to rise perceptibly in the neighbourhood especially after his marriage to Lady Isabel Vane and on his return home numerous visitors pay their respects: 'Mr Carlyle might have taken up his abode at East Lynne without any such honours being paid him, but his marriage with Lady Isabel had sent him up in the county estimation' (201). Despite the fact that Carlyle's public standing had risen after his marriage it is marital problems which cause a major, although temporary, hiatus in Carlyle's surging middle-class success story and becomes the dramatic impulse and focus of the novel. The initial circumstances of the marriage are worth considering because they suggest that for all the appearances of distinction which emanate from Carlyle there is a moral and ethical unease about his union with Isabel that needs to be addressed.

Left penniless, homeless and highly vulnerable by her inadequate father, Isabel is given a home by her uncle, the heir to the title. His wife is intensely jealous of Isabel's beauty and the attention paid to her by the villainous Francis Levison. 'Galling slights, petty vexations, chilling

annoyances were put upon her' (157), we are told, forcing her to pine for the relief of another 'refuge'. Eventually matters come to a head when, after accusing her of flirting with Levison for several hours, her aunt's intense jealousy provokes a physical attack:

She turned white with rage, forgot herself, and, raising her right hand, struck Isabel a stinging blow upon the left cheek. Confused and terrified, Isabel stood in pain, and before she could speak or act, my lady's left hand was raised to the other cheek, and a blow left on that. (160)

These events: the continuous abuse that Isabel suffers, her loneliness, her sadness at her father's death, her absolute dependency, her youth, naiveté and sheer bewilderment, make Isabel a very vulnerable young woman. In her late teens she has had a very sheltered and privileged life despite her father's improvident ways. Added to these circumstances prevailing ideology suggests that marriage and motherhood are a woman's prime duty. Isabel thus becomes even more insecure at which point Archibald Carlyle, about ten years her senior, successful and confident and it could be said predatory, persuades her, at a time of great vulnerability and against her heartfelt inclinations, into marriage.

Once again the proposal scene, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*, raises serious questions about the morality of what could be seen as a predatory sexual compulsion of an older man for a young, immature yet physically very attractive woman. No law has been broken but Carlyle's first meeting with Isabel since her childhood and his later premature actions suggest more than a passing interest:

someone else came in by the opposite [door]. Who – what – was it? Mr Carlyle looked, not quite sure whether it was a human being: he almost thought it more like an angel.

A light, graceful, girlish form, a face of surpassing beauty, beauty that is rarely seen, save from the imagination of a painter, dark curls falling on her neck and shoulders smooth as a child's, fair delicate arms decorated with pearls, and a flowing dress of costly white lace. Altogether, the vision did indeed look to the lawyer as one

from a fairer world than this. [...] Mr Carlyle had not deemed himself an especial admirer of a woman's beauty, but the extraordinary loveliness of the young girl before him almost took away his senses and his self-possession. (49)

Wood paints a picture of sensuous beauty which attracts Carlyle. Even though she points out that Isabel is still 'in her innocent girlhood' (51) Carlyle's desire is not deterred by her personal circumstances.

Several months later chance business takes Carlyle to Castle Marling where he pays a call on Isabel and discovers in her unhappiness and ill-treatment an opportunity to turn to his own advantage. Acting precipitously Carlyle proposes marriage to Isabel. Isabel is stunned, needs time for reflection and while she sees the advantage of being removed from Castle Marling she concludes to herself that 'It is not only that I do not love Mr Carlyle, but I fear I do love, or very nearly love, Francis Levison. I wish *he* would ask me to be his wife! – or that I had never seen him' (166). After thinking it over Isabel gives her answer to Carlyle. Although obviously pressured by circumstances and Carlyle's charismatic, persuasive presence she accepts him while trying desperately to deny him: 'I ought to tell you [...] It has come upon me by surprise,' she stammered. 'I like you very much; I esteem and respect you: but I do not yet love you' (168). Carlyle will not be denied. He wants to earn her love he says ignoring her 'hysterical tears'. He is determined to have her as his wife and despite all that is said about the honour and truthfulness of his character his self-first attitude that is described above as a form of trespass encouraged by the power of dominant masculine ideology disallows him from taking no for an answer.

Events move quickly so that by the time Isabel and Carlyle meet her uncle, hoping for approval, they are already married. Explanations are demanded by her uncle who is concerned that the family name should suffer no more humiliation. Here what matters is not Isabel's happiness but first and foremost family honour and their secure base in the class system. Isabel says she does not love Carlyle but she does not mention her ill-treatment by her aunt. Carlyle, also questioned, is, at first, accused of, 'beguile[ing] a young girl into a marriage beneath her' (184). His flimsy replies

reveal the shallow foundation of a marriage based on selfish desire rather than love. Revealing Isabel's suffering Carlyle explains weakly that her unhappiness:

aroused all my feelings of indignation: it excited in me an irresistible desire to emancipate her from this cruel life, and take her where she would find affection and – I hope – happiness. There was only one way in which I could do this, and I risked it. I asked her to become my wife, and to return to her home at East Lynne.

(186)

Accepting Carlyle's avowal of sincerity and financial security the Earl is satisfied and tells Isabel, 'I came here this morning almost prepared to strike your husband, and I go away honouring him. Be a good and faithful wife to him, for he deserves it' (187). Resolution at this point in the novel is achieved by a dominant, insistent man, his male collaborator and the insidious power of dominant masculine ideologies which underscore male centred decisions and ultimately leave responsibility, at least nominally, in the woman's keeping.

Though the novel goes on to chart the eventual downfall and disgrace of Isabel and readers have to tolerate some implausible events, Carlyle survives and flourishes. Although never as bombastic and domineering as Mr Hare, the town's leading magistrate who rules the Bench and his home intransigently, he is himself in hock to patriarchal ideology. Honour, truthfulness and sincerity constantly provide Carlyle's public face and consequently turn public opinion so strongly in his favour. In selecting a candidate for an upcoming Parliamentary election common assent at the selection meeting supports him:

"here we stand like a pack of noodles, conning over the incapables, and passing over the right one" [...] "There's only one man among us fit to be our member."

"Who's that?" cried the meeting.

"Archibald Carlyle." (492-3)

Put to Carlyle the plain reason for their choice is simply 'We'll trust you Carlyle. Too happy to do it' (493). Flattered by their belief in him Carlyle thinks the proposition over, thus revealing a degree

of immodest self-confidence and self-fashioning which is constantly present in the novel and which elevates Archibald Carlyle to an inviolable position in public opinion.

