Reading between the lines: railways and popular fiction in late nineteenth-century Britain

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Abstract

This study comprises an analysis of popular nineteenth-century fiction aimed at the family reader and featuring the railways, to ascertain how the railways impacted on community structures and how these changes manifested in literature. The primary texts featured are Robert Ballantyne's *The iron horse*; Mary Leith's *Mark Dennis*; Emma Leslie's *Gerald's dilemma* and *Maggie's message*; Elton Keane's *Heroes of the railway*; and Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Pennycomequicks*. Furthermore, this study specifically looks at representations of the engine-driver as a public hero and the effects this had on their families; the railway passenger's response to danger and the discrepancy between private and public liability for risk; and the presentation of the railway-carriage as a space of possibility in which new modes of being could be formed. The primary texts in this study have been chosen as they are all in some way about, or feature, the railways of the late nineteenth-century in a manner that proves the importance the railways had in shaping networks of mobility, but that also highlight the important role popular fiction had in conditioning readers to reconcile the dangers of railway travel with the opportunities that were afforded by them.

Table of contents

List of illustrations

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Reading between the lines: railways and popular fiction in late nineteenth-century Britain

Introduction

This study focuses on the place of railways in late nineteenth-century popular British fiction, asking what fictional representations of the railways contributed to existing genres—specifically adventure narratives and moral and instructive children's literature. The texts chosen in this study have the railways as a central concern or key setting, however, they differ as to which aspects of the railway they focus on. Although each text encompasses some degree of political and social anxiety in relation to the railways, in general they are concerned with the results of interaction between ordinary individuals and specialist railway operations, enterprise and expertise.

A measure of understanding of complex railway systems was necessary to enable and empower passengers in the late nineteenth-century, and many of these texts implicitly or explicitly attempt to cultivate this understanding However the unpredictable nature of this new technology, to and by which accidents seemed to happen with astonishing frequency, meant that there was a fine line between educating and catastrophising in both the press and popular fiction. By identifying the different functions of the railways in popular fiction, I aim to demonstrate how they were in some ways a reassuring construct in popular fiction of the late nineteenth century, and in other ways a mode of coming to terms with the inevitability of hazard and risk. Although in this study I select mainstream popular fiction—improving and aimed at a family audience—I acknowledge that there are other genres in which railways feature.

The place of the railway in Victorian literary history

The link between literary history and the history of the railways might not be obvious at first glance, but the two are in many ways intertwined. As Jeffrey Richards and John Mackenzie claim, 'the railways fostered the use of standard time, and the distribution of fresh milk' as well as having 'fostered the habit of reading,'.[1] Look no further than the children's 'railway alphabet' to see the role the railways quickly came to play in informal education, and the influence they had on formative reading experiences. The first published example was by Thomas Dean in 1840. Subsequent editions clearly chart changes in perceptions of the railways. Whereas in 1852 Thomas Dean & Son's *Railway alphabet* used 'Fog', 'Arch', 'Journey', 'Urchin', 'Key' and other similarly general words with only a link by association to the railways, a much later example from *The royal book of trains*, has a far

[1] *The railway station, a social history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 298.

greater incidence of active verbs: ‘hurry’ and ‘xpress’; alongside nouns selected to show the significance of the men and machines working the line: ‘carriages’ ‘engine’ ‘guard’ ‘porter’ and ‘vans’.[2] And for the older child, the excitement of railway travel provided the perfect backdrop to narratives of adventure which may themselves have been read upon the train. Train travel provided an opportunity for reading as a pastime. This gave rise to a market for reading material that was portable and entertaining, which in turn led to a rise in paperback sales. These editions of novels and reference books by popular authors were sold cheaply on the railway platform itself. As evident in the illustration from *Little Harry’s first journeys* (1896) shown below (Illustration.1), the platform bookseller was as

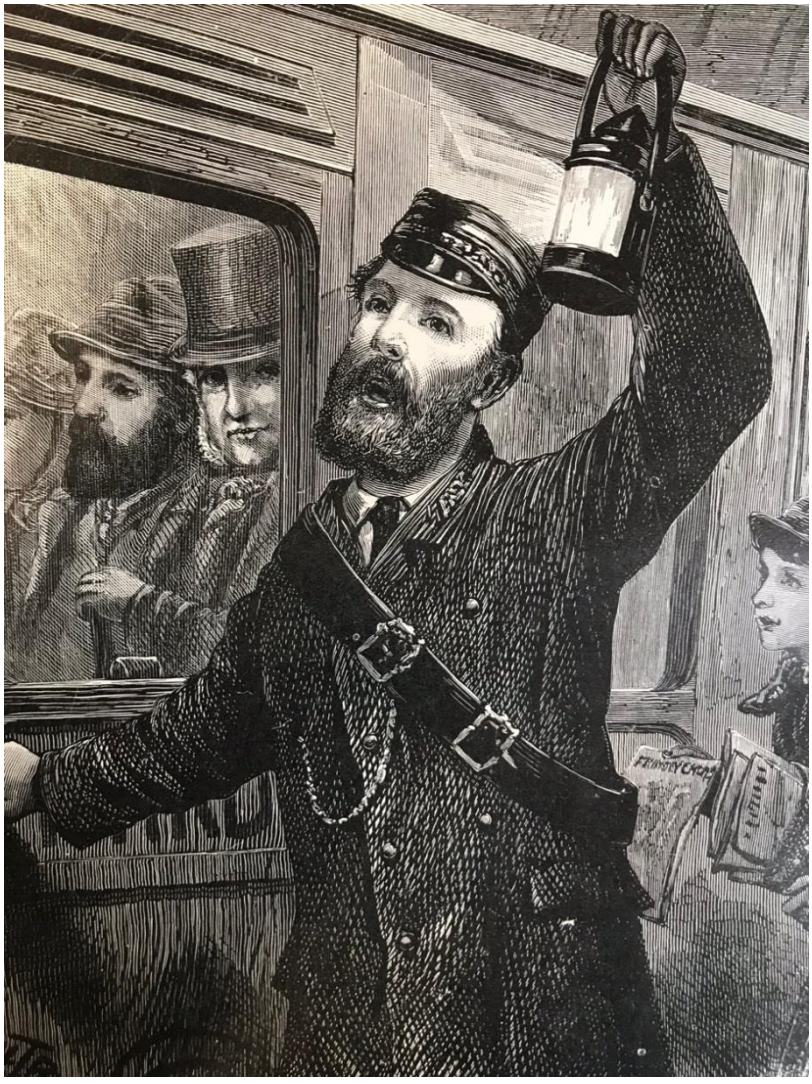

Illustration. 1 *Starting the train* in *Little Harry’s first journeys,* 1886

[2] *Railway alphabet*, London: Thomas Dean & Son, 1852; *The royal book of trains*, London: Nelson and Sons, 1905.

common a sight as the train's guard.[3] The lost property record-book from East Felstead station on the East Midlands line gives some idea of the types of reading enjoyed during travel. Entries include a lady's handbag containing *The elusive pimpernel*--published in 1908 it was the fourth in the *Scarlet Pimpernel* series by Baroness Orczy and reputed to have been instrumental in establishing the hero with a secret identity in popular culture—and several unnamed books left in the third-class carriage. The entries show that these were claimed by their rightful owners and the fee paid, suggesting the value placed upon reading material. Furthermore, examples of books left in the waiting-room suggest reading was a pastime not exclusive to the railway carriage but one that had filtered into other railway spaces. [4] And, as the comic illustration from *Punch* indicates (Illustration. 2), reading trends were varied and often divisive![5]

[3] *Little Harry's first journeys* was first published in 1896 as *Little Harry's first journeys: all about trains, trams and steamers* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1896)*;* it was reissued in 1904 to include motor-cars and re-titled as *Little Harry's first journeys: all about trains, trams, motors and steamboats* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1905).

[4] "Lost property book", Great Eastern Railway, Felstead Station 1850-1951, object no. 2008-8154, permanent collection, National Railway Museum.

[5] *Punch*, XVIII (1850), p.167; Samuel Philips comments in "The literature of the rail", *The Times*, 1855 that: 'Stations have their idiosyncrasies. Yorkshire is not partial to poetry. It is difficult to sell a valuable book at any of the stations between Derby, Leeds and Manchester. Religious books hardly find a purchaser at Liverpool, while at Manchester, at the other end of the line they are in high regard,' *Essays from The Times* (London: Times publishing, 1855), vol. 1. pp. 311-25.

Illustration. 2 ***Authors' Miseries. No. VI., Punch,*** **1848**

Despite the mandatory teaching of reading and writing to children after the 'Education Act' was passed in 1870, for the generation of working age men for whom this act was too late, the receipt of an education fit-for-purpose was often out of the question.[6] But, as employment trends changed from predominantly low-tech land-based, to high-tech and skills-based roles, occupation-driven education gave rise to new opportunities to gain literacy. The railway companies themselves were instrumental in providing opportunities for education; Crewe had its own library and reading-room for railway employees which grew into the Crewe Mechanics' Institution in 1845. Most railway companies followed suit—Swindon established its own mechanics' institute; Paddington a circulating library; and Wolverton—a railway town on the London and North Western line—a weekly evening school for adults.[7] Being able to read and write were essential skills for the railway employee; by the end of the nineteenth-century approximately 600,000 people were employed by British railway companies. John

[6] The 'Elementary Education Bill' was debated in The House of Lords and passed on 25th July 1870; there was widespread support for an educational system that matched education to national requirements and was fit for purpose: 'Our present duty […] is to provide a system co-extensive with the nation, which shall penetrate the length and breadth of the land, and as quickly as possible bring within the reach of every child in England and Wales the means of learning reading, writing, and arithmetic,' 'Elementary education bill' *House of Lords Papers*, vol 203 cc821-65 (1870), "https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1870/jul/25/elementary-education-bill#s3v0203p0_18700725_hol_21" [last accessed 12.06.18]**.**

[7] Jack Simmonds, *The Victorian railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.185.

Hartley observes the impact of the railways upon working-age males in Yorkshire in his dialect reminiscences *Yorksher puddin*' (1876):

> You've heeard tell abaat th new railrooad aw dar say? […] Ther's some fowk at Ovenden fancy it'll be finished befoor soa varry long, an' they've started what they call "a railway trainin class," to taich some oth' young chaps to be railway porters […] they meet in a cottage haase twice a wick to practice, an' they say they're gettin on first rate'.[8]

Even the lowest grades of railway employment required training and, as Joseph Parsloe suggested in in 1878, 'it is probable that there is no better clerk-school than railways for becoming accustomed to hard work, for attainment of rapidity in writing, and for a certain adeptness in simple calculations'.[9] Stringent adherence to rules and regulations and a need for meticulous record keeping were factors which maintained levels of literacy amongst railway employees after the initial training phase. Trevor May estimates in *The Victorian railway worker* that 'in the 1880's […] the Midland Railway superintendent's office received 1600 record sheets each day, on which guards had recorded details of their journeys tabulated in 44 columns'.[10]

Evidently, reading was an important factor in the smooth *operation* of the railways, but literacy was also necessary for navigating the railway network as a passenger. Responding to demand, advice books were produced in which the reader could gain helpful tips on making a safe railway journey. *The railway traveller's handy book*, first published in 1862, gave hints to the savvy traveller on how to behave before, during and after the journey. The advice extends to the railway timetable and points to the required standards of literacy necessary to plan a railway journey, the author commenting: '[I] confess, that although […] acquainted with a few of the initiated to whom a Bradshaw is easy [I] have never yet met with a lady who did not regard it as a literary puzzle, whilst the majority of the sterner sex have failed to master its intricacies,'.[11] Being able to read—and understand—a *Bradshaw's guide* was an increasingly necessary skill, although one that few ever seemed to master:

> When you get into the maze of this huge monthly magazine that scorns fiction and is congested with facts, armed with intricate tables of place names, dots, figures, warning hands,

[8] John Hartley, *Yorksher puddin* (London: W. Nicholson & Sons,1876), p.319.
[9] Joseph Parsloe, *Our railways: sketches historical and descriptive* (London: Kegan Paul, 1878).
[10] Trevor May, *The Victorian railway worker* (Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 2000), p.16.
[11] First produced by George Bradshaw in 1838, the 'Bradshaw' as it simply became known, was one of the key publications that sought to elucidate the complicated railway timetable. There were also the simpler *A.B.C guides* but these weren't as comprehensive and contained less information about the railway lines services, stations, accommodation or changes; *The railway traveller's handy book* was first published in 1862 by Lockwood and Sons. It was republished in 1971 with an introduction by Jack Simmonds (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1971), p.22.

> dark lines, notes, references, indications of trains 'up' and 'down', trains that run on weekdays, trains that run on 'Wednesdays only' and trains that run on 'Saturdays only' and when after striving in vain for half an hour to ascertain really what time you will arrive at your destination you alight; with your head in a 'fog' and your eyes aching, on the encouraging words in italic 'see above' or 'vice versa' you feel inclined to fling 'Bradshaw' out of the window.[12]

This dissertation takes for granted the embeddedness of railways in a variety of cultures of reading—and vice versa—and seeks to tease out some of the functions of this association in the reading offered to young people and families.

Approaches to the study of the railways in Victorian literature

Although the study of railway literature can hardly be termed a mainstream topic, it has proved to be of sufficient cultural importance to warrant scholarly interest and analysis. There are several different approaches to the study of railways in Victorian literature. These include a focus on the steam-engine as a symbol of the industrial revolution and modernity; on the railway carriage as a setting and plot-device; and on railway speed as transformative and fantastical. The most important critics writing about the role and meaning of the railways in Victorian literature include Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Michael Freeman, Nicholas Daly, Jonathan H. Grossman, Anna Despotopoulou, Charlotte Mathieson, and Ruth Livesey.[13]

Not surprisingly, given the scale of change the railways brought about during the nineteenth-century, an oft-cited argument is that the inclusion of the railway—and the steam-engine—in literary texts was a metonym for the destructive and inhuman force of the machine. This symbolic view sees the representation of the train—often as a demonic presence—as a metaphor for death: death of the old order—the *ancien régime*—and the death of nature. Citing Dickens' *Dombey and son* and the destruction of Staggs's Garden, scholars such as Freeman and Grossman assert the railway's intrinsic

[12] John Pendleton, *Our railways. Their origin, development, incident and romance* 2 vols (London: Cassell & Co.1896), vol. 2 pp. 153-54.

[13] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: The industrialization of time and space in the nineteenth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Nicholas Daly, *Literature, technology and modernity 1860-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jonathan.H.Grossman, *Charles Dickens's networks: public transport and the novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Anna Despotopoulou, *Women and the railway, 1850-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Charlotte Mathieson, *Mobility in the Victorian novel: placing the nation* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Ruth Livesey, *Writing the stage coach nation: locality on the move in nineteenth-century British literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

connection to the dramatic social and psychic effects of capitalism and the industrial revolution. They show that, in texts such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) the threats posed to the environment and the dangers—although some may argue capitalist opportunities—to established community structures are palpable. As an interpretation of the Victorian literary railway this is persuasive but partial. Though dramatic and exciting to the reader, such a representation of the railways overlooks the benefits to society which a comprehensive railway network conferred, and which many texts, especially for children attempted to confirm.

And yet the second argument is perhaps as damaging to the railway's reputation: that the secluded nature of the railway carriage and the train's advantage as a getaway vehicle made the perfect setting for representations of crime. Anna Despotopoulou argues in *Women and the railways:1850-1915* for a relationship between the railway carriage setting and the sensation novel. Despotopoulou suggests the carriage setting, when combined with sensibilities of gender and class, is used for scenes of misappropriation. She argues that whereas an upper-class lone female passenger is at risk from the sexual advances of men, the railway carriage also afforded opportunities for lower-class women to exploit male passengers by accusing them of assault. According to this school of thought, the railways are linked with sexual politics and voyeurism; the railway-carriage is at once an intimate and a public space. Despotopoulou explores the liminality of railway spaces in Rhoda Broughton's *Under the cloak* (1873), Wilkie Collins' *No name* (1862), and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) to suggest that sensation novels used the railway's speed and fast-paced change to develop not only original and modern plots, but to replicate social anxieties. Nicholas Daly espouses similar ideas in *Literature, technology and modernity 1860-2000,* claiming, amongst much else, that the sensation genre is an attempt to come to terms with the speeded-up nature of the railway age. Whilst there is truth in the suggestion that the railways could be and sometimes were construed as inherently dangerous, this interpretation overlooks the ways in which authors embraced the less catastrophic, more ameliorative potential of the railways as setting: the spaces it offered for negotiation, experimentation and even heroism.