Carlyle's character, which I consider steeped in trespass, is not only defined by others but he continually asserts his own integrity with a complacency born out of the confidence of his acceptable masculinity. 'I never was guilty of a mean trick in my life, to my recollection, and I do not think I ever shall be' (45) he tells Lord Mount Severn. Dealing with Isabel after her father's death we are informed, 'he saw how implicitly she relied upon his truth' (143). Deflecting criticism of his hasty marriage to Isabel he tells her uncle, 'I am at least a man of truth' (Wood, Ed. Maunder, 2000: 185) and in his response to popular pressure to stand for election his own thoughts self-consciously and in detail particularise his own self opinion for readers to acknowledge and with which to nod their agreement. He says, and it is worth quoting at length:

That he had long thought of sometime entering parliament, was certain; though no definite period of the "when" had fixed itself in his mind. [...] Not that he had the least intention of giving up his business; it was honourable (as he conducted it) and lucrative; and he really liked it: he would not have been condemned to lead an idle life for the world. [...] That he would make a good and efficient public servant, he believed; his talents were superior, his oratory was persuasive, and he had the gift of a true and honest spirit. That he would have the interest of West Lynne at heart, was certain, and he knew that he should serve his constituents to the very best of his power and ability. They knew it also. (494-5)

Supreme self-confidence in his abilities, professional success and integrity, motivation and sincerity provide Carlyle's instinctive self-perception of himself as ideologically assured, a man in a man's world. There is little wonder that the failure of his first marriage is attributed to Isabel's jealousy and moral frailty in the face of Levison's malevolent approaches yet my contention here is that the marriage should not have been part of Carlyle's ambitious drive towards class elevation. John Kucich in *The Power of Lies* (1994) comments on Carlyle's use of lying and secrecy to authorise

his movement and ascendancy to higher echelons of society meanwhile effectively threatening and undermining tenuous bonds with his wife. Dinah Birch, in *Fear Among the Teacups* (2001), a review of *East Lynne*, describes Carlyle's attitude to Isabel as complacency, an opinion with which I concur. It is complacency born out of ideological inflexibility which refuses mutual trust and openness in a marriage based in the first place on non-reciprocal attractions and well-disguised trespass on behalf of Carlyle.

My use of trespass to describe Yates's simplistic categorisation of masculinity remains a useful distinction in a reading of *East Lynne*. Here, though, as in the case of Sir Michael Audley, the application of trespass to Archibald Carlyle is not so easily applied. Yet it is by accepting trespass as the underlying precept of Carlyle's conduct that the indirect nuances of his character can be understood. Archibald Carlyle is established as a favourite, a pillar of society, the people's choice and an example of honourable masculinity. Yates would have had little problem in categorising him as a 'good' man. A searching examination of Carlyle's conduct reveals failings which are unintentionally exposed by Yates's naive distinction which accepts no deviation between trespasser and non-trespasser. Despite Carlyle's complacency which is already securely evident, his trespass, largely undistinguishable, is fundamental in his original designs on Isabel Vane and is exposed in a consideration of his convincing character at all levels: business, personal, and political. Yates's grouping of men into absolute masculinities: trespasser/non-trespasser, good/bad is a very one-dimensional approach. Using and applying this approach in deciding where to situate male protagonists in canonical sensation leads to a more comprehensive scrutiny of intricacies which reveal flaws in dominant masculine ideology.

[Cometh Up As A Flower](#)

Masculine domination underlines the next example, *Cometh Up As A Flower* (1867) by Rhoda Broughton that has close similarities to those cited above. Here again men and, definitely not women, appear to be acting within proper moral constraints as Nellie the heroine of the story is

courted, proposed to and married. Yet again the strength and dominance of masculine ideology so deeply embedded in society appears to absolve the actions of apparently honourable men. This marriage has the potential to rescue the bride's family from financial difficulties. The recognition of this potential hinted at though not openly discussed is, nevertheless, powerfully felt by the heroine. *Cometh Up As A Flower*, deemed outrageous and disgusting by formidable critics such as Margaret Oliphant, reflects the hybridity of sensation. Although it lacks the preponderance of striking incident so often typical of sensation novels, its overt sexual references and the sensual physicality of its young narrator/heroine appalled many of its contemporary reviewers. *The London Review* complained that 'The unmaidenly manner in which the heroine constantly dwells upon her lover's physical charms is not pleasant' (LR,1867: 324)¹⁶ and *The Athenaeum*, mistakenly believing the writer to be a man, decides he has gone too far and complains that 'he', 'shows himself destitute of refinement of thought or feeling, and ignorant of all women are, or ought to be' (Ath, 1867: 514)¹⁷ concluding that, 'At every page there is some offence against good taste or good feeling' (Ath, 1867: 515). Such comments may have helped to increase sales of the novel which, although published first was Broughton's second novel because the first, *Not Wisely But Too Well* (1867), had been held up by a dispute with the publishers. The comments show concerns reviewers had that whether the writer was male or female the young female narrator of the story showed too much interest and recognition that women were interested in sex too.

Cometh Up As A Flower has the sub-title *An Autobiography*. It tells the story of the life of Nell LeStrange from the age of nineteen to her approaching death at twenty-two. In these three years Nell meets and falls in love with a young and handsome soldier. Nell's family, the ancient LeStrange family, are in financial difficulty. Through the heroine's recollection Broughton delineates their family history reaching back to Norman times to relate how a wealthy family has

¹⁶ NEW NOVELS. 1867. *The London review of politics, society, literature, art, and science*, 14(350), pp. 324-325.

¹⁷ *Cometh up as a Flower: an Autobiography*. 1867. *The Athenaeum*, (2060), pp. 514-515.

fallen into such a precarious existence mainly due to the carefree extravagance and licentiousness of its men:

We had come sailing over the sea in beaked ships with Norman William; we had poured out our blood like water, under lion-hearted Richard, for the Holy Sepulchre; we had fat abbey lands given us by King Henry of the many wives, we had married heiresses, and had gone mounting up to the top of fortune's wheel, and it had been well with us. But, alack! in these latter days we had been too much well-known at Epsom and Newmarket; we had been very much at home at Crockford's when Crockford's was; we had wasted our young affections and substance on operatic Phrynes. (Broughton, Ed. Gilbert, 2010: 40-41)

Nell is quite matter of fact about all this in her narrative but it reveals the irresponsibility of men who were literally ruling and ruining family matters. The interference of a scheming elder sister means that Nell is coerced into a marriage that will help the family out of its present financial difficulties. Shortly after her marriage her father dies, her lover returns briefly and refuses to take her away with him and living disconsolately in her arranged marriage Nell contracts a fatal consumptive disease from which we are to presume she dies.

In this short novel (it was published in two volumes) men ultimately control events or benefit from control exerted in their favour such as Dolly's plotting. Nell loves her father, Sir Adrian, who is depicted as old and ineffectual. Although inactive and slowly deteriorating in health he recognises that having no son to attempt the resolution of family difficulties, his daughters must somehow be settled in as much security as possible for the family's sake; it is important, as Gilbert points out in her introduction, that historical ties to heritage, land and ancient name would have been of great significance to Sir Adrian. It would, of course, enable him to live out his days in comfort and thus he is complicit in allowing the marriage of Nell to Sir Hugh Lancaster, a rich baronet from the neighbouring estate. Sir Adrian's encouragement and acceptance of Sir Hugh instances patriarchal authority over women and their literal commodification. Sir Adrian never

misses an opportunity to compliment and approve Sir Hugh Lancaster, deliberately ignoring the age difference between him and Nell, “Talking of men,” said he, “that Sir Hugh Lancaster seems to be a nice young fellow; he and I had a great deal of talk together” (63). The subject of their talk is obvious as Sir Adrian had already expressed concern about Nell’s association with a young and penniless soldier. Nell is consistently disrespectful to the dull and witless Sir Hugh and earns her father’s disapproval as he wishes to strengthen their relationship. After one such display of verbal fencing with the baronet her father tells her, ‘Don’t get into the habit of making rude speeches, Nell, I advise you; a sharp woman is the most odious animal in creation’ (103). He does not want her to jeopardise her marital prospects with Sir Hugh and even though his health is failing he wishes to maintain male power in the household.