A third critical trend focuses upon the 'spatial temporality' of the railway carriage. As a setting unmoored from the usual laws governing time, the railway, according to this view, functions as a mystic space of magic and fantasy. Wolfgang Schivelbusch writes extensively about the journey as a metaphor in *The railway journey: the industrialization of time and space in the nineteenth century,* in which the speed of railway travel and its ability to enact physical change take centre stage. Charlotte Mathieson uses Schivelbusch's arguments about commodification in her own analysis of the railways in *Mobility in the Victorian novel: placing the nation*. Whilst Schivelbusch suggests the speed of travel is a catalyst of change, Mathieson proposes that the circulatory nature of the railway network transforms passengers into living parcels, sent from place to place and wrapped up in their travelling

accoutrements for protection. Whilst Mathieson applies her theories to Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's secret* (1861-62) similar arguments can extend to the commonly used trope of railways in children's fiction, where the steam-engine itself is often modified to the extremes of anthropomorphism. Mathieson argues that the passenger—self-governing but dependent--is vulnerable in comparison to the impassivity of an automatic and mechanised railway system. It is therefore necessary for the passenger to take protective measures to minimise damage to the self, even where these measures maybe individually restrictive, in order to make long term associative gains.

Although there is undoubtedly much of value in these arguments—indeed they have provided me with several insightful lines of enquiry—I would argue that these are not the only lenses through which to view the railway in Victorian fiction. Whilst Mathieson's approach is closest to my own arguments, I suggest that there is a wider body of railway literature—found in late Victorian popular fiction—which is unaccounted for by existing critical theories. Focusing on fiction from family magazines, the syndicated press, children's improving literature, and school prize books, the following chapters explore the balance between the risks posed by the railways to the individual and the advantages to be gained from embracing such a risk. Each chapter focuses on different facets of the railways: chapter one focuses on the representation of aspects of the railway industry--including the engine-driver and the railway works-- and addresses the challenges of fictionalising a life on the line for a juvenile audience. Chapter two assesses representations of relationship between the railway carriage and passengers' subjectivity, to suggest that the carriage could be used as a fictional space of possibility in which modes of being were specific only to the carriage and lacked long term consequences. Lastly, chapter three investigates fictional accounts of the correlation between the railway accident and the values of a beneficent community, identifying a need for both public and private liability and an individual understanding of the dangers and inherent risks of railway travel and operations. As a whole the dissertation points to the existence of a hitherto neglected repertoire of fictional representation of the railways in late nineteenth-century popular culture. It suggests an appetite for literature that was both entertaining and educational, accessible to a diverse range of readers, and which tested, and often confirmed, an equilibrium between risk and benefit in relation to the railways in Victorian Britain.

Chapter One
The engine-driving life: *The iron horse* and *Mark Dennis*

Despite the wealth of sources documenting the significance of the railways for almost all aspects of Victorian life, there are surprisingly few examples of engine-drivers taking the lead as heroes, or even protagonists, in fiction from the era. The influence the railways exerted—for good and ill--is well established in relation to the passenger, the landowner, and the cultural commentator.[1] But whereas the experience of those served by the railways fuels a considerable cultural output, the experience of those in service to the railways does not. Despite the impression of glamour surrounding steam-trains themselves, there is relatively little in the way of canonical-fictional representations of the men who worked the system.[2]

It is certainly not the case that the relative absence of railway labour in fiction reflects a general cultural indifference to the railway industry at the time. Take for example, specialist magazines dedicated to the railway locomotive; lithographic representations of railway engineering; architecture and railway stations in art; cartoons referring to railway policy and governance in the satirical drawings of *Punch*; and the graphic design evident in the promotion of railway tourism.[3] Perhaps, therefore, the absence reflects a lack of creative interest in the labouring workforce full stop? But fictional representations of manual labour in other industries do commonly occur.[4] In other areas of concern—political, legislative, moralistic—an interest in railway employees is also manifest.[5] Perhaps therefore, the absence of railway employees as central characters suggests a mismatch between perceptions of the railway industry and prevailing fashions in fiction at the time.

[1] See John Francis, *A history of the English railway; its social relations and revelations, 1820-1845* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1851), pp.54-65.
[2] Ralph Harrington addresses this in "Perceptions of the locomotive driver: image and identity on British railways c.1840-c.1950*"* in which William Frith's painting '*The Railway Station'* illustrates the engine driver's conspicuous absence. '[A]nd where is the driver?' asks Harrington 'he is the most distant and indistinct figure of all, banished to the background, hardly visible on the footplate of his remote locomotive,' *Working papers in railway and transport Studies*, The Institute of Railway Studies, (University of York: 1999), p.1.
[3] By 1845 there were at least sixteen dedicated railway journals including: *The Railway magazine*, which started in 1835, and the *Railway Times*, 1837; the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester line in 1830 saw the first publishers offering pictures of the railways in the form of civil engineering prints including Rudolf Ackermann's and I. Shaw; the satirical *Punch* published comic pictures of the railways; railway advertising reached its peak in 1835-37. See Jack Simmonds (1995), pp.236-45, 249-52.
[4] For instance: Gabriel Oak and Tess Durbeyfield in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding crowd* (1874) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891); Ham Peggotty and Joe Gargery in *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and *Great expectations* (1861); Elizabeth Gaskell's portrayal of Manchester in *North and South* (1855); and Dinah Morris in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859); also see Michael Wheeler, *English fiction of the Victorian era* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.21.
[5] For examples see debates between Fredrick Smith and Isambard Brunel, *Sessional Papers of The House of Lords*, Vol. XXVI. (London: GB Parliament, 1841), p.60.

A reading of the two railway texts in this chapter—Robert Ballantyne's *The iron horse* and Mary Leith's *Mark Dennis*—suggests that the survival of the traditional nuclear family in the face of new demands for a mobile and expendable workforce was a thorny and problematic issue. Evident in both texts are significant tensions arising between the requirements of railway employment on the one hand and Victorian moral codes of family loyalty, community and respectability on the other. Furthermore, these texts hover precariously between overlapping but distinct and different readerships. In many ways these depictions of the exciting world of locomotion are clearly meant to appeal to boys and youths aspiring to drive trains. On the other, the constituency actually likely to drive trains was made up of the class of newly literate male adult worker employed by the railway industry. The latter were the beneficiaries of the movements to encourage adult education and literacy; mechanics' institutes promoted book lending by having their own libraries and reading rooms catering for the industrial reader. But book production for this market lagged behind that for children, so that children's fiction was undoubtably a more accessible source of reading material for both audiences. Inevitably, the possibility—as well as taste and requirements--of such a dual audience created some conflicts of interest and priority.[6] Whilst these conflicts are interesting for today's reader, they were likely self-limiting due to the manifest difficulties in portraying an authentic engine-driving narrative whilst maintaining acceptable standards of propriety.

One of the central difficulties railway employment presented as a fictional *milieu* was the dissonance it implied between domestic and industrial spaces. Whilst farming, artisan crafts and cottage industries all set a precedent for the home as the family's economic centre, the industrial nature of the railways was on a very different scale. Traditional skilled occupations—for example blacksmithing, carpentry, tailoring and wheelwrighting—were historically self-employed roles operating from within the home environs; however, they were outsourced by the railway companies for the mass production of engines, carriages and railway paraphernalia. Consequently, the railways brought with them new ways of working that married traditional craftmanship with modern factory technologies. Quite understandably, the men who worked the railways—both manufacturing and operational--were often referred to as the 'railway army.'[7] Although the majority of such an army was hidden from the public eye, nonetheless some railway roles were more publicly evident. Most iconic of the front-of-house roles was that of the engine-driver. Ostensibly he was a courageous and fearless figure, prepared to battle against all elements to safely deliver the goods and passengers in his charge; however, as the texts in this chapter make evident, heroism was only one side of the engine-driving story. Its

[6] The Mechanics' Institute [Swindon] built in 1844 to encourage adult technical education, provided evening classes (in mathematics, engineering and English for men; arithmetic, diction and domestic duties for women), a reading room and lending library, lectures, drama and other entertainment. Edgar. J. Larkin and John. G. Larkin, *The railway workshops of Britain 1823-1986* (Basingstoke: Macmillan,1988), p.22.
[7] See Trevor May's *The Victorian railway worker* for a comparison between railway employment and the military (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2000), pp. 4-5.

counterpart is more equivocal, in that the more complete picture was one of insecurity, correction and fallibility extending to the engine-driver's family (themselves often railway employees) as well as to the driver himself. Neither text offers a secure moral compass to the reader, instead highlighting the working conditions rather than making a judgement. Given the railway's entrenchment in society by the second half of the nineteenth-century it would be unrealistic to expect any text—and especially a text aimed towards a juvenile reader—to take on the behemoth of the railway industry in a direct way. What these texts *do* attempt is to invalidate any pre-conceived ideas of engine-driving as a purely glamorous or heroic occupation. Instead, both texts reveal uncertainties about the viability of such a skilled, literate but ultimately expendable workforce such was required by the railway industry.

Stirring adventures and incidents: *The iron horse*

The iron horse, published in 1871, to some extent concentrates on the perceived romance of the engine-driver's life, but not to the degree that the inevitable dangers are erased. It tells the story of John Marrot, the engine-driver of an express-train on a fictional section of railway line in the vicinity of Clatterby. A 'frame' tale, *The iron horse* interweaves the experiences of the driver with several railway vignettes involving passengers, railway policemen, station clerks and porters. Tales of lost luggage and mistaken identities, station clearing houses and the Clatterby works, corrupt porters, courting travellers, and first and third-class ticket holders are all told as the various sections of the 'frame' tale unfolds. Despite the whimsicality of several sections of text, the novel concludes with a catastrophic railway accident which although not the fault of the engine-driver, does fall to human error. Although inclusive of the passengers' accounts of the journey, always central to this text is the engine-driver's perspective; a perspective taking in life both on and off the line.

Whilst the many facets of the story defy full summary, the main narrative threads include: John Marrot and his family's domestic lineside life; a passenger, Mrs. Tipps, losing the parcel entrusted to her containing her mistress's diamond ring; the bachelor Garwood missing the opportunity for romance in the first class carriage; heists upon criminals including carriage con-men and train robbers; the hijacking and high speed chase of an engine; a detailed exploration of the engineering works of the railway; and a serious accident between a derailed mineral train and a heavily occupied excursion train. Despite the multiple perspectives, the omniscient narrator focuses chiefly on Marrot the engine-driver. Consequently, *The iron horse* includes a wealth of information about the railways—both historical information and contemporary--in keeping with the level of knowledge required by an engine-driver.[11] Much of the information is imparted in a colloquial manner and

[11] See Jack Simmons' *The Victorian railway* for information pertaining to railway employment and standards of literacy and self-improvement (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp186-90.

included in Marrot's conversation and occupational patter. For instance, in dialogue with Mrs Tipps—a local resident of Clatterby—the reader learns of the speeds of trains:

> "Is that the usual rate of travelling on your railway?"
> "Oh dear no, ma'am. It's only *my* express train as goes at that rate. Other expresses run between forty and fifty miles, an' or'nary trains average about thirty miles an hour—goods, they go at about twenty, more or less."
> "The fastest mail coaches in *my* young days," said Mrs Tipps, "used to go at the rate of ten miles an hour, I believe."
> "Pretty much so," said John. "They did manage a mile or two more […] but that was their average of crawlin' with full steam on," (Ballantyne 25).[12]

By using Marrot's voice to point out the gaps in knowledge of Mrs Tipps—much his senior—Ballantyne gives Marrot an authoritative and convincing voice on matters of the railways. Similarly, Ballantyne uses descriptions of Marrot's daily routine to impart an opinion on the social impact of the railways:

> The engine driver turned off abruptly, and, increasing his pace to a smart walk, soon stood before the door of one of those uncommonly small neat suburban villas which the irrigating influence of the Grand National Trunk Railway had caused to spring up like mushrooms around the noisy, smoky, bustling town of Clatterby—to the unspeakable advantage of that class of gentlefolk who possess extremely limited incomes, but who, nevertheless, prefer fresh air to smoke, (Ballantyne 23).

Through the focalisation via Marrot, we are given an array of demographic, geographic and economic impressions, though the ensuing commentary sometimes seems at his expense: 'that class of gentlefolk…' and so on. Marrot is both a sly commentator on, and a beneficiary of, the parasitic colonisation of spaces created by the railways. Whilst some aspects of the informative nature of the text seem congruous with an avid child reader, Ballantyne also seems willing to engage with debate more appropriate for an adult reader.

This impression of uncertainty about its audience is compounded by the text's meticulous account of the manufacturing process of the engines; a whole chapter is dedicated to their forging and assembly. This time it is the fireman—Will Garvie--who guides the reader through the manufacturing

[12] Ballantyne, R. *The iron horse* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1871), references to this edition will be given in parenthesis hereafter.

process as he shows Mrs Marrot and her son Bob around the 'great Clatterby works' the 'finest of the kind in the kingdom,' which consisted of 'several acres of ground […] a group of huge buildings which were divided into different departments [where] the railway company manufactured almost every article used on the line—from a locomotive engine to a screw-nail,' (Ballantyne 128). It is important to note that Garvie, though occupying a lesser grade than the engine-driver, is extremely knowledgeable on all aspects of the steam-engines workings and engineering. In *Engine-driving life: stirring adventures and incidents in the lives of locomotive engine drivers* Michael Reynolds observes,

> How the fireman may obtain information, how far his surroundings must be his teachers, how much he will owe to inspection, and how much to the kindness of his drivers, it is difficult to say […] in locomotive engines and locomotive working there is sufficient material to fill some scores of books, and that the only way to make it one's own is to go into the work with a will, and follow it up.[13]

It is evident that despite Garvie's junior position in the railway company, he has 'followed up': has undertaken a lot of research into the engineering as well as the running of the engines. Once again, Garvie's authoritative explanation of the works is suggestive of the text's appeal to both the child reader—in the satisfaction of a curious mind—and to the manual worker who may wish to emulate Garvie's aspirations to better himself through education and promotion.

Garvie's tour of the works draws the attention of Mrs Marrot and Bob to the disparity between old and new ways of manufacture. For example, in the 'timber and sawing department' it is noted how 'hard wood in all sizes and forms, was being licked into shape by machinery in a way and with an amount of facility that was eminently calculated to astonish those whose ideas on such matters had been founded on the observation of the laborious work of human carpenters,' (Ballantyne 130). Mrs Marrot's reaction to the works is one of wonder and incredulity as she finds it difficult to comprehend the scale of manufacture taking place: '"W'y, Willum, it seems to me that if you go on improvin' things at this rate there won't be no use in a short time for 'uman 'ands at all. We'll just 'ave to sit still an' let machinery do our work for us, an' all the trades-people will be throwd out of employment," (Ballantyne 135). She voices concern at the automation of hitherto skilled trades. Although her concerns are trivialised as 'meditations' suggesting unfocused thought, when Garvie conducts the party to the smiths' department the contrast between the size of the coupling hooks and their crucial role in safety directs the reader to the potential for fallibility in such mass scale productivity:

[13] Michael Reynolds, *Engine-driving life: stirring adventures and incidents in the lives of locomotive engine drivers* (London: Hugh Evelyn,1968), p.12.

> Will Garvie drew Mrs Marrot's attention to the fact that two vulcans were engaged in twisting red-hot iron bolts an inch and a half thick into the form of hooks with as much apparent ease as if they had been hair-pins. These he said, were hooks for couplings, the hooks by which railway carriages were attached together, and on the strength and unyielding rigidity of which the lives of hundreds of travellers might depend, (Ballantyne 136).

Throughout the chapter there are many similar references to the wit of man and the brute strength of the machine. The worker is able to utilise mechanical processes to his advantage in an almost Titanic way using giant scissors to cut through iron: 'the man seized a bit of iron about as thick as his own wrist […] which the scissors cut up into lengths of eighteen inches or so as easily as if it had been a bar of lead or wood,'(Ballantyne 144). The scale of the Clatterby Works is further emphasised by allusions to Greek mythology and an Anglicised notion of Hell in which the size and intensity of the production line are closely linked:

> The stupendous nature of the operations performed there; the colossal grandeur of the machinery employed; the appalling power of the forces called into action; the startling chiaro-scuro of the furnaces; the Herculean activity of the 3500 "hands;" the dread pyrotechnic displays; the constant din and clangour—pshaw! the thing is beyond conception (Ballantyne 127).

There is a mythic quality to the descriptions of the men who perform such industrial operations:

> The begrimed warriors, whose destiny it was to ride these iron chargers, were also variously circumstanced. Some in their shirt sleeves busy with hammer and file at benches hard by; others raking out fire-boxes, or oiling machinery; all busy as bees, save the few, who, having completed their preparations, were buttoning up their jackets and awaiting the signal to charge (Ballantyne 31-32).

Inevitably, the text's exhaustive account of the engine's origins heightens the dramatic impact of the final crash. Furthermore, despite the jovial and upbeat tone ascribed to Marrot throughout the narrative, the overall impression of the railways is one of significant danger. A key source of jeopardy in the text is the hyperbolic account of an occasion on which Marrot and Will Garvie outwit the driver of a hijacked train. Despite their adventurous escapades, the portrayal of Marrot and Garvie is not as straightforwardly heroic as one might anticipate. Fundamentally, Marrot lacks the self-determination to be truly heroic. Rather than following instinct, Marrot is directed by his innate sense of duty; breaking company rules and giving chase is only possible given an order from a superior:

> Without a moment's hesitation he [the stationmaster] ran to John Marrot and said in an earnest hurried voice—
> "Give chase, John! Go over to the up line, but don't go too far."
> "All right, Sir," said John, laying his hand on the regulator, (Ballantyne 326).

Moreover, the driver of the hijacked train—Thomson, an escaping train robber—is ultimately defeated not by the actions of Marrot or Garvie but by his own lack of engine-driving experience:

> Another moment and the *Lightning* was up with the tender of the run-away, and John cut off steam for a brief space to equalize the speed. Thomson […] tugged at the steam handle to increase the speed, but it was open to the utmost. He attempted to heap coals on the fire, but, being inexpert, failed to increase the heat, (Ballantyne 328).

Nevertheless, the mission to stop the hijacked train provokes a thrilling chase in which Marrot reaches record speeds: 'never since John Marrot had driven it had the *Lightning* so nearly resembled its namesake. The pace was increased to seventy-five and eighty miles an hour,'(Ballantyne 327). Remarkably, even in the face of grave personal danger, John draws on his thorough knowledge of engine-driving to enact a plan, thus using his expertise rather than any pre-disposition for heroics:

> John knew well that he was flying towards a passenger train, which was running towards him at probably thirty-five or forty miles an hour. He was aware of its whereabouts at that time, for he had consulted his watch and had the time-table by heart, (Ballantyne 326-7).

A further incident occurs when the excursion train Marrot is driving—and aboard which his wife and daughter are passengers--collides with a derailed mineral train. Unfortunately, though not the fault of the driver, the accident should have been preventable.[14] The text draws a stark contrast between the diligence of Marrot ('it was not a night on which the thoughts of an engine-driver were likely to wander much […] it was extremely anxious work, which claimed the closest and most undivided attention,' [Ballantyne 374]); and the fallibility of the system:

> The driver and fireman of the mineral train were rather severely hurt […] so they neglected to take the proper precaution of sending back one of their number to stop the train that followed

[14] Jack Simmonds gives information on the block system of signalling in *The Victorian railway.* Block Signalling was rolled out as a preventative measure due to human error and fallibility (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), pp. 79-80.

> them. This would have been of little consequence had the line been worked on the block system,' (Ballantyne 375).

Regardless of Marrot's expertise and vigilance, he cannot prevent the 'terrible crash' which ensues. Once more the reader is shown the impact of the railway—this time devastating—through the eyes of the engine-driver as he tries to rescue his wife and daughter from the carnage of the train crash:

> Springing at once on the broken carriage […] he began to cut through the planking so as to get at the interior […] those who stood by could not help but wonder on the tall form of the engine-driver, as he cut through an tore up the planks and beams with a power that seemed little short of miraculous, (Ballantyne 379).

A stroke of luck saves Marrot's wife and child as 'they found the mother and child jammed into a corner and arched over by a huge mass of broken timber,' though the other inhabitants of the same carriage are less fortunate: 'the rest of the carriage had been literally crushed into splinters. Close beside them was discovered the headless trunk of a young man, and the dead body of a girl,' (Ballantyne 380). The narrative shifts away from the energy of adventure to a feeling of greater vulnerability. The tragic circumstances of the train crash are the culmination of events in the text and are felt beyond the parochial Clatterby community, thus expressing wider ripples of loss—physical, economic, and emotional--to society as a whole.

Thus, while Ballantyne certainly celebrates the grandeur, majesty and excitement of the railways, and the inventions and engineering processes that made them possible, he also recognises the sacrifices—of unconnected people as well as railway employees—made to progress**.** The discourse of sacrifice has profound implications for the text's construction of masculinity. Ballantyne draws on a sense of Arnoldian manliness in his descriptions of the 'begrimed warriors' of the railway line. But the text's imagery of militarism involves the forfeit of individuality in favour of homogeneity and regulation. Disturbingly, there are moments when the locomotive seems more animate than the humans:

> Farther on, three beautiful new engines, that had just been made and stood ready for action, were receiving a few finishing touches from the painters. Fresh, spotless, and glittering, these were to make their début on the morrow, and commence their comparatively brief career of furious activity—gay things, doomed emphatically to a fast life! (Ballantyne 150).

The idea of the 'fast life', with its connotations of excitement, sexual excess and moral precariousness suggests that the railway system is taking on a kind of hypermasculinity. This takes us a long way from what Claudia Nelson sees as the ideal of children's literature: '[it is] the adventure that separates

the young heroes from the rest of the world [that] has value not only in its results but in itself: whatever children don't share with adults is good.' [16] Certainly, the complex and mechanised power typified in descriptions of the steam hammer are not conducive to any mainstream notion of children's literature:

> Another signal was given, and down came the "five-carts-of-coals weight" with a thud that shook the very earth, caused the bar partially to flatten as if it had been a bit of putty, and sent a brilliant shower of sparks over the whole place. Mrs Marrot clapped both hands on her face and capped the event with a scream. As for Bob, he fairly shouted with delight, (Ballantyne 141).

The thrust and power of the hammer is overwhelmingly sexual both in the descriptions of its force, and in its fecundity. The reactions of both Bob and Mrs Marrot to the power of the hammer are verging on orgasmic. Rather than a simple children's adventure story, the text thus asserts more complex ideologies. In *Victorian masculinities: manhood and masculine poetics in early Victorian literature and art* Herbert Sussman identifies the 'proper regulation of an innate male energy,' as a 'crucial problematic' in the Victorian era.[20] As represented by the steam hammer's harnessed power at the Clatterby Works, it is in the metered flexing of muscle that manliness can be exercised without the danger of excess. Analogous to this overabundance of male energy is Ballantyne's descriptions of the newly built and immaculate steam-engines as 'young creatures'. Once set upon the rails these become dangerously unpredictable animals. These once young creatures only return to the works as 'aged and crippled […] all more or less disabled' (Ballantyne 150). Uncoupled from restraints of the factory, the engines become part of a burgeoning but unregulated service industry and are overwhelmingly powerful, but often to their own detriment. Ultimately, they can be found standing 'sulkily grim in a corner, evidently awaiting [a] sentence of condemnation,--the usual fate of such engines to be torn, bored, battered, chiselled, clipt, and otherwise cut to pieces and cast into the furnaces,' (Ballantyne 151). The connection between the railway worker and the engine is cemented in Mrs Marrot's distress at seeing the broken engines:

> As the wife of an engine-driver, she had long held the deepest respect, almost amounting to reverence, for locomotives, in regard to the weight, speed, and irresistible power of which she had always entertained the most exalted ideas. To see one of the race—and that too of the largest size—treated in this humiliating fashion was too much for her, (Ballantyne 152).

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[16] Claudia Nelson, *Boys will be girls: The feminine ethic and British children's fiction, 1857-1917* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p.124.
[20] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian masculinities: manhood and masculine poetics in early Victorian literature and art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.3.

The reference to the engine as being part of a 'race' further personifies the train and this is emphasised still further in the following passage where Mrs Marrot is introduced to the 'infirmary':

> "The infirmary, William?"
> "Ay, the place where old and damaged trucks and carriages are sent for repair. They are all in a bad way, you see,--much in need of the doctor's services."
> This was true. Looking at some of these unfortunates […] it seemed a wonder they had been able to perform their last journey, or crawl to the hospital, (Ballantyne 151).

The various maladies of the train's trucks and carriages are described as infectious diseases: 'some of the trucks especially might have been almost said to look diseased, they were so dirty, while at the corners […] they appeared to have broken out in a sort of small-pox irruption of iron tackets,'(Ballantyne 154). Reckless, oversexed, sulky adolescents swiftly turn into decrepit, disease-raddled old wrecks.

In part *The iron horse* can be read as a straightforward account of the engine-driver's life, but it is also, simultaneously, an extended metaphor for the increasing—and perhaps dangerous—acceleration of the technological age and for the corresponding powerlessness of the working man. The text thus highlights an interesting and difficult dichotomy between an amplified industrial zeal coupled with the automation of working practices which threatened traditional masculine identities. An insightful account of the engine-driver's life with its many nuances, difficulties and adversities, *The iron horse* offers its ambiguously youthful readers an exciting, but ultimately troubling, account of what it means to be a railway employee.

A life on the line: *Mark Dennis*

The second text in this chapter, *Mark Dennis,* was written by Mary Leith but published anonymously in 1859. Born Mary Gordon (1840), Leith gained popularity as a children's author after collaborating with her cousin, the poet Charles Algernon Swinburne.[21] Alternatively titled *The engine-driver: a tale of the railway* it relates the story of Bill, the engine-driver of an express train running from London to the coast, and of the driver's son Mark—whose own ambition is realised in an apprenticeship to the same London to Seagate Railway company.

[21] See Yisrael Levin in *A.C. Swinburne and the singing word* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p.129.

The tale begins with Mark's first journey aboard a train in which he experiences the route from the third-class carriage following his formative training but prior to his apprenticeship as a fireman. Mark matures both occupationally and personally as the novel progresses, reaching the status of both engine-driver and married man. Whilst Mark overcomes his reservations about the huge responsibilities entrusted to him, his father Bill is involved in a near fatal train crash which was neither his fault nor avoidable. He survives the crash to witness his son's marriage to the sister of his own fireman, but Mark's fears are ironically realised as a second crash brings about his own death. Bill never fully recovers from the tragedy, blaming himself for his son's untimely death because he encouraged and facilitated Mark's career as engine-driver. Some consolation is found when Mark's widow, Lizzie, and her infant son move into Bill's home; however, life for the family has changed irrevocably. Although at times sentimental, the novel also draws on wider societal concerns about the dangers of long working hours, poor working conditions for engine-drivers and the threat of supernumerary and independent excursion trains on an already over-capacitated railway system. The novel depicts both the heroism of, and the inevitable sacrifices exacted by, the engine-driver's life. Set against the idealised notions of hearth and home that were fashionable in the second half of the nineteenth century, the text tackles—and to some extent struggles with—the impossibility of an engine-driver uncompromisingly inhabiting both worlds.[22]

The impact of railway employment on the family unit is of central concern to the plot. Whereas Ballantyne used a sequence of railway vignettes—interlinked but not sequential--to show the engine-driver's unique working conditions, Leith employs a linear structure in which all actions lead to adverse consequences. The linear structure applies to time in the text, tracking Mark's life chronologically from his return home from training, to learning his trade as a fireman, through to his promotion and eventual death as an engine-driver. This linear structure is replicated in the different locations in the text which are always the village of Ashleigh—situated near to a station on the London and Seagate Railway—or either terminus of Seagate or London. The back and forth nature of these settings replicates the railway line's own spatial monotony and fashions a sense of claustrophobia in which accident and death are inevitable. Consequently, even prior to Mark's death, the engine-driving life is seen to exact considerable stresses upon maternal and filial family relationships.

Mark Dennis begins with the return of Mark to the family home after he has 'served an apprenticeship in the locomotive department, and […] had just returned home, prepared […] to take the situation of fireman on the London and Seagate Railway,' (Leith 9).[23] This homecoming frames the novel,

[22] See John Tosh, *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 1.
[23] Leith, M. *Mark Dennis or The engine-driver. A tale of the railway* (London: Rivingtons, 1859),

establishing Mark's status as a returning son whilst borrowing from more established genres of adventure with the trope of coming-of-age. In Mark's return there are suggestions of the heroic—of physical strength and embodied manliness—whilst also those of a school-boyish 'home for the holidays' return. Immaturity and physical weakness are evident in Mark still, corollaries of his not yet having reached the very end of his education. Such a duality is evident in Mark's mixed reactions to home. Whilst he shows a childish appreciation for its familiarity, as a wiser and more mature young man he is quick to realise that home is no longer the place of security that it once was. Mark notes specifically the beauty of the garden "There is no place like the country…and I'm very glad I'm going to live here. The garden, and the flowers, and everything looks so nice," (Leith 4). Even though Mark's estimation of his parents' garden is rather conservative, it is the only feature of the property he comments on upon his return and suggests his perception of home as a Garden of Eden. However, his recognition of home as paradise is tempered by his observations of the heat and the harvest as he notes how the journey home was: 'Tremendously hot…a positive oven' and how he 'observed several fields of reapers,'(Leith 4-5). Mark is torn between the pull of home and his apprenticeship to the railway trade, and this is evident in the conflict of interests between mother and father. Whilst Mark's mother receives Mark as a grown man: "There that'll do, Mark! She said at length; "stand up and let me see you. What a fine young man you are grown, to be sure!", (Leith 3); his father instead chastises his boyish impetuosity: "well, mother, what do you think of your impatient boy bolting off the instant he's out of the train, instead of stopping with me to learn all he could?" (Leith 4). Now that Mark is apprenticed to the railway company, his loyalties are clearly divided between home and his new employment. This divide is shown symbolically in Mark's father's removal of his cap, 'taking off his shining brass-edged cap, and laying it down on the window-sill' (Ballantyne 5) and is evidence of the different facets—or hats—that the engine-driving life consists of.

The cap, which formed an iconic part of the engine-drivers uniform, takes on further significance later in the novel when Mark commissions a photographic portrait of himself in his drivers uniform which he gifts to his wife:

> She opened the parcel and found it to contain a small glass photograph […] there was his shining cap with its bright brass rim, and plate with the letters "L.S.R." engraved upon it, and his own thick wavy locks of dark hair beneath it […] it was one of her greatest treasures, and was duly set up on the mantlepiece in the front room of the cottage, (Leith 69).

references to this edition will be given in parenthesis hereafter.

Lizzie places an especial value on the memento in light of Mark's frequent absence from home. Mark's uniform is a reminder of the responsibility he holds, but also of the dangerous and inclement circumstances of his journeys:

> Lizzie Dennis could not but shudder and think anxiously of her husband, as the fierce gusts shook the walls of her cottage, and howled in the chimney […] and Mark, with his great-coat buttoned up to the collar […] and his cap drawn down over his face, standing next to the protecting dome of the engine, had not yet got half-way on his journey, (Leith 70).

But despite being proud of her husband's position as engine-driver, both Lizzie and Mark recognise that an engine-driver was essentially a role of servitude and the couple choose the name of 'Jane' for their child in keeping with the belief that 'fine names are [not] for people in our station of life,' (Leith 101). Evidence of Mark's servitude extend beyond his and his family's sense of duty, and their home is a tied property belonging to the railway company. The family's security is reliant on Mark's commitment to employment as an engine-driver, despite the many manifest dangers. Hence the accident that culminates in Mark's death, also renders Lizzie and their child homeless:

> "Lizzie told me today that she would have to leave her cottage."
> "Poor dear!" said Dennis, and what does she mean to do?" (Leith 185).

Despite the hardships and inherent dangers, the pull of the railway and the engine-driving life is apparent. Even as Mark lies dying, on hearing the train he comments that he would "give[n] anything to be out on the engine once more, and to feel the fresh cool wind,' (Leith 177). There are elements of the adventure genre--as encountered in Ballantyne's text also—in Mark's commitment to the 'fast life.'