The chances of Nell causing upset to Sir Hugh are unlikely; he is intellectually dull and generally dismissed as jolly. Nell says ‘He had a jolly countenance, not encumbered with any particular expression, a jolly laugh at anybody’s service’ (102) and later, “Jolly” is Sir Hugh’s own epithet, as “venerable” is Bede’s and “pious” is Eneas’s. Other people may be, and no doubt are jolly, venerable and pious, though not all three at once but these three men are the representatives *par excellence* of these qualities” (136). Broughton significantly contrasts her female heroine’s sharpness of mind and deep emotional sensibility to emphasise the trespass men are committing in forcing her into an unwanted marriage with her dull but dotting suitor. Sir Hugh is remarkably slow-witted, ‘enough brains to carry him decently through his very easy part in life, and not enough to make him uncomfortably wise in any company’ (102) says Nell. In Sir Hugh Lancaster, Broughton constructs a middle-aged suitor of inoffensive, simplicity but with no shared sensibilities with his intended wife. Yet for all his naivety, simplicity and goodness he is a trespasser who will eventually concur in an agreement that gives him possession of Nell.

The intolerable harshness of this situation is Nell’s commodification and lack of say in the lifetime decisions about her future. That Sir Hugh is a good man and kind by nature is never in doubt. He remains almost oblivious and unembittered by Nell’s persistent rebuffs treating them

good humouredly. On their country picnic she complains, ‘most things *are* awful bores in this world, I think – and people too’ (183) and Sir Hugh accepts the hint with equanimity and a sense of fun at his own cost:

Ha, ha! Most people means *me*, I suppose [...] “Never mind!” he says, good humouredly. “I’ve a pretty tough hide, and I’d rather be pitched into by *you* than kissed by anyone else!” (183)

Once again it becomes almost impossible to find fault with Sir Hugh. He is open, truthful, not underhand or deceitful although we know he has had discussions with Sir Adrian. He is clumsy and rudimentary in his courtship but he is sensitive and honest enough to offer to withdraw:

“If [...] you feel that you can never have anything but a bare toleration of me, say so at once, child? I’m old enough and strong enough to bear a little disappointment; we can’t expect to have everything our own way in this world, and I know I’m not quite the right cut to take a girl’s fancy; it would be better you should speak out, while it’s time, than that we should make each other miserable for all our lives. (271)

Here the seeming magnanimity of Sir Hugh’s offer appears to legitimate him as a decent man but, the unbearable pressure of patriarchal will is lurking in the background. As indecision and brighter prospects of freedom clash in her mind Nell’s choice is determined for her: ‘Shall I kill my old dad? *Never*. For him I have begun this great sacrifice; for him I will complete it; for him I will go to hell’ (272). The will of the father so inescapable and determining in Laura Fairlie’s first marriage in *The Woman In White* once again proves an imperative factor as Nell bitterly resigns herself to a quasi-arranged marriage with a dull and unimaginative man some twenty five years older than herself.

Still manipulatively working at his daughter’s emotions and nearing his own death Sir Adrian exerts his will in a final effort to cement the marriage agreement: “‘Hugh is a good fellow, isn’t he?’ [...] “I like to think of his being so fond of my little girl; I wish you and he were married [...] then he could take you home and comfort you, when I’m gone” (273). While Sir Adrian may lovingly call Nell his ‘little girl’ she is literally that in terms of age difference from Sir Hugh but it

also emphasises the patriarchal perception men had of themselves in relationship to young women. It is beyond Sir Adrian's perception that allowing Nell autonomy to make her own unencumbered decision would be a greater and more attractive gift to bestow on his younger daughter before he dies. Although Nell is telling her own story, her reflections on the marriage demonstrate a powerful condemnation of men's selfish abuse of women by disguised bullying and pressure which make this marriage an obligation.

Nell speaks of the marriage service, 'being read over me' (292) suggesting that it was an imposition not a taking part, and also it calls to mind the fact that a funeral service is 'read over' the deceased where participation is not a matter of choice. Ironically Nell seems to associate her enforced marriage with death. She also refers to the ring as a, 'pledge of a worse than Egyptian bondage' (277) a reference to enslavement which Tamar Heller, author of an introduction to *Cometh Up As A Flower*, conflates with mention of Sir Adrian's interest in the American Civil war and his sympathy for the Confederate states. Heller suggests, 'it is a desire to please and save him that sells his daughter into the slavery of her marriage with Hugh' (Broughton, Ed. Heller, 2004: xli). Nell later has to admit that Sir Hugh 'has been good to me, honest fellow – he has kept his word' (Broughton, Ed. Gilbert, 2010: 278), but this does not alter her view that the whole process has been conducted as if she was a commodity in a market. As Heller says 'as a degrading economic necessity for women, marriage was implicated in the commodification of human beings by capitalism' (Broughton, Ed. Heller, 2004: xxxviii). Nell's poignant words after accepting Sir Hugh and quoted above suggest the totality of women's subordination in what amounts to a suggestion of 'sexual slavery' (Broughton, Ed. Heller, 2004; xxxvii) wherein ostensibly honourable men hold sway. Finally, further mention of Dolly's complicity in the pressure exerted on her sister should not be excluded but she is almost acting as a pseudo male accomplice to Sir Adrian and Sir Hugh. Also towards the end of the novel the young soldier, Nell's true love, acts honourably by refusing to take Nell away from her marriage. Attention to ideological issues, in which hegemonic men dominate, is diverted as focus remains centred on Nell's marriage and what I view, in this, as

an example of men's trespass, but what is viewed, in the novel, as provision for *her* future happiness.

Although it is not so obviously evident in Sir Hugh's conduct (he is never unkind) trespass can be used to describe the tragic outcome of this novel. Ironically Nell's life is foreshortened by her serious illness and she dies relatively soon after her marriage. Here marriage and death are closely linked in the tragic end to the story. Trespassing men symbolically 'kill' Nell's desperate hopes for happiness. Trespass here is linked to the type of trespass I identified in *Kissing The Rod*. In that novel Katherine Guyon's, and women's security in general, is part of the commodification men use to pressurise women into marriage. In terms of my discussion, such contractual arrangements are driven by trespass. Gilbert remarks that, 'By the end of the novel Nell recognizes the kindness of the Coxes and the goodness of her husband (Broughton, Ed. Gilbert, 2010: 16). Nevertheless, despite Sir Hugh's various offers to withdraw from the marriage, despite his continual kindness and Nell's martyr-like insistence to go ahead, the marriage signifies a moral trespass. It is decided, ultimately, on men's wishes and not on what is the best outcome for everybody's eventual happiness. Men's trespass is exposed coincidentally by Yates's uncomplicated revision of codes of masculinity.

[The Moonstone](#)

The next example, *The Moonstone* published towards the end of the most intense period of sensation fiction's popularity also reflects the hybrid nature of the sensation novel which encapsulates a variety of genres, interests and pertinent questions relating to social, political and economic issues of the period. *The Moonstone* is used to expand my examination of masculine trespass in areas of imperial power where the symbolic diamond and the contested ownership of it foreground masculine power, greed and domination in all areas of the colonial project whether in the field or in home-based disputes over colonial property. Sensation fiction's hybrid genre

structure and multi-layered meanings afford a variety of critical approaches and analysis. Although some examples of masculine conduct are blatantly criminal and easily judged, other men found in sensation novels withstand all but the closest scrutiny particularly as illustrated here in *The Moonstone*. It also provides an example of the limitations of Yates's revision of sensation fiction faced with the complexity of issues which arise in this novel.

Wilkie Collins's novel, *The Moonstone*, situated in an isolated country house in North Yorkshire, seems to corroborate ideological norms where men of action and intellectual acumen eventually resolve the mysterious disappearance of a valuable diamond that is the property of the Verinder family. Although the diamond is not recovered the threat of criminal and foreign incursion into British society is thwarted and order is restored. Nicely ignored here is the fact that Ezra Jennings's intellectual ability, which solves the mystery, is that of a man of mixed heritage. Although there appears the possibility of future curious interest in the diamond and therefore in the affairs of the Verinder/Blake family Franklin Blake's desire is to forestall this by putting the story on record in family papers 'in the interest of truth' (Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999: 60). Regardless of Blake's confidence, apparent openness and plausibility, difficulties assail the narrative from the start. Details in the Prologue reveal compromising historical information about the acquisition of the diamond and the legality of its subsequent ownership prior to its disappearance and eventual re-appearance in its rightful place in India. Such doubts call into question the character and substance of the men involved.

The large and mixed cast of male protagonists in *The Moonstone* are not all easily defined in terms of Yates's simplistic notion of trespass. There are those such as Herncastle and Ablewhite whose original and later theft and acquisitive greed signify their obvious interest in the jewel as blatant trespass. Others like Franklin Blake, whose benefit from the jewel is more circumspect and calculated, would be difficult to class as trespasser. Finally there are protagonists such as servants, experts and acquaintances (Betteredge, Murthwaite and Jennings) whose relationship to the jewel is varied. Trespass here takes on a wider dimension than the gender issues discussed earlier in this

chapter. Yates's trespass may not be helpful in specific questions about the jewel concerning spoils of war or looting, for example, but it may be a useful idea in alerting readers to a wider range of trespass.

Fractures or faultlines relating to ownership and theft of the diamond and consequently to masculinity begin to surface in a narrative which is ambivalent in pursuit of all the facts relating to the precious stone. Patriarchal power, as examined above with particular reference to marriage, also becomes a focus in *The Moonstone* for what has been seen by some critics as Collins's tentative, cautious and hesitant exploration of attitudes to Colonial masculinities. *The Moonstone* was first published in serial form in Dickens's own periodical *All The Year Round* and it is worth noting that Dickens and Collins embraced contrary political views on many subjects. In a comment on their literary connection Lillian Nayder states that:

Collins held views that were considerably more radical than those of Dickens, and he did not always keep them in check. Although Collins sometimes sounds as wary of class interest, women's rights and native insurrection as his senior collaborator, he proves more willing to challenge the status quo than Dickens does. (2002:8)

Ironically, as Nayder indicates, although Collins had a brief period as visiting editor at *All The Year Round* during the serialisation of *The Moonstone*, his scope for editorial power was kept in close check from the other side of the Atlantic. Nayder emphasises 'As Dickens's memorandum makes clear, Collins and Wills were not to publish articles on politically sensitive subjects' (2002: 161). Strict editorial control may have restricted the freedom Collins had to be open and direct in his criticism of colonialism.¹⁸ What these few comments indicate is the complexity of relationships, subjectivities, political persuasion and rivalry involved in nineteenth century novel production. Nevertheless, British hegemony in India and its repercussions in the several thefts of the diamond is

¹⁸ Lillian Nayder's chapter "Crimes of Empire, Contagion of the East: *The Moonstone* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*" in *Unequal Partners* (2002) details much of the rivalry and reaction which followed the writing and publication of Collins's novel and also modern criticism and comment on their fraught relationship.

revealed in *The Moonstone* as a flawed system of domination in its original location and in the later acts of men connected, however loosely, to those events.

It could be argued, as Melissa Free has done in “*Dirty Linen*” *Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins’s The Moonstone*”(2006), that most indigenous Englishmen and women are complicit in the theft of the diamond. The most blatantly criminal connections to the diamond are ultimately identified and expunged from the novel. Colonel John Herncastle, referred to earlier in this study, is a looter who originally stole the jewel. Class, power, position, influence and possible collusion with the most credible witness at Seringapatam, his cousin, somehow aided his successful misappropriation of the diamond: an important religious icon to the Indians. Debatable issues thus arise about the ownership of the jewel. Colonel John Herncastle is not exonerated. Despite questions that arise about issues concerning plunder and the spoils of war, Herncastle looked to have committed murder in his violation of the Indian shrine. Collins uses his name metonymically to represent the East India Company and the excesses of imperialism that were sanctioned in colonial campaigns. Although orders had gone out that looting would be punished they were issued too late for Herncastle’s acquisitive desires to be curtailed and, despite his own ultimate dishonour within the family, the jewel remains a prize coveted by all.

The Moonstone is an example of wider abuse of male power which follows the original theft of the diamond as various male protagonists show jealous, envious and covetous interest in the jewel. Although John Herncastle is the actual looter and therefore stands as the representative of shameful imperialist plundering, other men are complicit in the colonial project which saw the misappropriation of the wealth of another nation. No-one renounces ownership of the jewel and it is seen as a valuable acquisition to the Verinder fortune. Later, ostracised by his family, Herncastle maliciously bequeaths it to his niece on her eighteenth birthday. Herncastle knew full well that zealous believers in the diamond’s religious significance would always be on the lookout for opportunities to retrieve it and that such efforts might result in the accomplishment of his vengeful designs to stimulate greed and cause mischief for the family.

Such an opportunity occurs at the time of Rachel Verinder's eighteenth birthday when the jewel she has inherited disappears. Godfrey Ablewhite, Rachel's cousin and admirer, is ultimately found to have stolen the jewel and is murdered in the course of its recovery by three Brahmin devotees who have traced the jewel in order to return it to the shrine at Somnauth. Ablewhite for all his evangelical ardour is a sham. He is in serious financial difficulties and had stolen the jewel to resolve his problems. For Ablewhite, Christian evangelism seems to provide a waterproof alibi for the successful theft of the diamond which might solve his personal difficulties the result of criminal embezzlement of his ward's funds.

The third most obvious criminal trespasser and Ablewhite's contact in London was Septimus Luker known to the London police as a moneylender and also as a 'fence' for stolen goods. There is symbolic representation here of: the self-interest, greed, dishonourable intentions and violence which established the British presence in India and in a wider Empire. Although Luker is a petty criminal he has no qualms about accepting the possibility of profiting from the theft of the Indian diamond but it is arguable about how much responsibility he might be expected to shoulder. These are the three most recognisable criminal characters in the novel associated with the theft of the jewel. They conform to men who Yates would have deemed unworthy types of masculinity.