Mark is keenly aware of the mounting risks to the engine-driver as technology and the popularity of the railways advance. The time-lapse in the narration gives an insight into how the dangers have magnified from Mark's first days on-board an engine to when he is a fully-fledged driver. Although Mark's 'great ambition from a boy had always been to follow his father's trade, and work on the railway,' (Leith 8) the reality of this employment falls short of his expectations: it was 'the post upon which, as a boy, he had looked at as the summit of human happiness. Of course, it was not the same to him now, after three years spent on the engine, and he had had experience of the drawbacks […] of a railway life,' (Leith 48). Mark further ruminates upon his 'troubles' explaining to Lizzie how the over-capacitated railway system was likely adversely to affect his own safety:

> With a sigh and a smile, he sat down to the table. "They are going to run excursion trains on Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays, and they are to follow the regular trains so close, ten to one we will be having collisions," (Leith 132).

Mark's mixed response in which he both sighs and smiles and mentions the catastrophe of 'collisions' alongside the run-of-the-mill 'regular trains' is evidence of both resignation and ambivalence. Whilst recognising the danger, Mark is resigned to living with the threat of an accident. Lizzie's principled response to Mark's concerns "the laws ought to prevent it," is idealistic but unhelpful, showing her lack of understanding of the fundamental politics belying an engine-driver's rights. Mark is stoic as he reflects on the driver's responsibility to facilitate the railway companies' commitments without apportioning blame: "if there are the trains, there'll be the people to fill them. It can't be helped," (Leith 133). Mark's determination to continue driving 'his' engine, despite his fatalistic understanding of the risks, arguably makes him heroic; conversely, his death itself is far from the epitome of a hero's death. Instead, Mark clings to life for several days after the crash. During this time, he is heavily reliant on the care ministered by his wife and mother. His slow and painful death is antithetical to the concept of adventure and the fast life and he eventually passes away in a humble manner, in 'a great deal of pain' and after 'the clergyman has been,' (Leith 175). Because Mark inadvertently sacrifices his family's happiness in his own pursuit of his career, ascribing him a true hero's death is problematic. Consequently, whereas the circumstances of the accident are tragic, Mark's death itself is rendered relatively unremarkable. The emphasis is placed not on Mark's passing, but instead upon the impact of his death on the family. His engine-driving career has been, from its very earliest days, a precursor to his death, having been the cause of protracted absence: 'as the company's engines only made one journey a day, from London to Seagate, or the reverse […] consequently [he] slept in London almost every alternate night,' (Leith 19).[24] Therefore, whilst the railway accident is portrayed in a stirring manner, Mark's death is drawn out, its impacts having taken effect long before his actual demise.

To conclude, both texts in this chapter demonstrate some of the difficulties of fictionalising the engine-driving life. There is evidence of an incongruity between adventure and stability in the context of the engine-driver and their family. Both Ballantyne and Leith's texts reveal the challenges and threats posed to the traditional family unit by modern railway driven occupations. On the one hand,

[24] As a specialist trade, engine-driving was a job which necessitated a lengthy period of training and as this required specialised experience, the training called for a stay away from home. Engine-drivers and footplatemen were expected to work for the entire journey and therefore stays away from home were frequently necessary as journey distances increased. Trevor May explains the hospitality systems that were established specifically for male railway employees in *The Victorian railway worker* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2000), pp 15-16.

both texts explore the burden of responsibility placed upon the driver, but on the other hand, neither text wholeheartedly celebrates the engine-driver as a heroic figure. Both Ballantyne and Leith reserve judgement on the status of the engine-driver. In both texts, there are opportunities to engage with wider political debates about the responsibilities of the railway companies and the government in intervening in accident prevention, but these are by and large avoided. Ballantyne suggests that accident and loss are inevitable consequences of living a fast life, but he doesn't apportion blame to either driver nor the railway companies. Leith recognises that greater legislation would offer protection to the engine-driver, but she too acquiesces in the impracticability of this, accepting that as long as people are willing to pay to travel by train, the priority will always be on sustaining and growing the industry and not on protecting any individual's safety for which they must ultimately be accountable for themselves. The lack of certainty surrounding the engine-driving life makes it a difficult topic to conceptualise as children's fiction. Whilst the engine-driver can provide the types of heroic qualities commonly ascribed to adventure narratives, the danger of the fast life is often far too close to home for comfort.

Chapter Two

Spaces of possibility: The railway carriage in *Maggie's message* and *The Pennycomequicks.*

The fast speeds and potential danger of the railways and train travel lent themselves to the types of narratives of adventure popular with the juvenile reader during the late nineteenth-century. Though many markers of the adventure genre—typically stories of daring deeds and brave heroics--featured in railway narratives, unlike most fin-de-siècle romances for boys, railway stories tended to be set at home rather than abroad, and to feature industrial railway spaces. That is not to say that these industrial settings were not dangerous or exciting and unfamiliar. As we have already seen in Robert Ballantyne's *The iron horse* and Mary Leith's *Mark Dennis*, fictional accounts of the railways were able to provide exciting and engaging narratives in which unlikely heroes and heroics abounded. But the railways also gave rise to new constructions of privacy and even of domesticity, and hence to scenarios as absorbing as, if less thrilling than, the railway works, the engine's footplate, or the scene of the railway disaster. As evidenced in the texts in this chapter--Emma Leslie's *Maggie's message* (1872) and Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Pennycomequicks* (1880) the railway carriage afforded an important setting for popular fiction. Written and published in the final decades of the Victorian era, *Maggie's message* and *The Pennycomequicks* both present the railway carriage as a unique and indeterminate space which was yet to have fully adopted conventions of class, age or gender.

When thinking about railway spaces, it is easy automatically to consider grand architecture such as London's King's Cross Station, Paddington or York.[1] However, much railway architecture and design stems from far humbler domestic origins. The railway space most familiar to the passenger was the railway carriage and, in the railway's early days as a passenger conveyance, competing railway companies went to great pains to mimic familiar spaces to put their passengers at ease and attract the customer to out-do the competition. It follows that the railway carriage interior could be likened to a 'parlour on wheels'.[2] Whilst 'parlour' might have been an apt description for early first-class carriages, in the main second, third-class and later first-class carriages were utilitarian spaces. As railway historian Jack Simmons suggests, functional carriage spaces represented a 'space of possibility giving rise to new modes of being.'[3] In *Maggie's message*, the carriage is occupied solely by females—a mother and daughter—and unrestricted by a male dominance or presence, thus enabling Maggie—the young daughter—to experiment with different modes of being without fear of chastisement or overstepping the mark. In *The Pennycomequicks*, the carriage is occupied by strangers—a gentleman and an unaccompanied female—between whom the circumstances of the

[1] For detailed information on the architectural history of these stations see L.T.C Rolt's *Victorian engineering* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007), pp. 25-30.
[2] Mathieson, C. *Mobility in the Victorian novel: placing the nation*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 77-79.
[3] Simmons, J. *The Victorian railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp. 332-36.

journey force an uneasy interaction. In both *Maggie's message* and *The Pennycomequicks* the railway carriage features as a socially unconditioned place, in which the conventions and rules of polite society could be bent, or might not apply at all. The proliferation of travel advice guides directed at the Victorian railway passenger suggests how open to negotiation these rules really were, and in how precarious a situation an unwary passenger could find themselves. Both the lack of social rules, and the undercurrent of danger this creates, provided ample scope for interesting and engaging narratives to unfold. This is certainly the case in *The Pennycomequicks* where threat is levelled at both male and female passengers. In *Maggie's message* the dangers arise not from any threat from a fellow passenger, but from a psychological jeopardy arising from Maggie and her mother's inhabitation of a space unmoored from any conventional modes of being.

The view from the carriage window: *Maggie's message*

Maggie's message by Emma Leslie was published in 1872 by D. Lothrop and Co. as well as by The Religious Tract Society during the same year. There are few records of the text and it is unclear which publisher issued the first edition of the book, however it is listed in *The Publishers' Weekly* under the heading of 'Premium Sunday School Books' and under the subtitle 'D. Lothrop and Co.'s A Select List of Books'. Regardless of publisher, is can be surmised that the text belongs to a category of fiction intended as improving literature aimed at the Sunday School student and commonly issued as a Sunday School prize. Its listing in *The Publishers' Weekly* is accompanied by a strapline declaring the text a 'charming story,' which is in keeping with Emma Leslie's other stories aimed at the juvenile reader.

In *Maggie's message* the railway journey holds significance as a trope independent from the weightier themes – repentance, moral duty and family loyalty--of the main plot of the text. Though in some ways subordinate to the rest of the domestic narrative, the railway journey introduces us to the central protagonist Maggie—a young girl--and her recently widowed mother in an apparently neutral setting. The pair are unaccompanied on their journey and are the sole occupants of the carriage as it takes them from London to the village where Maggie's mother grew up and where her grandfather—the village squire--still lives. The pair are estranged from the squire—the reasons being are not established--and the journey marks their troubled return to the village. Maggie's mother is dying of consumption and she wishes for a reconciliation with her father and for provision for her daughter in the event of her death; a transaction she terms 'Maggie's message' as she believes—or hopes—that her daughter will be pivotal in the Squire's moral reformation.

The reader is first introduced to Maggie and her mother before they actually board the train, but it is the intimacy of the railway carriage setting that affords the reader a greater insight into both

characters' motivation and relationship. The story begins *in medias res* as Maggie and her mother are seen aboard the train by an attending male relative to ensure their safety. This is in accordance with advice given in *The railway traveller's handy book* which suggests that an unaccompanied female traveller should 'contrive […] to secure the services of her husband, brother, or other male relative to see her off by the train […] the departure is the most harassing part of the journey, she will then not have much to dread,'.[4] However, it soon becomes apparent that the journey itself does become a form of harassment. though not one stemming from external threats; instead, it is a self-perpetuating provocation which stems not from strangers, but from the claustrophobic nature of the railway carriage: the lengthy period of immobility prompting introspection and a depressive mood.

Whilst there is little action as the pair travel from London to the country village of Fernfield, and the journey is rather unremarkable, it is an important narrative device which is used to give the reader crucial aspects of the backstory. The details revealed include the death of Maggie's father, the estrangement of her grandfather, and her mother's poor health. Ominously, in light of the mother's evident ill health, only single tickets have been purchased: the outing is apparently only one-way. The journey functions as a homecoming for the mother, but an adventure into unfamiliar territory for Maggie: an ending for the one, and the beginning of a new chapter for the other. The trope of the single ticket as a figure of finality or irreversibility would have been familiar, at least to adult readers, as shown in the following illustration from *Punch* (illustration 5).[5] The understanding that Maggie's

Illustration 5. "*Pleasant prospect—a day with the stag" Punch*, 1864.
Little T.N.: "Shall you take a single or return!" Friend: "Well, I shall take a return, because I know the horse I'm going to ride,--but you'd better take a single and an insurance ticket!

[4] Simmonds, J ed. *The railway traveller's handy book*, (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1971), p.53.
[5] Anon, *Punch's almanacks* (1862-1880), II. (London: Punch Office, 1881).

mother will not return encourages the reader to give Maggie a sympathetic hearing. This matters, since Maggie is at times a rather conceited character whom it is difficult to like: but the success of the narrative as a whole will depend on the reader extending forgiveness to Maggie and recognising that her mistakes have been made as an orphaned child without lasting parental guidance.

It is now a commonplace that the confined nature of the railway carriage provides a secluded space conducive to internal reflection and meditation. The emergence of this trope coincided with that of railway travel itself. Since travel generally afforded its own intrinsic sense of purpose, it allowed for sedation and permitted time to indulge in introspection exempt from accusations of laziness or lack of productivity. *The railway traveller's handy book* categorises 'musing' as a specific pastime of the railway journey: 'railway travelling affords a favourable opportunity for musing and reflecting, combined with that delightful occupation known as building "castles in the air".[6] In *Maggie's message* both mother and daughter spend a large portion of the journey time in musing, though the scene is focalized primarily through young Maggie:

> Maggie nestled closed to her mother, and for the rest of the journey […] she wondered who this mysterious grandpapa could be, for she was not quite sure yet whether to think of him being an inhabitant of the earth—a mortal like herself […] or something midway between that and her dead papa,' (Leslie 14).[7]

In the context of this permissive space, the vantage point of the carriage window, separating the outside and inside worlds as distinct and separate modes of being, has particular resonance. In *Mobility in the Victorian novel* Mathieson refers to the railway carriage window as affording 'new modes of perception.' She suggests furthermore that 'the compartment window was a much bigger and smoother sheet of glass than that of the stagecoach and, when combined with the new speed of travel, this created an altogether new platform from which to view the world beyond'.[8] In *"The travelling companions"* artist Augustus Leopold Egg captures the way in which the railway carriage framed, whilst also distancing, the landscape from the carriage interior (illustration 6).

[6] Simmons, J ed. p.67.
[7] Leslie, E. *Maggie's message* (London: The Religious Tract Society,1872), references to this edition will be given in parenthesis hereafter.
[8] Mathieson p. 69.

Illustration 6. *"The travelling companions*" Augustus Leopold Egg, 1862, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

In the painting, the carriage window frames the view as a triptych, while the swinging of the tassel at the window provides evidence of the train's movement; however, the characters—the female companions—are stationary, reflecting the separate modes of being inside and outside of the carriage. Similarly, in *Maggie's message,* the carriage window affords a view of the outside world but is also a protective barrier. Elsewhere in the story, the opening and closing of windows is one of the child's preoccupations: a focus of anxiety and expectation: 'Maggie, with a thoughtfulness beyond her years, sprang from the sofa and closed the window. 'Mama cannot bear the cold,' she said,' (Leslie 19); 'we are scarcely used to open windows,' (Leslie 19); and 'she was not allowed to leave the housekeeper's room for fear she should be in her Grandpapa's way, and to look out the window was an amusement not at all to Maggie's liking,' (Leslie 71). In the railway carriage the distinction between spaces is carefully drawn. The external environment is one of activity: 'they were rushing through the midst of budding hedgerows, springing cornfields, and past tiny bubbling brooks, which highly delighted the little girl' (Leslie 10). The cluster of present participles suggests youthfulness and energy. Contrastingly, the solemn and oppressive atmosphere inside the carriage is dominated by the mother's melancholia:

> The lady smiled at the child's pleasure, but her thoughts seemed to be far away, and she only gazed out of the window when directed to do so.

> "Mama are you very sorry to leave London?" She asked at length, noticing her mamma's saddened look […] it's about dear papa, isn't it?" Said Maggie, glancing at her black frock and settling herself at her mamma's side again, as though she ought not to look upon the glad bright fields when her mamma was so full of sorrow, (Leslie 11).

The interior of the carriage is detached from the landscape and the alienation from the physical world of 'the glad bright fields' is cemented by Maggie's realisation that she 'ought not look'. Maggie finds herself in a vacuum. She can either choose to act as a young child and follow her mother's directions to 'look at some sheep that were scampering across an adjoining field,' (Leslie 13); or, she can choose to try and cross '[a]gulf as impassable as that which separated her from her father,' (Leslie 15), into the adult world—a gloomy and depressing place currently dominated by her mother's sadness and depression. Perhaps unsurprisingly, she falls asleep instead.

Without any clear rules or guidance on how to behave, the railway carriage is a difficult space for Maggie to navigate and she finds herself charting unfamiliar territory. Unsure of whether to act as an adult or a child, Maggie's insecurity gives rise to conflicting feelings which she levels at her mother as a challenge to her authority and as resistance to doing as she is told. However, arrival at the station rectifies any conflicting sense of selfhood as the station—easily recognised as a patriarchal adult space—is easier to appropriate by the young girl. The familiarity of the space gives Maggie greater confidence that she has yet to fully accept adult responsibilities, therefore she can afford to playact at being a grown-up:

> "Mama, I can tell them which are our boxes," […] and Maggie, lifted out of the carriage by the guard, went at once to fulfil the important duty, feeling and looking quite a little woman in her new duty of looking after her mother, (Leslie 15-16).