Other protagonists in the novel are more difficult to specify using Yatesian descriptors of trespasser or non-trespasser. Servants and associates of the Verinder family, Gabriel Betteredge, Mr Murthwaite, and, indirectly but importantly, Ezra Jennings are usefully examined below to establish further the value of Yates in illuminating other sensation fiction. Although he is a servant, Betteredge makes the lengthiest statement but he is difficult to categorise. His observations reveal much about hegemonic relations in the microcosm of the Verinder estate and its environment. Franklin Blake, one of those with most to lose by the disappearance of the jewel, takes charge of organising the collection of statements for the archive to be placed with family papers. Truth is his object but he is not an independent adjudicator and therefore questions begin to surface about the

impartiality of witnesses and the reliability of their narratives. Betteredge is an example of a complex character who is difficult to position in terms of Yates's taxonomy.

Yates's novels although often configured in situations of ordinary life: the art scene, racing, club life and concerts do not generally feature servants in prominent roles. Yates seems to be chiefly concerned with masculinity at the upper reaches of a masculine hierarchy. Betteredge, a servant has a prominent part in *The Moonstone* but the complexity of his character make categorisation of him difficult in terms of trespass or non-trespass. His relationships at the Verinder estate are twofold. He is both devoted servant to the family and benevolent master in his own realm of servants and is described as, 'the novel's primary ideological problematic' by Ashish Roy in his essay, 'The Fabulous Imperialist Semiotic of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*' (1993). Analysis of Betteredge's lengthy narrative and reference to other evidence brings hegemonic structures in the novel into consideration and suggests that Yates's model of masculinity is too narrow in scope to account for the subtleties of Betteredge's position in the Verinder household. He is a servant and friend but not a blood relative with all that that involves. A consideration of his role shows the limitations of Yates's simple typology.

In the gathering of evidence Gabriel Betteredge with, as John Sutherland points out, his symbolic initials GB, acts as a type of national spokesman. There is a tendency to look upon Betteredge as a rather harmless, quaint, old-fashioned servant with eccentricities accountable to his age but his views reflect popular caution of 'Others' in this case, 'strolling conjurers' (Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999: 69) whom he distinguishes immediately by their appearance, 'three mahogany-coloured Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers' (Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999: 69). They are warned off the premises by the dutiful Betteredge who explains:

I am [...] the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker than myself. But the best of us have our weaknesses – and my weakness, when I know a family plate basket to be out on a pantry table, is to be instantly reminded of that basket by the sight of a strolling stranger. (71)

Betteredge harbours prejudice against any intrusion into the Verinder estate. His protestation of non-racial attitudes is a hint of such prejudice particularly when it is read alongside his later description of the Indians as, 'a conspiracy of living rogues' (88). Yates's uncomplicated revision of masculinity seems to have little bearing on an understanding of the attitudes of a senior and trusted country servant.

In the process of writing his narrative Betteredge reveals how over many years he has been so successfully interpellated that he identifies almost completely with the immediate family. Althusser's term, interpellation, describes how Betteredge's acceptance of the mores of the Verinder family is so comprehensive that he identifies with their lifestyle almost without question. A little flattery by Franklin Blake persuades a falsely modest Betteredge to agree to his part in the collection of evidence. He is concerned about how to start and reveals a dependency on a volume of *Robinson Crusoe*. Here Betteredge displays an unerring acceptance of a code of behaviour and relationships established by Defoe's protagonist. Friday's unerring faith in Crusoe foreshadows Betteredge's absolute approval of Lady Verinder although given what is also revealed about his attitude to women it is more likely that his approval is for her upper-class status as well as his admiration of her as a person he has known and respected all his life. Betteredge's loyalty to the family is almost absolute and has been nurtured in him by the family over many years.

The Verinders have skilfully interwoven kindness and discipline to secure loyalty. There are occasional instances where practical common sense ensures that Gabriel 'remains on side'. In the digressive start to his narrative Betteredge recalls small incidents from his life in service: his promotion to indoor duties, approval of his marriage plans, small gifts from Lady Verinder and always the suggestion that what he does is, 'a favour to herself' (65). Drawing attention to such trifling incidents could cause a cynical reaction in readers but on the occasion of Rachel Verinder's seventeenth birthday, when Colonel John tries to see her, Lady Verinder unceremoniously reminds Betteredge of his position in the household: 'the family temper flashed out at me directly: 'when I want your advice,' says my lady, 'you know that I always ask for it. I don't ask for it now.' (87).

There are always boundaries that hegemony has to reiterate occasionally and this can be achieved, as Lady Verinder demonstrates here, through personal authority without recourse to ultimate and violent sanction.

Later in the novel Betteredge's reliability and status is confirmed in a scene which also makes it difficult to categorise Betteredge's true position. Lady Verinder needs an ally when she is reluctant to deal alone with Sergeant Cuff, the investigator of the diamond's disappearance, who she has begun to consider an intruder into family privacy. She asks Betteredge first to represent her and later to at least be present as, 'her trusted adviser, as well as her old servant' (167). She later repeats this calling Betteredge her, 'good servant and friend' (226). The hegemonic bond in which Lady Verinder stands in for her late husband, Sir John Verinder who had agreed with his wife that Betteredge was indispensable, is again firmly demonstrated in a symbolic gesture as Cuff's suspicions of Rachel are aired and Betteredge recalls, 'Lady Verinder turned to me, and gave me her hand. I kissed it in silence' (226). In terms of symbolic implication which runs so powerfully in Collins's novel there is a suggestion of fealty in Betteredge's action betokening an almost intangible and unshakeable loyalty such as that between subject and monarch.

Incongruities in Betteredge's almost unshakeable dedication to the family occur in several small instances. He recalls a minor debt which Franklin Blake owes him, 'seven and sixpence in money – the colour of which last I have not seen, and never expect to see again' (68). It is a minor item but it recalls to mind Blake's general profligacy with money and Betteredge's attitude while treating it as a trivial matter shows it is obviously not his way of doing things. Two criticisms of the upper classes emerge during his long narrative. At one point he criticises the idleness of upper-class people who have no authentic occupation. In an extended aside Betteredge complains about Rachel and Franklin's painting experiments and grumbles, 'Gentlefolks in general have a very awkward rock ahead in life – the rock ahead of their own idleness' (105) a reflection, perhaps, of prevalent attitudes to self-help and industrious application to work. Betteredge's reference to gratuitous time-filling by the upper-classes carries several possible meanings. It could be set against the modest and

limited view we are given of lower-class life in the novel where even dreams of radical change will bring no respite from a life of enduring poverty and labour. As the house party at the Verinders breaks up, Limping Lucy arrives to see Franklin and reveal plans she has for herself and Rosanna: ‘I had a plan for our going to London together like sisters and living by our needles’ (247). As she loses self-control her anger at Franklin Blake and the class system flares, ‘the day is not far off when the poor will rise against the rich’ (248) she vows. Betteredge may be also be ironically lampooning his own thralldom to the upper-classes which has extinguished his personal agency to that of a watching bystander.