Whilst the boundaried station setting instils confidence in Maggie, it has the opposite effect on Maggie's mother as she realises the vulnerability of unaccompanied female travellers in a space dominated by male strangers. Upon debarking from the train, Maggie and her mother are once again open to the unsolicited attention of strangers. In the same protective manner that Maggie and her mother's departure was overseen by a male relative, they are met by a male chaperone upon their arrival. It is not until Maggie's mother recognises the chaperone as a local farmer whom she used to know that she can express 'great relief' upon seeing 'the farmer himself [who] had come from the farmhouse where they had arranged to stay,' (Leslie 16). The journey from the railway station is a short one by pony and cart, but marks a big change in Maggie and her mother's identity as they are received as the daughter and granddaughter of the squire rather than in their own right: 'They were not long reaching the farmhouse, where the farmer's wife, in her trim cap and rosy face, met them at

the door, all smiles and welcomes to the daughter of the squire,' (Leslie 18). The unconventional space afforded by the railway carriage offers Maggie the freedom to experiment with new modes of being such as greater independence, autonomy of thought and self-regulation. However, she automatically returns to following the established hierarchy when in the wider world. In *Maggie's message*, then, the railway carriage doesn't extend the type of luxury and comfort that typifies 'the parlour on wheels' described by Mathieson, but it does afford a temporary space immured from judgement and convention, thus suggesting to its young readers the possibility of experimenting with alternate modes of being.

In the cage with vultures: *The Pennycomequicks*

Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Pennycomequicks* likewise features the railway carriage as a space of possibility. *The Pennycomequicks* was published in weekly instalments by *The Bolton Weekly Journal*, *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* and *the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* from the 4th January to the 26th June 1889. Whereas the other texts featured thus far have been levelled at the child reader (though undoubtably within the forum of family reading practices,) *The Pennycomequicks*' distribution as a serialised story in the syndicated press indicates it was aimed at a wider family audience than children specifically. The story centres on the eponymous Philip Pennycomequick—a London solicitor and a gentleman. Philip, upon receiving an ambiguous letter notifying him his uncle is 'lost', takes the train from London to Murgatroyd in Lancashire where his uncle owned a textile mill. Having hastily boarded the train, Philip finds himself alone in the compartment with a very attractive—and forwardly self-assured— young lady. Uncomfortable with the position he is in, he does his best to ignore her though she does her utmost to draw him into conversation. A complicated narrative unfolds—part pantomime farce, part detective story and part romance—in which various narrative threads run concurrently: the missing, presumed dead, uncle is found alive in Bridlington; his housekeeper and her son are conspirators to inheritance fraud; Philip marries the twin sister of the girl in the train carriage, before finding out she is the daughter of a past business adversary; and so forth. The story advances through several geographical locations: it shifts from Lancashire, to Yorkshire and eventually to Switzerland and the Alps. Throughout the complicated narrative, the railway line and the corresponding journeys provide a constant which unifies the different locations, the non-chronological timeframes, and the multiple character perspectives. Two railway journeys are given particular attention: the initial journey from London to Murgatroyd and the later journey across Europe in which Philip travels to surprise his wife in the Alps. In both cases, the isolated interior setting and locomotivity of the railway carriage have an importance beyond transportation alone. In the domestic journey between London and Murgatroyd the railway carriage provides the setting, and the difficult circumstances of the journey the impetus, for an uncomfortable liaison between characters of differing genders, classes and agenda. The journey across

Europe to the Alps is also a journey undertaken by Philip, though this time he is a married man and the father of an infant. His motivation for this journey is very different from the previous journey as it is self-directed and not at the request of another—indeed he intends to surprise his wife—and he is alone in the carriage. The duration coupled with the solitude of the European journey is discomfiting to Philip to the extent that it becomes a metaphor for the difficulties of maintaining meaningful relationships in an increasingly fragmentary modern world.

The satirical, worldly tone of the text renders it a slight misfit in the context of the railway narratives already featured, but it helps us understand the crucial role the railway journey had in broadening horizons in the late nineteenth-century and the tensions associated with this as the characters have to wrestle with their own modes of being and self-identity. The juvenile reader of *The iron horse* or *Mark Dennis* could feasibly be the adult reader of *The Pennycomequicks* given the time passed between the dates of publication (*Mark Dennis* was published in 1859, *The iron horse* in 1871 and *The Pennycomequicks* in 1889). In these earlier texts, the danger of the railway journey was manifest at a physical level, and the main threat was injury or death in the event of a train crash. However, in *The Pennycomequicks* the threat is to propriety and reputation, and the concern is how to maintain these in a time when the railways were contracting geographical distance at the same time greater connectivity presaged the shifting of social boundaries.

The most extensive description of the railway journey in *The Pennycomequicks* combines travel for business and pleasure, as it charts Philip's experience of a lengthy journey on the Midland Line. Philip finds himself alone in a carriage with a young and attractive female passenger. At this point in the story, both characters are anonymous to the reader and there is a natural inclination to judge each based upon their travelling countenance and attire. The first impression given of Philip is unremarkable:

> In a second-class carriage on the Midland line sat a gentleman […] He was a tall man, and was dressed in a dark suit with a black tie. His face had that set controlled look which denotes self-restraint and reserve. The lips were thin and closed, and the cast of the features was stern. The eyes, large and hazel, were the only apparently expressive features he possessed (Baring-Gould 70).[9]

However, his bland appearance is a double-blind, simultaneously piquing the interest of the reader by drawing attention to his appearance whilst giving little away beyond the fact he appears to be a

[9] Baring-Gould, S. *The Pennycomequicks* (London: Collins Modern Fiction, 1880), references to this edition will be given in parenthesis hereafter.

gentleman. There is a subtle sense of satire in the narrator's comment that 'the classes are distinguished by their countenances' (Baring-Gould 72), given that we are offered little description of Philip's own cast of features: beyond his self-control and sternness he is effectively a blank canvas and could more-or-less represent any white male middle-class commuter during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

By contrast, the female passenger occupying the carriage is brought to life with colour and detail:

> Pretty—uncommonly pretty the little lady was, with perfectly made clothes. The fit of the gown and the style of the bonnet proclaimed French make. She had lovely golden-red hair, large brown eyes, and a face of transparent clearness, with two somewhat hectic fire-spots in her cheeks. Her charming little mouth was now quivering with pitiful vexation (Baring-Gould 74).

Both appearance and demeanour of the two characters are markedly different. Philip dresses in muted tones, his expression reserved, his aloofness painfully apparent. The lady traveller is, by contrast, uncommonly pretty, gay and exuberant. Instead of feeling admiration or attraction to the female passenger, however, Philip finds her presence unsettling. Although to the reader's knowledge, the lady traveller hasn't done anything to cause alarm, the very fact of her being pretty, young and unaccompanied rings alarm bells. As the narrator reflects, '[being] shut in with a lady unattended, especially if young and pretty [would cause a] repugnance [in a] single gentlemen' (Baring-Gould 72). Although Philip's self-restraint prevents him from expressing his discomfort outwardly, the reader is afforded an insight into his opinion of the lady traveller: "He on his side said to himself, 'a forward missie! I wish I were in a smoking-carriage, though I detest the smell of tobacco,'" (Baring-Gould 74). Philip's judgement of the lady appears rash and unfavourable compared with the judgement she makes in return:

> The pretty young lady had not opened the conversation, if that can be called conversation which is one-sided, without having observed the young man's face, and satisfied herself that there was no more impropriety in her talking to one of so staid an air than if he had been a clergyman, (Baring-Gould 73-4).

It is not only the appearance and demeanour of the passengers that is very different, their actions and travelling behaviour contrast also as the characters respond to being confined in the railway carriage. The lady passenger is eager to establish a connection with her fellow passenger, attempting to broach a conversation :'she had travelled a long way for a great many hours, and was weary of her own company. She longed for a little conversation,'; but Philip would rather travel in silence and thus

deflects any attempts at interaction: ''In-deed,' said he in dislocated syllables. He quite understood that a hint had been conveyed to him, but he was an armadillo against hints,' (Baring-Gould 73). When the lady passenger's attempts at conversation are rebuffed, she tries to take advantage of the uncomfortably cold temperature in the carriage and offers her footwarmer to Philip as a way of gaining some rapport with him. Despite the discomfort of the cold, Philip declines the offer "'Thank you, my feet are not cold,' was the ungracious reply," (Baring-Gould 73). Keen to avoid any accusations of misconduct, which the narrator refers to as the calamity of 'voluntarily casting himself into a cage with vultures', he casts suspicion on the lady's motives and prioritises respectability over , securing a physically comfortable journey (Baring-Gould 72). By contrast, the lady traveller puts her desire for communication and connectivity above any unwritten laws governing propriety:

> "Oh, sir! Excuse my seeming rudeness, but—you have been reading the newspaper, and I am on pins and needles to hear the news from France. It is true that I have just crossed the Channel from that dear and suffering—but heroic country; I am, however, very ignorant of the news," (Baring-Gould 74).

In labouring the young woman's intrusions, the text plays on familiar advice about railway etiquette: as we have seen, there were specific guides aimed at helping travellers navigate the more subtle aspects of railway travel. Covering conduct before, during and after the train journey, guides such as *The railway traveller's handy book* aimed to educate the reader on the 'business of railway travelling—the art one might call it, of travelling in the greatest comfort and safety'.[10] The anonymous author of this guide gives specific advice to the unaccompanied female traveller, suggesting that 'if a female is obliged not only to travel alone, but to go to the station alone, she should place herself under the care of one of the policemen or guards,'.[11] Such advice is adhered to in *The Pennycomequicks* as the lady claims 'the porters have been remarkably civil, and the guard looks in occasionally to see that I am comfortable' (Baring-Gould 73). The 'care' alluded to is of course, not entirely freely given: the reader bears witness to the transaction between the lady traveller and the guard as she passes him a bottle of 'Saint-Julien' with a bank-note tucked underneath,

> He slipped the money into his waistcoat pocket, the bottle he stowed elsewhere; then thrusting his head inside [the carriage] he said confidently, "never fear. I'll make it alright for you ma'am," (Baring-Gould 77).

[10] Simmonds, J ed. (1971), p.22.
[11] Ibid.

Much of the advice given in *The railway traveller's handy book*—in the chapter 'In the carriage'—is aimed at negotiating the journey untarnished by the proximity of strangers. The *Handy book*'s author acknowledges the existence of what they term 'unpleasant travelling companions,' claiming that 'railway travellers are […] thrown into company with persons who might not know how to behave themselves,'.[12] However, in *The Pennycomequicks* it is the male passenger who fears allegations of misconduct being made against him: 'what a nuisance it would be were he stopped and obliged to tarry for some hours till the road was repaired, tarry in cold and darkness, without a lamp in his carriage, caged in with that pretty, coquettish, dangerous minx, and with no third party present to serve as his protector,' (Baring-Gould 79). Philip's discomfiture at being in the compartment with a lone female is heightened by the circumstance that the railway carriage is a space in which the rules of social engagement seem to apply less stringently.[13] Whilst Philip cannot leave the railway carriage during the journey, he places as much physical distance between them as he can: 'he made up his mind that she was a coquette, and he was steeled against her various tricks to attract attention and enlist sympathy […] he rose from his place and moved to the further end of the compartment,' (Baring-Gould 75). The carriage is empty apart from the two characters but instead of the lack of proximity to others minimising any suspicion of harm, it significantly increases it. Despite the carriage being relatively empty, the distrust the sharing of space generates breeds an intensely claustrophobic atmosphere.

The sense of claustrophobia is significantly increased by the duration of the journey as it continues as night falls:

> The short November day had closed in; and the remainder of the journey would be taken in the dark. The lamps had not yet been lighted in the carriage […] the gentleman was uneasy. If the dromedary will not voluntarily enter the cage of the vulture, he will not remain in it in darkness with her without tremors, (Baring-Gould 77).

With little experience of lone female travellers beyond the typecast harridan, Philip assumes his companion to be 'a vulture'. It is not until fate intervenes with the journey and damage to the railway lines dictate that the train can go no further, that the feeling of claustrophobia lifts. The train inadvertently and alarmingly halts and both passengers are ordered out by the guard who "sharply turned the handle and threw open the door. 'Everyone get out. The train can go no further,'" (Baring-

[12] Simmonds, J ed. (1971), p. 86.
[13] See Adrian Grey for coverage of sexual assault in the railway carriage. The most widely known cases are Dickinson vs Baker (Croydon Assizes 2nd Aug 1864); Moody vs Nash (Hampshire County Court 1864); and Siddals vs Goodall (Tamworth and Burton 11th Jan 1892); However, he also concedes that 'not every assault of this nature was accurately reported by its 'victim''; *Crime on the line* (Penryn: Atlantic Publishers, 2000), pp. 31-43.

Gould 80). Once outside of the carriage, the train's stasis affords Philip and his co-passenger a chance to revert to more conventional, less derailed behaviour:

> Mr. Philip was obliged by common humanity to assist the young lady out of the carriage, and to collect and help to carry her manifold goods […] He engaged to see her across the dangerous piece of road and return for those of her wraps and parcels which he and she were together unable to transport to the train awaiting them beyond the faulty portion of the line (Baring-Gould 80).

The dynamic between characters having reverted to more traditional gender stereotypes of gallant male and vulnerable female, the conflict is displaced from being between the passengers, to being between man and the machine. The hostility aimed by Philip at the lady passenger is redirected to the train itself and directed as annoyance and inconvenience at the malfunction: 'in front glared the two red lights of an engine that waited with carriages to receive the dislodged passengers,'(Baring-Gould 81). The red lights of the engine suggest danger and Philip uses this to reconfigure his behaviour. Shedding the aloof demeanour of the railway carriage, Philip is proactive in offering his arm to the stranger:

> The walk was most uncomfortable. It was properly not a walk but a continuous stumble. To step in the dark from sleeper to sleeper was not easy, and the coal fires dazzled and confused […] "You must take my arm," said Mr Philip to his companion, (Baring-Gould 81).

Furthermore, upon arrival at the station it becomes clear the travellers share the same destination—'the house of Mr. Pennycomequick'—and their luggage is conjoined by the porter: 'Mrs. Baynes is also boun' to t'same, and I can take t'whole bag o'tricks on one barrow,' (Baring-Gould 83). On reflection, Philip brushes off any concerns about indecency he felt in the railway carriage, instead regarding the liaison as 'tedious' and stating in a tongue and cheek manner that he wishes to be 'as far as possible from those young ladies […]: one has been in the train with me for many hours, and has worried me beyond endurance,' (Baring-Gould 90). The discomfiture of the journey with a stranger ultimately pays off for both passengers by enhancing their access to both physical and emotional support, however, there does need to be a catalyst to bring them together—in this instance the stalling of the journey. The railway carriage space alone lacks the societal boundaries to enable Philip and his companion to interact without fear of repercussion or allegation. Whilst the railway carriage's lack of boundaries is in some instances enabling to the individual allowing experimentation with different modes of being, the unpredictable nature stemming from such an unregulated space gives rise to a potential conflict of interests between the strangers and whilst this frisson is exciting, it also carries with it inherent danger.

The second significant railway journey in the text occurs in Switzerland—on route to Andermatt. The addition of European travel adds scope to the railway journey with greater distance, and with it an emphasis on the abundance of time available to wile away in personal reflection. At this stage in the text, Philip has married the worryingly-named Salome (the sister of the lady passenger he met on the previous journey) and despite having a young son together, the couple have become estranged. The purpose of Philip's travel to Switzerland is to retrieve his wife (she left to go to Andermatt to stay with her sister but has not returned) and he takes the unusual step of taking their baby son with him. Philip goes to great lengths to ensure the comfort and safety of his son, although he doesn't go so far as to travel in the same carriage: as in the earlier scenes, he values the sanctity of his own space above time spent with the infant:

> A Swiss nurse had been found ready to take the child and accompany Philip to Andermatt. Philip did not travel in the same carriage as the nurse and child, but he saw to their lacking nothing, (Baring-Gould 382).

Whilst Philip 'occupied a compartment of a first-class carriage by himself,' (Baring-Gould 382) he does ensure the child and nurse inhabit adjoining carriages onboard the train. Instead of the intimated threat from the proximity of strangers onboard the train, this journey suggests the shared destination is enough to maintain the attachment between father and son. Furthermore, the astronomical metaphor of planetary orbits is used to compare the railway journey with Philip and the baby's shared destiny:

> Throughout the journey Philip maintained his connection with the baby, though keeping it at a distance, as the sun holds the earth and swings it round it, but never allows the earth to approach it too closely. And as the moon revolves about the earth, so did the Swiss nurse dance attendance on Philip the Little, rotating also, of course, about Philip the Great, (Baring-Gould 384).

Philip uses the time and space the longer journey affords him in contemplation. Far removed from the hustle and bustle of the commuter journey, he uses the time meditatively as he 'thought a good deal about himself and his wife,' (Baring-Gould 382). The reflective mood in the carriage is strikingly different from that of the previous unsettling journey in which he occupied a carriage with his wife's sister. However, despite being alone in the compartment, Philip still finds himself at odds with the inconvenience and discomfort of the journey. Without a fellow passenger to pitch his animosity at, Philip aims it at the train's employees, pettishly accusing them of the theft of his pocket handkerchiefs.

> "I know" said Philip, as the train drew up at Thionville— "I know that when one has a cold, the secretion is acrid, but it is not sulphuric to burn holes in pocket-handkerchiefs. What? Turn out here, and have one's boxes examined? I will come to the bottom of that disappearance of pocket-handkerchiefs. I am put to intolerable discomfort […] I am going through, voyez mon billet! What nonsense examining one's baggage here," (Baring-Gould 383).

Philip feels discomfited by the inconvenience as it places him in a vulnerable position at the hands of the railway porters.[14] As a male head of household and businessman, Philip is accustomed to having full jurisdiction of his property and finds the baggage checks and loss of belongings tiresome. Consequently, Philip redirects his attention to the factors he can control (his wife) and is eager to reach his destination in order to return to full hegemony. Rather than succumbing to the tedium of the journey (as Maggie does in *Maggie's message*), Philip takes advantage of the time alone to ruminate on his wife's failings and muses on how he can intervene to rectify these matters:

> He had his wife's letters—the last two—in his pocket, and he reread them; the jolting of the train, the flicker of the light in the lamp overhead, made the reading difficult, and predisposed him to take umbrage at her expressions. What especially annoyed him was her praise at her new friend, the American lady, and it gave him satisfaction to conjure up before his imagination the scene of introduction of himself to her, and to picture […] his cold words giving her to understand that her friendship with his wife must be discontinued, (Baring-Gould 384).

The railway carriage offers Philip a blank screen on which he can project the visions he has for his relationship with his wife. Whilst the railway journey physically enfeebles Philip as he passes control of his mobility to the engine-driver, at the same time he can use the time and space alone in the railway carriage in musings that place him in the driving seat of his and his family's destinies. In a similar way to Maggie in *Maggie's message,* on debarking from the train Philip is confronted with a different reality to what he had imagined and soon finds he must revert to the behaviour his wife expects from him. On arrival in Andermatt, far from asserting his authority, Philip confuses his familial property with his physical property and on the reunion with his wife, it is the lost handkerchief that takes priority and not his wife or son:

[14] In the introduction to *Night trains* Andrew Martin describes the vulnerability of the continental traveller who had to relinquish responsibility to the train's staff of their passports. This was a proponent of the Wagon-Lits and allowed the passenger to sleep through the long journey; the staff would hand over the passports for a nominal inspection at the border (London: Profile books, 2018) p. 15.

> [Salome] began to sob. "It is too great happiness. My darling! My darling pet!" […]
> "You mean the baby?" […]
> "By the way," said Philip, "how many had I?"
> "How many what, Philip? Only this one, darling."
> "I mean pocket-handkerchiefs. All, all have disappeared and I have been condemned to one. I have come here to Andermatt expressly to know what my stock consisted of. Conceive, only one pocket-handkerchief left!" (Baring-Gould 391).

Whilst Philip can utilize the railway carriage as a 'space of possibility' in which to consider ways of changing a stale and unsatisfying relationship through asserting his authority over his wife, ultimately, outside of the railway carriage he is not able to carry his plans through to fruition. As is the case with Maggie in *Maggie's message* (where she finds a greater self-autonomy on the journey which quickly dissipates on disembarking), the railway carriage affords a temporary conversion for the characters inhabiting it, but one that has no real permanence or lasting effect.

To conclude, the texts in this chapter indicate the importance of the railway carriage as a space that was unconfined to any conventions or modes of being. On the one hand, the railway carriage is an extremely liberating space as demonstrated by Maggie in *Maggie's message* where the young girl experiences an emotional separation from her mother which enables her to recognise that she has her own identity beyond that of being merely her mother's daughter. However, in *The Pennycomequicks* the unregulated space becomes dysfunctional as without rules of conduct, the lack of boundaries cause confusion over what constitutes acceptable levels of engagement. Furthermore, beyond the repercussions for characters, the unregulated railway carriage as a space of possibility has bearings on our wider understanding of the role of the railways in popular fiction. Depictions of the railway carriage experience afforded writers and readers a legitimate space for day-dream, one in which fantasies of control and surrender could be played out without the commitment to, or consequences of, actual transgression.

Chapter Three
Railways, risk and accident: *Gerald's dilemma* and *Heroes of the railway*

When we think of taking risks, we do so within a framework of predictable actions and predictable consequences. We can judge the likelihood of misadventure weighed against the benefit of taking action. But to do this, we must also have a degree of experience—either first hand or taught. Whereas an accident itself cannot be controlled—an act of God if you will—risk can be assessed and minimised. Through experience we build up a repertoire of situations until we can gauge risks as they arise. Ross Hamilton argues that 'accidents acknowledge the complexity of sensory experience, but they also require an assessment of the probability that a particular experience will or will not occur. They demand interpretation,'.[1] In modern societies a crucial way in which this interpretive competence is gained in childhood is through the reading of fictional stories. Fiction is a sandbox—a playground where risk can be explored in an imaginative context—in which a multitude of factors can be orchestrated to educate the reader about the assessment of risk without the inevitable consequences of making a serious mistake. In this text I develop my account of the significance of railways in popular nineteenth-century fiction by focusing on the ways in which two late-century texts for family and younger audiences portray, and encourage engagement with, risk and the possibility of mishap. In the first text with which this chapter is concerned, Emma Leslie's *Gerald's dilemma (1890)*, an accident is presented as something occurring to the individual through negligence, whilst in Elton Keane's *Heroes of the railway (1893)* the train accident is used as a lens through which the contrast between muscular heroics and intellectual intervention become the focus of attention.

The diverse valences of danger, as illustrated by these texts, are perhaps a reason why the railways became such a preoccupation of children's literature.[2] By introducing them to danger and showing the potential threats and benefits that are encountered when engaging in a risky activity, the young reader is placed in a position of self-empowerment in which they are able to learn about and mitigate danger from a safe standpoint. The two texts vary in the depth of involvement of the child protagonists in the accident. In *Gerald's dilemma* the child is passive in the accident whilst in both the short stories in *Heroes of the railway* the children play an active role in preventing, or at least minimising, the accident and its repercussions. Both texts recognise there is an underlying tension between individual heroics and wider social responsibilities, making the depiction of the railway accident a productive site for the socialization of child readers in a world of increasingly complex, finely calibrated, and ultimately precarious interlocking systems.

[1] Ross Hamilton, *Accidents: a philosophical and literary history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 7.
[2] See M. Daphne, *Empire's children: empire and imperialism in classic British children's books* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.1; and 'children's fiction', *A companion to the Victorian novel*, eds Patrick Brantlinger and William Thesling (London: Blackwells, 2005), p. 364.

Despite its widely-publicized dangers, railway travel quickly dominated Victorian society, permeating many aspects of both rural and urban life. The dangers of railway travel could be minimised but not negated and the occurrence of—and response to—danger are frequent tropes in narratives concerning the railways.[3] This is the case in each of the texts in this chapter, where accidents involve narrative setbacks—a lost child in *Gerald's dilemma*, the death of the protagonist in *"*Fool Patsy*"* and serious accident in *"*The Signalman's boy". However, the setbacks are never represented as entirely negative in that each text incorporates cause and effect. The costs to the individual are offset by eventual societal gains as the lessons learnt from railway accidents pave the way for technological advancements and improved safety. By engaging with the threat to the individual in railway-accident fiction, the reader is exposed to and develops a tolerance of danger. This tolerance enables the reader to accept and manage fear in their own lives, embracing risk for the opportunities as well as the threats it may present. In fiction for Victorian youth, then, the railway often does more than offer a convenient backdrop; it functions as a way of understanding the accident, of learning from the mistakes of others—the fictional characters whose fate is to experience disaster for the sake of the reader. In *The original accident* Paul Virilio points out the inadequacy of responding to the accident with a scientific approach alone. Instead, he asserts 'we have to try as fast as possible to define the flagrant nature of disasters peculiar to new technologies. And we have to do this using scientific expertise, of course, but also a philosophical and cultural approach'.[4] Although Virilio is referring to accidents in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, his account explains why narratives of disaster were popular in the nineteenth, and not just confined to the adult reader. As we shall see, both *Gerald's dilemma* and *Heroes of the railway* propound quite complex messages to their readers about the relationship between mobility, accident, risk and liability.

***Gerald's dilemma*: 'don't, don't stop me!'**

Emma Leslie was a prolific Victorian author, predominantly of pious texts for children and young people.[5] Her novels depict both historical and biblical events, as well as portraying aspects of

[3] See Jack Simmonds: 'the railway companies came to represent a power over […] daily lives that were more immediately oppressive than the governments. The power—embodied in rule-books and by-laws, its irregular exercise demonstrated in accidents—might well have appeared to some of them a malignant creature of their age. Or perhaps all these things were a necessary price to be paid for the gains the railways had brought?' *The Victorian railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp. 372-73.

[4] Paul Virilio examines the relationship between accident and advancement. He claims that by rectifying the mistakes of earlier invention, technology is advanced. However, this can lead to the next generation of accidents and so on. 'Consequently' he claims, 'the shipwreck is the futurist invention of the ship, and the air crash the invention of the supersonic airliner,' first published in French as *L'accident originel* (Éditions Galilée, 2005); this edition *The original accident* trans., (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p.5.

[5] Widely regarded as a children's author, Emma Leslie did write for other audiences. As well as a biography of Queen Victoria *The life and reign of Queen Victoria* (1887), Leslie published in S.W.Partridge's 'pictorial magazine' *The Family Friend*. This miscellany was aimed predominantly at wives and mothers, offering advice and guidance on the home, the domestic and the family as well as serialised versions of popular writers' novels.

childhood in the late nineteenth century. She frequently includes marginalised and under-represented people among her characters—both as main protagonists and secondary characters—which make her texts of interest as instances of social and political commentary.[6] She also integrates aspects of late nineteenth-century modernity into her fiction, in references to the technological, industrial and medical advancements familiar to her young readers and indeed to her two high-achieving and scientifically-minded sons. Although undeniably motivated by her evangelical beliefs, Leslie was engaging with very modern concerns.[7]

Whilst thoroughly imbued with Leslie's evangelical beliefs and social concerns, *Gerald's dilemma* is firmly centred upon accident and risk specific to railway travel. Published by The Religious Tract Society—first as a monograph and then an abridged version issued serially in *The Family Friend*—the story centres on the character of Gerald, a young, recently qualified doctor, his involvement in a minor railway accident, and the subsequent chain of events. The text begins with Gerald's friends and colleagues at the London hospital where he has completed his training, requesting his attendance at a party to celebrate their graduation. Gerald, mindful of the need to catch an early train the following day, judiciously declines. His journey is from London to his mother's house some distance away; he is returning home with the intention of discussing his future career plans with her. Although he has a job lined up as a doctor at the training hospital, this is not the path he wishes to follow; rather he would prefer a career as a country doctor, giving him enough free-time to pursue his interest in medical research. The latter path is unlikely to secure him status or financial prosperity but will fulfil his philanthropic ambitions. Somewhat distracted by his dilemma, he leaves boarding his train until the last moment, then does so in a rush. Finding himself in a carriage alone with a young lady and a small boy, he momentarily acknowledges the older passenger's attractiveness, but convention prevents him from engaging in conversation with her. The boy, whom Gerald correctly assumes to be a ward of the lady and not her own child, becomes restless on the journey. Despite her best attempts to incite him to sleep, the boy's restlessness means that when the train unexpectedly lurches, he is thrown against the door. The door opens, and the boy falls from the train.

The lady passenger is distraught, and Gerald is forced to restrain her physically to prevent her from jumping from the train after the boy. The alarm cannot be raised until the train stops at the next

It is described in S.W. Partridge's catalogue as 'a beautifully illustrated magazine for the home circle with serial and short stories by popular authors, helpful articles, hints on dressmaking etc.'

[6] Leslie's texts including marginalised characters include *The Ferryman's family or Daisy Hope's fortune* (1874); *The gipsy queen* (1884); *Tom the boater a tale of English canal life* (1882); and *Water waifs a story of canal barge life* (1882).

[7] There are extensive references to the great dock strike and workers' rights and unions in *The seed she sowed* (1891); sanitary reform as advocated by Florence Nightingale and the fresh air movement in *Maggie's message* (1872) and *The seed she sowed*; reforms in education and the national school board in *Ellerslie House* (1867) and *Arthur Ranyard's training* (1890); and pioneering medical and surgical interventions in *Aunt Selina's Legacy* (1889).

station, already some way from where the boy fell. The engine driver agrees to drive a tender back to the place the boy fell, and Gerald and the lady—by now identified as Miss Austin—travel back to where he was last seen, but there is no sign of him. After speaking with several local country people, they come across evidence of the boy, although he still isn't found. During the search, Miss Austin—she is the child's aunt and has travelled to get the boy from her sister after the family had been exposed to scarlet fever—falls ill and becomes unconscious. Gerald tends to her in her distress, finds a place of accommodation to ensure her safety, and pledges to himself that he will take the hospital job to secure the necessary funds to pay for the arrangements. He contacts his mother, requesting she come to his assistance. She arrives the following day after the boy, Frank, has been found safe and well in the company of Joe, an almost feral and illiterate local boy. Gerald's mother expresses disapproval at Gerald's involvement with this family of strangers and leaves the next day to attend a garden party. Considering the responsibility he feels for Miss Austin and the boy—he feels his carelessness was a contributing factor to the accident--Gerald resigns himself to taking the hospital job in order to contribute to their welfare. Frank is safely returned to his mother, and at the close of the story it is reported that Gerald and Miss Austin are happily married. When as an adult Frank goes to stay with the married couple, he is quick to remind them that the favourable turn of events would not have happened if his fall from the railway carriage had not catalysed Gerald's eponymous dilemma.

Although ostensibly a novel motivated by moral didacticism, in the chain of events that transpires in the railway carriage and upon the railway tracks, Leslie engages with more than just moral guidance, but also with themes of social and political significance. To give context to these messages, it is worth paying some attention to the illustrations, and in particular to one used as the frontispiece to the monograph and included in the serialised version in *The Family Friend* (Illustration. 3).[8]

[8] The illustrations in *Gerald's dilemma* are by Frederick Barnard (1846-96). His most notable achievements were the illustrations for Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit, A tale of two cities, The Christmas tales* and *David Copperfield* all included in the *Household edition* 1871-79, (London: Chapman and Hall). See Philip. V. Allingham's chapter, 'Pickwick to the Household edition 1836-1870, Phiz to Fred Barnard' included in *Reading Victorian illustration 1855-75: spoils of the lumber room*, Paul Goldman and Simon Cooke (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016).

Illustration. 5 '*"Don't, don't stop me" she cried' , Gerald's dilemma,* 1890.

The picture highlights one of the most crucial moments of the text—the moment in which Miss Austin is prepared to throw herself from the open carriage door after the child, to which Gerald responds by blocking and restraining her. Both characters are caught in their own acts of heroism and, though strangers, there is a palpable connection between them as they each grasp the other's arm. Miss Austin pushes Gerald away, using his shoulder as leverage to aid her escape, whilst at the same time Gerald holds fast her other arm, his own arm firmly braced against the open carriage door. There is as much a dialogue in this illustration as there is in the narrative: though Miss Austin implores "Don't, don't stop me!" Gerald has no choice but to intervene. The dialectical relationship between the two characters is sealed in the aftermath of the accident, foreshadowing their subsequent marriage.

The clinch between the characters--if removed from the context of the railway carriage--could easily be mistaken for one between lovers.