Much later, after Rosanna’s tragic suicide, Betteredge also laments the lack of opportunity for the lower classes to indulge in emotional display:

People in high life have all the luxuries to themselves – among others, the luxury of indulging their feelings. People in low life have no such privilege. Necessity, which spares our betters, has no pity on us. We learn to put our feelings back into ourselves, and to jog on with our duties as patiently as may be. I don’t complain of this – I only notice it. (221-2)

Here a minor observation by Betteredge, a man of seemingly few personal opinions, indicates a powerful reflection on the nature of humanity and the suggestion that emotional response is the dominion of the wealthy class. Betteredge has done well for himself. Hegemony appears to have been beneficial to him so why upset his own harmonious existence? Questions are raised about his self-interested forbearance and his seduction by society that naturalises his place in the social hierarchy. Such issues vaguely occur to Betteredge but are subsumed under the general anxiety of the, ‘quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian diamond’ (88).

Criticism of nineteenth century imperialism in *The Moonstone* has been the subject of some dispute amongst scholars. Stephen Arata, for example, dismisses interpretation of the novel as, ‘a critique of imperialism’ (1996: 136) suggesting, rather, that the theft is used as a framing device for a much greater, “family scandal” and concluding that, ‘*The Moonstone*, stands firmly within the

English tradition of domestic realism' (1996: 138). Other critics such as Melissa Free, mentioned above and John R. Reed's early essay on imperial responsibility, 'English Imperialism and the Unacknowledged Crime of *The Moonstone* (1973) have used the novel as an opportunity to criticise British colonial history and examine the morality of Empire. They are only two amongst a number of critics such as Patricia Frick, John R. Reed, Ashish Roy, Lillian Nayder, and Deidre David amongst others who have joined the debate. Whatever stance is taken there is scope here for further analysis of masculine hegemony and its manifestation of power at home and abroad.

The diamond links domestic and foreign situations. *The Moonstone* explores imperialism which has been briefly hinted at in other sensation novels especially in *Lady Audley's Secret*. In her chapter "Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives" (2000) Lillian Nayder suggests links to India. There are references to Indian artefacts such as; 'tea caddies of sandal wood and silver' and expensive Indian shawls and at one point Robert Audley travels in the company of an officer who had served in the Indian Army. References to the Mutiny are also pointed; especially talk of the legacy of battle wounds and the locus of a disused well for the attempted murder of George Talboys which is an allusion to atrocities at Cawnpore. Purging *The Moonstone* of its most obvious unsavoury, dishonourable and criminal elements does not validate and sanction the legitimacy of hegemonic dominance by those who remain. At no point is the original theft of the diamond or the right of Rachel Verinder's ownership questioned rather it could be suggested that dissident elements of Empire, who search for the missing jewel, are in some way re-enacting or persevering with acts of what Lillian Nayder calls, 'economic and political grievances against their colonizers' (2000:32) rather than a justified and symbolic attempt to redress the exploitation of India and by extension colonialism in general.

Prejudice and stereotyping in the novel do little to counteract the 'common sense' pseudo-knowledge of outsiders that prevails amongst its characters. Apart from the small amount we can gather from the Prologue there should be two main sources of reference to colonial knowledge in the novel: Mr Murthwaite, the Indian traveller, and Ezra Jennings, temporary locum for Dr. Candy.

Other unreliable sources are perhaps best represented by Betteredge's generalisations, his references to Crusoe and his limited and conventionally biased knowledge of other Europeans. Faultlines which surface come from the person who should, on the evidence of his experience, be one of the most dependable sources of knowledge.

Mr Murthwaite is 'the celebrated Indian traveller' (Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999:122). The use of the definite article implies importance and significance to this description of him. From what we are told Murthwaite is widely travelled and would have gathered prodigious knowledge of the Indian people travelling as he did, 'where no European had ever set foot before' (122). The 'experienced traveller' does little to moderate common 'knowledge' and hearsay about Indians. His comments on the danger Rachel would be in if she wore the jewel in India reinforce ideas of a violent, thieving and murderous race. Betteredge emphasises Murthwaite's inscrutability, strange looks and his reticence: 'a long, lean, wiry, brown, silent man. He had a weary look, and a very steady, attentive eye [...] I doubt if he spoke six words [...] all though the dinner' (122-123). This exemplifies the mystery and exoticism of India rather than a more informative view which might be expected from an expert. Murthwaite the so-called expert on India obscures issues about colonialism although this could be a deliberate ploy by Collins. In one instance where he speaks he uses the type of language often used to describe the lower classes in England casting it widely over the whole Indian nation as he refers to their deviant and untamed animal characteristics. He tells Betteredge: 'those men will wait their opportunity with the patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers' (129). Murthwaite speaks fluently to the Brahmins and seems to admire them for their selfless quest which Arata links with Victorian values:

The Moonstone portrays the Brahmin's quest to recover the diamond in a charitable light. Though Collins frequently resorts to stereotypes in his depictions, he emphasises the Brahmins' resourcefulness and intelligence, as well as their courage in sacrificing caste to redeem the moonstone. Indeed they exhibit the traditional

Victorian virtues of faith, steadfastness, and a tireless devotion to the work ethic.

(1996: 135)

It is Murthwaite's words which praise the dedication of the Brahmins yet this only goes to show his ambivalence to a people whose lack of respect for human life he details as a national characteristic.

Referring to their determined attitude Murthwaite tells Betteredge:

In the country those men came from, they care just as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and the getting back of their Diamond – and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discovery – they would take them all. The sacrifice of caste is a serious thing in India, if you like. The sacrifice of life is nothing at all.

(Collins, Ed. Farmer, 1999: 130)

In this view the Indian race or Hindoo [sic] people are religious extremists and fanatics *en bloc*.

Murthwaite, the anthropologist/explorer, has his solution to problems caused by the cultural significance of the diamond to the Brahmins. He suggests, not simply a return of the diamond, therefore cancelling the risk of loss of life, but to take heed of Herncastle. Murthwaite declares:

Colonel Herncastle understood the people he had to deal with. Send the diamond tomorrow (under guard of more than one man) to be cut up at Amsterdam. Make half a dozen diamonds of it, instead of one. There is the end of its sacred identity as the Moonstone – and there is the end of the conspiracy. (131)

Destruction of the diamond advocated by Murthwaite in his more imperialist tone and his apparent sympathetic attitude to the acquisition of the diamond suggests denial of the culture of the Indians. It does, in effect, add support to hegemonic exclusion of colonised others. Murthwaite's superior attitude belies his status as expert and suggests he harbours stereotypical views of the colonised as primitive, in need of control and not to be trusted. He himself remains to those around him the enigmatic explorer eager to be off on further travels: 'It was rumoured that he was tired of the humdrum life among the people in our parts, and longing to go back and wander off on the tramp

again in the wild places of the East' (122-3). Although this is Betteredge's comment Murthwaite as expert on these 'wild places' has said nothing to portray the regions he has visited and their inhabitants as anything other than uncivilised. Ezra Jennings's arrival in the novel goes some way towards redressing the prejudicial imbalance of ignorant stereotyping in attitudes to the Brahmins and to the colonised in general.