The detail of the railway carriage adds much to the reader's interpretation of the event. The carriage is basic but comfortable: the seats a shared bench but upholstered and cushioned; a luggage rack insinuates the likely presence of a top or bowler hat and a portmanteau.[9] There is a subtle difference between Gerald's behaviour as a passenger and Miss Austin's; whereas Gerald has removed his hat and unbuttoned his jacket to relax during the journey, Miss Austin wears her hat—a symbol of propriety--throughout. There is scant evidence of her other accoutrements, making her appear less at home in the carriage than Gerald. The carriage depicted here is a far cry from Charlotte Mathieson's claim in *Mobility in the Victorian novel* that 'the compartment is a physical space of comfort, luxury and protection […] the upholstered carriage-space, work[ing]s to literally cushion the body by containing it within a safe, familiar space, that provides both comfort and the illusion of safety,'.[10] The carriage interior illustrated in *Gerald's dilemma* is a utilitarian space which exposes each individual's vulnerabilities, rather than offering even an illusory sense of protection.[11]

The illustration could, however, be interpreted as paternalistic: Gerald, a doctor as shown by his prominent medical bag in the foreground of the picture, protects the vulnerable lady passenger and prevents her coming to harm. Miss Austin, with her lack of belongings, appears a transient figure, a far cry from the stereotypical representation of the female passenger as wrapped in furs and shawls.[12] Rather, she embraces the dangers of railway travel and is quite prepared to sacrifice comfort and safety and go after the child herself; she doesn't give a second thought to the idea that this act of heroism might be better suited to her fellow traveller. The emphasis on the physical relationship between the two characters—both in their own way proactive—suggests not just the struggle between male and female as each tries to do what they believe is right, but also the transfiguration of bodies in the shifting spaces of modernity.[13] However, in the tussle between characters shown in the illustration,

[9] For an excellent illustration of the difference between first and second-class carriage interiors, see the two paintings by the artist Abraham Solomon (1824-1862) '*Second Class: the parting'* (1854) and '*First Class: the meeting'* (1855). Both are on display at the National Railway Museum, York.

[10] Mathieson, C. *Mobility in the Victorian novel: placing the nation*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 81-2.

[11] *The railway traveller's handy book* (1862) recognised the similarity of the railway carriage to a prison cell 'a person in a railway carriage may be likened to a prisoner of state […] he is confined to a certain space for so many hours, and cannot well remove from his allotted durance,' Simmonds, J ed. (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1971), p.6; The railway carriage in *Gerald's dilemma* is a minimalist space and alludes to this representation

[12] See *The railway traveller's handy book* (1862) on the accoutrements providing comfort and safety, Simmonds, J ed. (Bath: Adams & Dart. 1971), p. 61. Peter Bailey notes in *Adventures in Space: Victorian Railway erotics or taking alienation for a ride* as 'impedimenta […] forming a potentially protecting zone around the body,' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9.1, 2004.

[13] Mathieson identifies this metamorphism as a 'representational mode [which] demonstrates a progression from articulating the devastating impact of the railway, instead negotiating an encounter between the body and modernity in which […] bodies in transit can more comfortably move into the spaces of modernity,' p.61.

there is a physical cost to this shift as it takes energy and inertia to negotiate the encounter, a cost that both characters will pay, either physically or financially.[14]

If—according to Aristotle and Virilio—every accident brings with it an advance in standards, so too is progress evident in the unconventionally bold and adventurous behaviour of Miss Austin within the modern railway carriage space. Frank's fall from the train is catalyst for the change in fortunes of both Gerald and Miss Austin and the fallout of the accident replaces the young woman's unaccompanied journey with a less radical locus of attention, in which traditional roles of masculinity—heroism and protection—are ultimately re-established. For the reader, in other words, the accident has a predictable outcome in which the status quo is reaffirmed. Leslie modifies the widely-circulated trope of the fatal accident—the kind most commonly reported—and instead chooses to recount a less serious one, albeit one which could have feasibly occurred. As Simon Bradley in *The Railways: nation, networks and people* attests, such accidents began early in the history of railway travel. He refers to an incident of 1844 in which 'a two-year-old child in a family party travelling south by express from Liverpool managed to tumble out through an unsecured door on the approach to Crewe, only to be found uninjured by the locomotive and carriage that were sent back to search the lineside'.[15] Furthermore, the following advice is given in *The railway traveller's handy book*, pointing to the real, or at least perceived, danger of falling from a moving train: 'children of all ages are frequently suffered by their parents to lounge against the door, which, if not properly fastened, is liable to give way to the pressure, and hurl the child foremost on the rails'.[16] The similarities between these examples and Frank's accident give plausibility to Leslie's plot, suggesting anxieties surrounding railway travel extended beyond the fatal accident alone. In *Gerald's dilemma* the accident is disruptive and upsetting but crucially, it is not catastrophic. Leslie bypasses the trope of catastrophe whilst still utilising the railway accident as an accessible trope commonly reported in both local and national newspapers, forming the basis of a familiar narrative that would resonate with most readers, regardless of age or status.

The familiarity of the misadventure plot extends to the often difficult and tumultuous relationships between dependents and figures of authority; again, a well-recognised trope that most readers could relate to in one way or another. The relationship between child and adult is a central theme in Leslie's works and in *Gerald's dilemma* is featured beyond the railway journey itself. Gerald's mother is both deceitful and selfish, placing her own needs above those of her son. Frank's mother contracts scarlet

[14] The term 'railway spine' is used to explain how the jolting of the train would cause damage to the nervous system; it was also a diagnosis for the post-traumatic symptoms of passengers involved in railroad accidents. See John Eric Erichsen's *On railway and other injuries of the nervous system* (Philadelphia: Henry.C. Lea,1897).
[15] Simon Bradley, *The Railways: nation, networks and people* (London: Profile books, 2015), p.180.
[16] Simmonds, J. The Victorian railway (London: Thames and Hudson, (1995), p.74.

fever. Miss Austin—*in loco parentis*—becomes hysterical and unconscious. Joe's parents are absent entirely and he is left to fend for himself. But, despite the lack of responsible adults, the offspring—Gerald, Frank, Joe—all manage to overcome the potential threats, survive and ultimately thrive. What all these examples have in common is evidence of a wider community or system of care. In the event of a breakdown at the parental level of the hierarchy there is another—perhaps not ultimately as loving or ideal—and responsibility for the management of risk is transferred. What is striking about this model of risk is the oppositional direction of risk and responsibility. The physical nature of risk is increased as it passes down the order of command—like the ranks in an army, it is those at the bottom level that hold the greatest threat of physical harm. The director of a railway company may experience damage to their reputation or their financial assets but is unlikely to be directly affected by an accident occurring on a railway line under their jurisdiction. Compare this level of harm with that faced by engine-driver, fireman or passenger involved in the same accident and an intensification of risk as it moves downwards through the system is evident. Conversely, responsibility moves in the opposite direction, growing in scale and magnitude as it moves upwards. This humanitarian shouldering of responsibility is reassuring to the reader and is affirmation of a caring and beneficent society rather than the fractured and dislocated one more commonly associated with the cultural representations of the railways in this era. When Frank falls from the train he is temporarily a lost child but in fact becomes a ward of the wider community.[17] Such a plotting of risk and responsibility blurs the boundaries between private company and public interest and in many ways heralds the development of other service industries such as healthcare, state education and the benefits system.

No textual reading is cut and dried, and it would be an oversimplification to suggest such a humanitarian system is always in evidence in the text. As capitalist ventures, the railway companies were notorious for their promotion of financial gain at the expense of human lives. Safety measures were arguably implemented only where they were likely to maximise profit by allaying public fears and were more about publicity than any real concern with safety.[18] However, employees of the railway had a more vested interest in reducing risk and maintaining safety—not only for their own safety, but for those of their community.[19] A recurring motif in many anecdotal accounts and fictional

[17] Lost children were a common trope in Victorian fiction and are a frequent theme in Leslie's writing (*Esther's regret* [1863] and *The lost baby: a story of a flood* [1883]). The trope also features in *Little Harry's first journeys* (1896)— by an anonymous author—where a mother tells her son about how she was, as a child, left at a railway station as 'lost luggage' (London: Religious Tract Society, 1896), p. 22. There is more than a passing resemblance to Oscar Wilde's play *The importance of being Earnest* (1895) and in both incidences the railway is a benefactor to the lost children.

[18] Ian Carter identifies the competing pressures felt by the railway companies: '[the companies were] beset by competitive pressures, by newspapers attacking railway directors for elevating company profits over passengers' safety,' *Railways and culture in Britain*: *the epitome of modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.15.

[19] Railway towns such as Swindon and Crewe fostered a great sense of community amongst railway employees. These specialist towns meant that the railways engendered a close-knit community that shared an infrastructure including schools, medical care, temperance societies, churches and the railway industries own factories and

stories featuring the railways is an individual act of heroism in which the intervention of one person is able to save the lives of many. Although those directly responsible for operating the railways identified risk early on, the companies were often slow to respond. The discrepancy created between employer and employee raised a need for mediation. Although the government did have an indirect stake in the research into some aspects of railway safety, as the railway companies were private there was little scope for state intervention.[20] One example of Government investigation into railway accidents is evident in the 1842 Board of Trade's report into accident prevention through legislation that sought to make the locking of railway carriage doors mandatory.[21] The returns to the committee from the railway companies were almost unanimously against such legislation and the government's involvement was considered interference. The companies opined that such a regulation would be impossible to enforce and unnecessary unless in exceptional circumstance. In their deliberations, the balance of risk and responsibility was weighted towards the individual, and the legislation was not passed. The reluctance to legislate railway affairs permitted more accidents and – arguably -- afforded opportunity for individual acts of heroics. Whereas Ballantyne and Leith's texts provide openings for the engine-driver to be the fictional hero, *Gerald's dilemma* affords conditions in which members of the general public are compelled to take on the hero's mantle.

Whilst on one level *Gerald's dilemma* is an exciting tale centred on the accident befalling a young boy, its wider appeal stems from an extended circle of characters implicated in his misfortune, and the situations in which they find themselves. *Gerald's dilemma* encompasses both the private sphere (the intimate relationship between Gerald and Miss Austin, Gerald's introspection, the dynamic between him and his mother and his moral epiphany), and the public: the railway system, education, medical practices and rural reform. Precisely by addressing risk in the novel, Leslie draws attention to the discrepancy between public and private responsibility for accident prevention. By expressing his remorse, Gerald shows the most capacious sense of liability for the incident.

> "But that does not do away with the fact that a short time ago he was a lost child—lost, too, through my carelessness to a great extent."

workshops. By the late 1800's several generations might have lived and worked in such a town so that a loss of life caused by a railway accident would be felt across the whole community and not just the immediate family unit. The employees of the railways had an increasingly influential voice as railway workers' unions were established to address matters of safety and working conditions. Arthur and Elizabeth Jordan identify the altruistic nature of the railway towns' inhabitants: 'railwaymen are usually ignored by the media, unless they are involved in an industrial dispute, but their trade unions have a long tradition of caring for railway orphans', *Away for the day: the railway excursion in Britain, 1830s to the present day* (Kettering: Silverlink, 1991), p. 73.

[20] On the supervisory role of the government see Simmonds, J (1995), p. 80.

[21] '[T]he practice of locking both doors has been adopted by one or two companies in this country, from the belief it is actually safer to deprive passengers of the means of jumping out when the train is in motion; but that this practice is of little use in the case of third class passengers, who travel in open carriages, and can seldom be of use except in the cases of passengers reckless from the effects of liquor or lacking common prudence,' The British Government, *Accounts and papers: twenty volumes. Railways.* Vol 16 (London:1842), p.1.

> "How could that be?" Demanded his mother.
> "Do you remember that I told you I stood talking to Lockyer until the train began to move, and then as there was barely time for me to jump into the carriage the door was not fastened securely—could not have been, or the little fellow would not have fallen out," (Leslie 88).[22]

The impression of his regret is heightened by use of the noun 'carelessness' with which he labels his behaviour. As one of the adults in the carriage at the time of the incident, Gerald assumes a responsibility that is magnified by the diminutive adjectives— 'lost' and 'little'—describing Frank. Gerald's penance is to sacrifice his own ambition for the sake of those he feels he has injured. He assumes individual liability, never once seeming to consider that the incident might have had other contributory—wider— causes:

> "I will be responsible for whatever the cost may be. Although I have only just completed my studies, I have had the offer of a situation, and as soon as Miss Austin is better I shall go; so let her have all the attention that is necessary." […] he had made up his mind as to his future now the burden this dilemma had imposed upon him left him no choice of action […] but although he had made this resolution, it cost him a pang of regret to give up all hope of those higher studies he had longed to pursue (Leslie 72).

There is a disproportion between his action and loss. On the one hand, Gerald states he will be 'responsible', he has a 'situation' and has 'made up his mind' —all proactive phrases—but at the same time he feels a sense of 'burden' that leaves him with 'no choice'. In the text, responsibility for risk management and liability for the accident comes with a significant moral, financial and psychological cost to the individual. Elaine Freedgood explains that Victorian risk narratives are about taking action. She claims that: 'the passive rhetoric of the invisible hand is replaced with the active rhetoric of many visible hands […] one that promises individual and national health, of both a physical and political kind,'.[23] In *Gerald's dilemma* even the station-master, a servant of the railway company and thus obliged to follow its rules and regulations, displays a sense of autonomy when he agrees to send a tender back to the site of the accident, despite this contravening the timetable and risking a fine. Furthermore, the engine-driver, when pushed, can make his own assessment of the situation to carry out necessary action in search of the child.

[22] Leslie, E. *Gerald's dilemma* (London: S.W. Partridge & Co.,1890) references henceforth will be in parenthesis.
[23]Elaine Freedgood *Victorian writing about risk: imagining a safe England in a dangerous world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 7.

> Miss Austin moved away in the direction indicated, without further questioning, too intent upon her search to notice that the engine-driver was beckoning to them from the bank.
> "Wait a minute, Miss Austin," said Gerald, "I must run back and see what the man wants, and ask him to wait for us so as to go back on the engine." […] Gerald ran back to the siding to tell the man they had found a clue to the child, and were going to fetch him.
> "But I can't stay here all day, sir," said the man in reply.
> "Can you wait for an hour for us?" […] the man scratched his head in perplexity, and wondered what he ought to do. At last he said, "Well sir, I'll wait for an hour, but I can't stay longer," and as he spoke he took out his watch and looked at the time, (Leslie 54).

References to time feature prominently in this exchange between Gerald and the engine-driver. The vague denomination 'all-day' gains clarification in the concrete period of an 'hour' as the engine-driver becomes more self-determining. He shifts from 'scratching his head in perplexity' to checking his watch, thus denoting a change from abstract passivity to a finite action. In the transition from governed to self-governing, the engine-driver transforms from passive to active.

Not all of Leslie's characters are moved to take action. On the contrary, whereas Gerald sees the incident as his fault and therefore Frank as his responsibility, his mother holds the opposite view, asserting that 'What you ought to have done, was to hand the lady over to the care of the station-master and come home to me by the next train,' (Leslie 85). She concludes that the safe return of the boy and his mother should be the responsibility of the railway authorities:

> "Very well, Gerald, I shall be quite willing to believe what you say, if you leave these people to come home with me at once. The farmer and his wife will take care of them until their friends find them, which they will very soon do through the railway people. We can leave word at all the stations down the line where the little boy may be found who fell out of the railway carriage and depend upon it their friends will very soon come to claim them," (Leslie 89).

Thus, she attempts to remove the burden of blame for the incident from her son and by association from herself. Whereas Gerald's mother actively distances herself from any element of liability for persons outside of her immediate family, Gerald is magnanimous in his shouldering of responsibility. However, the existence of different opinions about who should indeed be held responsible fosters debate about the competing theories of liability and risk. The reader is led to understand that it takes more than the good morals or intentions of one individual to ensure the safe passage of all. Furthermore, Gerald's assertion of individual responsibility is undermined by Miss Austin's reactions to the accident. Instead of acquiescing to Gerald, Miss Austin asserts her own share in assuming

responsibility, feeling the overwhelming need to make amends for her mistake in letting Gerald leave the door unfastened: 'I could not rest until I have found him. He is my sister's only child, and she will break her heart if he is not found,' (Leslie 55). She suffers her own penance in the shape of her hair turning white:

> He started back with an exclamation of horror, for spread out on his coat were masses of snow-white hair. The beautiful nut-brown tresses had faded with the last hour's agony and were bleached to a whiteness seldom seen except in the very aged' (Leslie 66).