Ezra Jennings is strange in several aspects. He is physically different with his 'gypsy darkness', his resemblance to 'the ancient people of the East' and his extraordinary:

thick closely curling hair, which, by some freak of Nature, had lost its colour in the most startling partial and capricious manner. Over the top of his head it was still of the deep black which was its natural colour. Round the sides of his head – without the slightest gradation of grey to break the force of the extraordinary contrast – it had turned completely white. The line between the two colours preserved no sort of regularity. At one place, the white hair ran up into the black; at another the black hair ran down into the white. (390)

He is a mixture of races: 'My father was an Englishman; but my mother' (439) he does not finish yet he elicits the response that is expected. Franklin Blake stares at him. Jennings's role as doctor is mainly to the poor we are informed by Betteredge who again emphasises, 'the man with the piebald hair, and the gypsy complexion' (391) also stressing his unpopularity and rumours about his character. There is a complicated structure of relationships at work here in the obvious suspicion and prejudice against Jennings and his difference.

He is difficult to categorise because of his self-abnegation, the prejudice he attracts, or in terms of Yates's trespass. Servants are prejudiced against him; Betteredge does not like him and feels usurped in the Verinder household and even the maid, at Dr Candy's, receives his instructions, 'with pursed up lips, and with eyes which ostentatiously looked anywhere rather than look in his face' (436-7). Yet Jennings is an educated and professional man albeit shunned by the better off sick. His appearance establishes, 'there was the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood'

(439). There is little wonder that Blake's original view of him was of, 'the most remarkable-looking man I had ever seen' (390). Jennings is problematic, falling between: colonised subject and hybrid Englishman, educated, physician's assistant, writer and amateur detective, non-white, illegitimate, addict, Other. His 'Otherness' may possibly have confused Yates whose implicitly coded masculinity as configured in texts cited above is based on a straightforward, unambiguous categorisation.

In general Jennings's status is that of an outcast. His multi-faceted characteristics and prejudice against him constrain the usefulness, in his case, of Yates's trespass/non-trespass categories used to describe masculinity. Public opinion rejects him for his appearance, for rumours of some past indiscretion, and for his unsatisfactory origins. In some respects he enacts a similar role to Luke Marks in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Socially unpopular as was Marks, addicted to opium as Marks was to alcohol, his humanity and acceptance of subordination allow him to elicit the solution which eventually restores domestic harmony to the troubled Verinder household. Similarly, as described above, Marks's inherent human goodness figures powerfully in restoring harmony as he discloses his rescue of George Talboys. Jennings's forward looking research and dedication to his work on, 'the intricate and delicate subject of the brain and the nervous system' (441) and his tolerant forbearance of prejudice permit him to design and successfully test his experiment. Like Luke Marks in *Lady Audley's Secret* Jennings confounds easy labelling. They are both men who destabilise the distinction between good and bad masculinities. Their apparent autonomy disqualifies them from the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity. It is tempting to suggest that their demise signifies Yates's and society's rejection of those it cannot classify.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the usefulness of what I identify as Yates's conservative revision of masculinity in his sensation fiction during the 1860s period of its immense popularity. Yates's novels were quite different and featured a greater emphasis on the nature of masculinity. I have identified a tendency in Yates's narrative strategy towards a revision of masculinity in a taxonomy of unsophisticated simplicity that I have referred to as trespass used to

describe errant masculine conduct. I have used this codification of masculinity identified in Yates's novels in a reading of several sensation novels which are part of the modern canon of sensation fiction. In some examples detailed in the chapter, simply asking how male protagonists conform to Yates's categories prompts a closer inspection of men who survive the events of novels with impunity. In some instances, emphasised above, closer scrutiny of male protagonists reveals their flawed conduct which is deceptively masked and made almost invisible by patriarchal ideology which, in turn, ingeniously resists interrogation in, for example, the plausibility of men that is so difficult to contest. Such an uncomplicated revision proposed by Yates is in character with his novels but is found wanting in the complexity of other sensation novels where characters such as Betteredge and Jennings in *The Moonstone*, are more comprehensively drawn. Yates brings another perspective to sensation and acknowledging this introduces possibilities that understanding masculinities may have in illuminating sensation fiction.

Conclusion

My thesis attempts to balance critical perspectives and unsettled debates on sensation fiction that are predominantly driven by feminist interpretation, with a more inclusive reading that embraces masculinity. Renewed and continuing interest in sensation fiction in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries has been a profitable stimulus for exciting and perceptive criticism of the genre. Much significance, in criticism of sensation fiction, is given to discussions of major female protagonists, such as Lady Audley, as champions of protest against and challenge to the inferior status of women in mid-nineteenth century England. There has not been a conclusive answer to the question of whether sensation fiction served a primarily radical or conservative purpose. My thesis here has been that, by neglecting masculinities, recent criticism of the sensation genre has overlooked an important aspect of the ideological significance of sensation fiction.

The publication format of sensation fiction in serial instalments was important because it immediately positioned the genre in a web of discourse. Readers had a monthly or weekly ration of fictional instalments, editors selected a variety of surrounding paratexts, and critical reaction fluctuated between approval and condemnation. Sensation fiction was linked to a variety of public debates: for example, gender issues concerning women and cultural issues linked to anxieties about reading and class demarcation. Much later, with the gradual increase in awareness of sensation as a worthwhile genre for scholarship, a retrospective canon has been formed which connects the women's movements of the mid-nineteenth century to those of the present, and positions sensation fiction as a catalyst for enabling subversion. Containment of subversive elements also featured strongly in sensation fiction hence the nature of the ideological work performed by the genre has been an on-going contentious issue. This thesis has explored the significance of the masculine boundaries of sensation fiction that frame the genre's subversive possibilities.

My work, focussing on broad masculine influences and in particular on a non-canonical author of sensation fiction, Edmund Yates, seeks to counterbalance the undoubtedly worthwhile, invaluable and significant body of mainly feminist modern criticism. Stefan Horlacher (2011) draws attention to Raewyn Connell's use of the term 'gender project' and perhaps use of this type of terminology might encourage more inclusive thinking so that talk of over-emphasis on feminist views or neglected masculinities becomes redundant in future study of a fascinating genre. Exploring masculinities in and around sensation fiction and the way that Yates's fiction might illuminate debates about the moral significance of sensation is the essence of this thesis.

The neglect of masculinities in modern criticism of sensation fiction has implications for debate on the ideological work that is performed by the genre. The marginalisation of Edmund Yates and the overlooking of paratextual content, I have argued, are important contextual frames which need to be interrogated as ideological props to masculine privilege. The lack of attention to masculinities in modern debates on sensation and to the original development of the genre, when masculinities were very much part of the influences surrounding its appearance and success, is crucial to this thesis. Masculine influence has been discussed in Chapter Two. The dialogic nature of magazines is acknowledged in the eclectic mix of articles giving them a wide appeal as 'family' magazines. Nevertheless, there is evidence of a masculinist tendency in the editorial selection of many articles. The chapter pursued the power of masculinist discourse in paratexts surrounding sensation's first appearance as serial instalments. Chapter Three has examined the critical socio-political emphasis in the turn from appreciative reviews to defamatory criticism and outright condemnation of sensation fiction. I have drawn attention to hints of recent change in interest in masculinities in sensation fiction but it remains, at present, a relatively neglected area in current debates.

Historical evidence reveals a very perceptible presence of an author, Edmund Yates, who had been excluded from the critical rediscovery of sensation fiction in recent times. This suggested an opportunity for further exploration of the vexed and seemingly unanswerable question of

whether the genre is radical or conservative in its treatment of gender. The thesis offers an extensive and original analysis of Yates's major works. In his reworking of the sensation genre Edmund Yates channels the emphasis towards trespassing masculinities in their illicit behaviour described in sensational incidents, violent threats and conduct and amorous indiscretion rather than transgressive femininity. My research has been motivated by a sense of the ideological influence of the masculine boundaries of the modern canon of sensation fiction, which Yates's fiction helps to illuminate. In drawing Yates's fiction into the light the thesis redresses the balance of criticism and adds profitably to the discussion of the ideological significance of the genre. Sensation fiction, new and culturally charged, attracted and excited both readers and hard-headed entrepreneurs who saw it as a profitable inclusion in magazines. Ideologues, as discussed in chapters two and three of this study, eventually maintained a reactionary attitude to the genre. Editors and owners published it in magazines with a paratextual content which was powerfully masculine, dominant, though never totalising, and commentators saturated their critical reviews with an anti-sensation tone that was also ideologically masculine in its import. They welcomed a writer like Edmund Yates, who was said by one critic, to have written 'Nothing against good morals and correct taste.'¹ He has certainly been of little obvious use to feminist critics yet he had a relatively prominent position in the mid-nineteenth century publishing world. Scrutiny of Yates's work, in this thesis, informed the development and expansion of my primary critical distinction between transgression and trespass. This distinction is crucial to my analysis of Edmund Yates's work. I emphasise the difference in a perception of the limits of possibility which are opened by the use of such terminology. Transgression challenges the structure of patriarchal society. It questions the basis of a social organisation which disempowers, in this instance, women and lower class characters. Trespass, as I have configured it, breaches and weakens from within the substantive nature of patriarchal justification for such an imbalance of power.

¹ *The Reader*, 1863-1867 6.152 (Nov 25, 1865): 594-595.

In my analysis of Yates's fiction, as mentioned previously, I developed a distinction between transgression, a significant element used to define female protagonists in the modern canon of sensation fiction, and trespass, a term I adopted to describe men who take on more significant roles in his work. It was a cautious distinction made between two words which are etymologically very close but it helped to distinguish the way Yates's fiction could be read as a vehicle for positing a conservative revision of ideological assumptions about masculinity in mid-nineteenth century Britain. What I identify as Yates's taxonomy of trespassing and non-trespassing men is a useful approach towards unravelling the ideological work that is performed by texts that have, in modern critiques, become associated with transgressive challenges to patriarchal entitlement. The distinction between trespassers and non-trespassers provokes and encourages a reconsideration of the way that men are included in these categories and how hegemonic masculinity can be shown to confirm and protect the natural plausibility of its social privileges. Feminist critics' focus on transgression is one useful element of the subversive aspect of sensation fiction. Trespass, whose meaning is more than purely criminal, is self-regarding, egocentric, and non-altruistic and is used to underline how these qualities also pervade dominant masculinity.

Application of my ideas about trespass to a reading of a selection of modern canonical sensation novels shows how the analysis of Yates's fiction gives rise to an original perspective on the wider canon of sensation fiction. It illuminates hidden and indiscernible subversion in men's own conduct; an area that has been difficult to unravel and critique. The analysis of Yates has been a valuable means through which I have shown that to some extent texts which accommodate transgressive heroines also concede to tolerance and acquiescent policing of trespassing masculinity in order to reassert the privileges accruing to dominant norms. Trespass, my focus in the latter part of the thesis, has proved a meaningful distinction enabling impenetrable, plausible and therefore acceptable manifestations of patriarchy to be interrogated and mistrusted. Incontestable endings of novels, which close in security for men who remain in powerful situations, are shown to be

specious, flawed and dependent on little more than a notion of common-sense approval and public consensus rather than strongly deliberated moral and ethical considerations.

My thesis redresses critical neglect of Edmund Yates by supplying an interpretation of his work which is pertinent to modern understanding of the ideology of sensation fiction and relevant to contemporary debates on masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century. Employing a close reading method in synthesis with ideas about transgression and trespass allowed a more comprehensive understanding of male characters in sensation fiction. Such male characters in Yates's work, often minor characters in terms of the overall plotlines of novels, provided an opportunity to examine the structure, context and social agenda of contemporary nineteenth century Britain. Yates's considerable empathy for women did not allow him to perceive of radical change in society other than a change in men's outlook and conduct rather than an overhaul of women's opportunity.

Exploring and interrogating the margins of sensation fiction and applying these findings to the modern canon of sensation informs a sense of how and why this canon is constructed, but also the considerable and irreducible significance of the masculine boundaries against which this canon has been defined. Conservative constructions of gender, notably masculine privilege, are subtly self-sustaining and difficult to break down especially, as I have shown, in my analysis of plausibility. Men who apparently remain within their own allotted boundaries, often depicted as intangible abstractions such as honour, have their privilege reinforced. My thesis has shown that probing and questioning the limits of the sensation fiction canon is necessary to a fuller understanding of the dynamics of subversion and containment within the genre.

The analysis of Edmund Yates's work provided a way of looking again at men who had profited by their acceptability. Although Yates's revision of sensation fiction was fundamentally conservative I believe that inadvertently it has supplied evidence that points to men who incriminate themselves and demonstrate the weaknesses of dominant ideology. Alan Sinfield's work on faultlines was invaluable in enabling me to innovate and foreground ideas about plausibility through which the use of trespass rather than transgression was used to show how men expose the self-

perpetuating injustices in a system of dominance which has no moral grounds. Notions of plausibility, through which the use of trespass rather than transgression were explored, show how men's bankrupt morality can be exposed in a system of domination which has no ethical grounds yet manages to endure.

This thesis suggests new perspectives for examining sensation fiction but there are limitations which need to be recognised. In this research, the selection of paratexts in Chapter Two and the selection of texts in Chapter Five are areas which could be further developed. There is an extensive selection of material available for this type of project and the delimiting of the scope of conclusions drawn from the samples used is a concern that may be addressed in future enquiry. Availability of material is an appropriate area for comment. In this work, I have made extensive use of digital resources to read nineteenth century periodicals and, most importantly, to read the novels of Edmund Yates. Digitisation of facsimile editions and recovery of writers and little known works presents the possibility for the expansion of scholarship. The punitive cost of printing, of book purchase or travel to research libraries can be an economic hindrance to scholarship. Digitisation offers the possibility for removal of these obstacles and the expansion of the availability of sensation texts that could be engaged with. This possibility increases the opportunity for using other writers' work to bring new and perceptive critical insights to canonical work.

Edmund Yates was not a great novelist, not even a great sensationalist, but his work enables a different assessment of the outstanding popular literary and cultural vogue of mid-nineteenth century Britain. Inadvertently Yates's simple organisation and concerns about masculine conduct help readers to perceive and discern invisible, insidious, and complacent power structures which reinforce masculine domination. I think that Edmund Yates and his review of masculinities and the exploration of the wider margins of sensation fiction offers scope for future research into the abundant source of sensation fiction.

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