Though initially forceful, Miss Austin is ultimately of a disposition too fragile to shoulder such a burden of responsibility alone. Her somatic reaction to the crisis suggests that the ability to respond to an accident is not something that everyone has the emotional resilience to cope with, thus strengthening the argument that liability should be shared. Furthermore, whilst Gerald repents his mistakes, he has the humility to realise that he must yield to those more knowledgeable than himself:

> When he went upstairs to prepare for his journey to London the next morning, his thoughts were busy over the events of the last few weeks […] he could be thankful know for that bitter time of adversity, when he had been driven to seek help, (Leslie 135).

Ultimately, such self-effacement is rewarded with personal enlightenment; Gerald wins the esteem of his colleagues and wider community; and gains success in his medical career. *Gerald's dilemma* offers a palimpsest of spiritual, moral and political risk that is a surprisingly complicated formulation for a family audience.

Heroes of the railway: rescue, rifts and repercussions

Where *Gerald's dilemma* centres upon the aftermath of the accident and the toll it takes on the characters, Elton Keane's *Heroes of the railway: stories of railway rescue* recounts instances of pre-emptive rescues in which acts of individual heroics attempt to avert a major accident. Set in rural Ireland, *Heroes of the railway* is a diptych of tales with the stories—"Fool Patsy" and "The signalman's boy"--being set twelve years apart. The structure of *Heroes of the railway* is ideally matched to the subject matter, as the cycle depicts history repeating itself in respect of the railway accident. In this text, each accident is averted, meaning consequential learning doesn't take place and safety measures are not much advanced. Instead, the accident provides circumstances in which individual heroics can take place. However, the emphasis is on impulse and sacrifice rather than any planned intervention, and this model of risk management is unsustainable: in both the stories the hero meets an untimely death or critical injury. Whilst both stories celebrate personal bravery, the cyclical

pattern of problem/sacrifice/problem suggests that no moral, individual or metaphysical solution will solve problems arising from such complex systems.

The eponymous protagonist of the first story goes by the name of 'Fool-Patsy' and is described as '[a] tall shambling lad who […] justified [the name] but too well,' (Keane 7).[24] As an implicitly learning-disabled youth, he is mostly shunned by his rural but relatively affluent community: 'the neighbours disliked and tried to avoid him, the children feared or jeered him, while he, by way of return, took an elfish delight in playing further pranks to increase their terrors' (Keane 9-10). Within the organised and meritocratic community in which he lives, Fool-Patsy is viewed pejoratively. He is accepted only by 'the pitying, kindly, Irish peasants' who were 'accustomed, and indulgent, to him. For many a year Fool-Patsy was welcomed to a seat by the turf fire, and a share of the pancakes and potatoes,' (Keane 9). However, in the natural environment, Fool-Patsy is far more at ease: 'he and the wild sea birds knew and answered each other; the sea creatures were his friends; and the free, wide air and the great ocean's moaning soothed and pleased and stilled him,' (Keane 10). Fool-Patsy is portrayed as a Caliban-esque creature, cast out by a modernising society for being apparently useless, though possessing several latent but useful skills. When an eight-year-old girl, Mysie, disappears, Fool-Patsy is the one who finds and goes to her aid upon the cliff-face where she has become stranded. His attunement to the natural world enables him to traverse the cliff-face and reach the frightened girl. He does this not because of any overwhelming moral code, or desire to be heroic, but as an instinct in which 'none of the for or against had entered into Pat's first strong, if blind, impulse of rescue and affection' (Keane 16). Fool-Patsy's actions are rewarded: he becomes 'hugely delighted with his own wisdom and success so far […] grinning and chattering, Pat reached her at last,' (Keane 16). The participles 'grinning' and 'chattering' conjure the image of an ape-like creature suggesting that Fool-Patsy's behaviour stems from an innate instinct rather than any learned response. Fool-Patsy cannot adequately judge the potential consequences, nor the severity, of the danger he places himself in. The text celebrates him as an accidental hero even as it demeans him within its conventional ableist and anti-Irish discourses.

As Mysie cannot climb back up the cliff face, Fool-Patsy concludes they will have to stay the night on the ledge. He promises to look after the frightened child, even at the sacrifice of his own comfort. Fool-Patsy's heroic status is further cemented when in a freak turn of events he identifies that the railway line that traverses the cliff edge across the bay has collapsed into the sea below:

[24] Keane, E. *Heroes of the railway*, (London: John F. Shaw & Co., 1893), references hereafter will be in parenthesis.

> Pat, who had often been observed to possess almost preternaturally keen sight, peered earnestly through the bright moonlight, and presently starting up in his excitement […] solved the mystery. He conveyed, in his own phraseology, that several yards of the railway embankment had given way, leaving a great rift, and had actually slipped down into the waves! (Keane 26-27).[25]

At first, Fool-Patsy displays a childish delight in picturing the destruction of the railway line at the hands of nature giving 'a loud peal of mocking laughter […] chuckling and grimaces,' whilst 'pointing by turns at her, the large moon—sailing grandly among silvered clouds overhead—and finally, for a long time, at the scene of the disaster,' (Keane 27). Although he recognises that this will be a disaster, he has little concept of either the potential threat or scale of the consequences. His 'simple' nature renders him unable to forecast that the collapsed railway line could be the cause of a further accident. He is not indifferent, just naively unaware. Not having seen a railway collapse, or an accident before, he cannot imagine what this will look like. On the other hand, little Mysie can predict the logical outcome that another train will follow and that it will inevitably fall into the sea below. Her reaction to this impending disaster reveals her greater worldly experience—first hand or imparted--compared to Fool-Patsy:

> But in *her* clear mind there gathered a thought which blanched her very lips, and made her eyes dilate with horror […] "Patsy, Patsy," she shrieked, catching him by the arm, and shaking it violently to recall his wandering faculties. "Oh, Patsy, the night mail passes Ballycor at half-past one o'clock […] if it comes in the dark to that place that has fallen, won't all the people be killed?" (Keane 27).

The difference in the two children's reaction epitomises the gap between instinctive behaviour and that based upon experience and calculation. Fool-Patsy's reaction is one of excitement because the toll on human life has not occurred to him. When he does realise the extent of the impending disaster, he is quick to shift from reactive to proactive behaviour as he conceptualises a rescue based on the 'stories of people doing things' which he has read. From this he constructs a vague plan to 'get over there, and try to light a big fire,' (Keane 28). Once the seed has been planted, Fool-Patsy gets carried away with the excitement of the rescue "I'll do it. I can swim; an I'll light the fire. Will ye jest tell Fool-Patsy te try it, Miss Mysie, an' he'll thry! And he smiled with an expression of almost exaltation,' (Keane 28). The vernacular 'thry' ascribed to Fool-Patsy serves to emphasise his Irish rusticity and simple-minded nature making his rescue plan seem untenable. Mysie speaks in smart,

[25] See P.J.G. Ransom, *Snow, flood and tempest: railways and natural disasters* (Hinkley: Ian Allen, 2001), pp. 136-44; for examples of coastal erosion and railway accidents.

unaccented English, in order to assume a tone of greater rationality as a protestant versus Fool-Patsy's superstitious and instinctive Catholicism. Though Mysie is the younger of the two characters, her status as Anglo-Irish presumes her to be civilised and well educated. Fool-Patsy's plan relies on 'lighting a fire,' a potent symbol of primitive savagery, but Mysie is evidently imbued with pragmatism and foresight and is the one to find fault with Fool-Patsy's plan. She points out the lack of matches and when Fool-Patsy produces a packet given to him earlier in the day, she immediately realises he will need a way to keep them dry. She solves the problem by engineering a make-shift waterproof cover from a thimble and a handkerchief:

> The next puzzle she proposed and solved was how to keep the matches dry. Fortunately, she had in her pocket a small beautifully-carved ivory needle and thimble case, with a tight screw top […] she filled it with Patsy's matches, strained her handkerchief in a hard rope round the opening to keep it further watertight, and then […] lengthening the free ends by strips torn from the lining of his coat, she firmly tied and knotted the all-important package on the top of his shock head,' (Keane 29).

Where Fool-Patsy provides the muscle, it is Mysie who is the brains behind the rescue operation. The success of the rescue is reliant on a combination of Fool-Patsy and Mysie's respective strengths as neither the practical hero nor the theorist is of use in isolation. It is the interaction between action and experience that enables the rescue attempt to be seen through to fruition. For accidents to be prevented, or at least the impact diminished, cooperation between brain and brawn must be established.

Fool-Patsy's heroics are not as entirely successful as the rubric of a typical adventure story might suggest. His interventions are enough to save the carriages, but the engine falls over the precipitous cliff edge and the engine-driver is instantaneously killed, whilst the fireman is badly burned. The accident itself is described in hellish terms as the train, Fool-Patsy, and the fire become irrevocably entwined in a grotesque dance in which the train is representative of the devil and Fool-Patsy the redeemer:

> The great engine gasped and quivered, snorting, hissing, groaning under the strong check in which they struggled hard […] the waves were forming over the wreck they had already wrought, and crawling up still and again as if greedy for more; a winding sheet of all revealing flame; a wild leaping figure with its ragged hair, and sad, mad, haggard face, weirdly lit up—saw it and flew to the break again—for life! […] And on—chafing and snorting under its restraint, labouring, slackening surely, but still it came the engine, with those two great red eyes glowering through the murk and the smoke,' (Keane 37-38).

The accident with its allegorical references to individual sacrifice for the greater good are in stark contrast to Fool-Patsy's earlier excitement at the rescue attempt and his naïve optimism. Fool-Patsy ultimately saves the train's passengers but at the cost of his own life. Ironically, because of his intervention in the accident, Fool-Patsy is recognised for his heroism and for the first time accepted into the spaces inhabited by society: "deathly cold, and nearly drowned; if not, as I fear, injured otherwise also. Lend a hand someone, please, to lift him into the carriage there […] I want you to make room for this poor fellow, they say he is our rescuer," (Keane 40). Fool-Patsy's worth is measured in the currency of his practical value and he becomes a 'good fellow' in the eyes of the train's passengers. But despite this sudden increase in his worth, Fool-Pasty pays the ultimate price for his heroics, suggesting that brawn without brain is dispensable; by contrast, Mysie, who can be credited with masterminding the rescue plan, is saved to be 'carried home […] a little hushed […] in the pure, still, early morning,' (Keane 41) – and to return as an adult in a later story. Their divergent fates suggest preferential treatment is given based upon intellect—or experience—over bravery alone.

Fittingly, the story finishes with recognition of the fickle nature of a modern society in which Fool-Patsy's heroics are 'in all the papers and made a day's staple for conversation; and photographers and sight-seers came to view "the scene of the accident"; and Ballycor could feel itself quite famous till, for the eager world, the next passing interest eclipsed this,' (Keane 42). The story is perhaps a parable; the transition from muscular heroism to a more cerebral heroism reflects a wider societal shift in the late nineteenth century. In an age of technological advancement in which the machine outstrips the physical strength of man, man's advantage comes in his ability to problem solve and keep abreast of change. Fool-Patsy, therefore, becomes an unfortunate casualty of progress, and one, it seems, whom society does not much care long to mourn.

The second story in the diptych "The signalman's boy" is set some twelve years later in the same rural Irish community. The story is split between two main protagonists: Kenneth Blake, a gentleman scientist and painter from London and Mike Connellan, the local signalman's son. Kenneth and Mike become acquainted when Mike is stranded on the cliff trying to gather bird's eggs and implores Kenneth—alone and brooding on the clifftop—to assist him. Whilst chatting on the clifftop, the pair are aware of a commotion below. From the clifftop vantage point they notice a runaway train that is heading towards an oncoming regular mail-train. Kenneth is struck with the horror of the situation, but it is Mike who, with lightning speed, intercepts the runaway train by switching the tracks at the last moment. Unfortunately, Mike is knocked unconscious by the force of the train and sustains catastrophic injuries by which he is permanently invalided.

Both characters have heroic characteristics. Kenneth is a brooding romantic:

> A solitary figure, apparently insensible of, or indifferent to, the perils of his position. Young, fair, and too thin; with an indefinable sort of attractiveness about his clear cut and intelligent pale face, where either illness or sadness, or both, had left a sternly legible stamp,' (Keane 45).

Whereas Mike carries a rugged boyhood charm:

> Only a few feet off, came quietly up a brown, curly, capless head; a merry, pretty, bronzed but boyish face, with honest, wide-open grey eyes, which were rather frightened at that moment, but nonetheless looked an appeal to Kenneth straight and bravely,' (Keane 46).

The dialogue between characters during their initial meeting cements the age difference between them but also introduces a vulnerability to the older Kenneth as Mike draws attention to his conspicuous arrival at Ballycor station:

> "And I know who you are , sir, for I read your name on your portmanteau at the railway station […] you are Mister Blake, and you come all the way from London. And you didn't know where to go and stop when you came […] father he said you looked ill too, and we were both sorry for you," (Keane 47).

Kenneth takes Mike's comments about his arrival in good humour, calling him a 'cute youngster' and saying he is 'much obliged' (Keane 47). It is evident from the interaction that follows that Kenneth has a superior intellect and education and that, although Mike is interested in science and the arts, he has little formal education: "Oh please, sir, will you show me your pictures? And will you—will you be so good as to teach me a little?" (Keane 50). As Mike pleads with Kenneth to show him his 'sketches and microscope' (Keane 51), they are alerted to the train's predicament by the 'shrill, quick and strong […] whistle after whistle,' (Keane 51). The reader's first impression of Kenneth is of a highly educated and thoughtful man, but when the accident takes place, the futility of all his artistic and scientific accomplishments is underlined. Despite Kenneth's refinement, he is helpless to prevent such a fatalistic and brutal train crash. The inevitability of the crash is accentuated by the clifftop vantage point from where Kenneth has a bird's eye perspective of the two trains:

> The little station lay well in sight […] to Blake's bewilderment, two trains were apparently on the same lines, and coming to meet each other though still distant. Then he saw that the one beyond the station, coming steadily and quietly towards it down an incline, was without an

> engine, evidently broken loose […] the men were straining every nerve to slacken speed and give the alarm if it might be in time, (Keane 52).

For all his education, Kenneth is rendered 'Horror-struck [and] could not for a moment take in the thought of the fearful calamity that seemed about to happen,' (Keane 52). It is left to Mike to react to prevent the trains from crashing; his race to the station to switch the points is described using an intensifying list of verbs: to begin Mike is 'springing, bounding, gaining half-supernatural speed,' (Keane 52) but the focus soon turns to the 'encompassing, reverberating and bellowing'(Keane 53) of the train; the physical implications of the accident are manifest. Kenneth is physically unable to help although he initially tries: 'Blake started in full pursuit but being weak and out of training could not come near the boy' (Keane 53). He can only offer prayer willing that 'God grant breath, sight, brain, strength one moment more!' (Keane 53). Despite Kenneth's greater life skills and education, he is without the required specific knowledge to prevent the accident occurring. Details of the situation are given speculatively in the conditional tense: 'To Blake's bewilderment, *two* trains were apparently on the same lines […] the shrieking and panting locomotive […] in an awfully brief space of time would have dashed into the cutting beneath his feet,' (Keane 52). The 'shrieking' and 'panting' train is personified—a common trope in describing trains in children's literature—in a manner that heightens the drama, but Kenneth is inert and cannot react to the commotion. On the other hand, Mike can use his specific knowledge of railway signalling and "in a single flash the signalman's son had grasped the whole situation, and with a scream that rung in Kenneth's ear above the steam whistle itself, shouted, 'the points!'" (Keane 52). Pitted against the strength and might of the train his act is almost superhuman and Mike is 'the one frail hope which […] stands between the many scores of human creatures and death or worse,' (Keane 53). Despite the odds stacked against him, Mike can avert the accident though not without serious consequence to himself.

The sequence of events culminates in the stand-off between the train and Mike as 'the long string of engineless carriages was not ten yards away in front, the great up-mail was bellowing twenty yards behind, when those little brown, muscular, trembling hands seized the lever with their desperate grip,' (Keane 53). Mike's resolute grasp of the lever in the face of the oncoming train is the subject of the cover and frontispiece of the "New Edition" of the text (Illustration 4). The illustration shows Mike's powerful grasp upon the lever. Behind him, there is much commotion track-side and in the signal-box as it becomes apparent what has happened. The faces at the carriage windows give an idea of the number of passengers inhabiting the carriages and highlight the potential scale of the accident. The

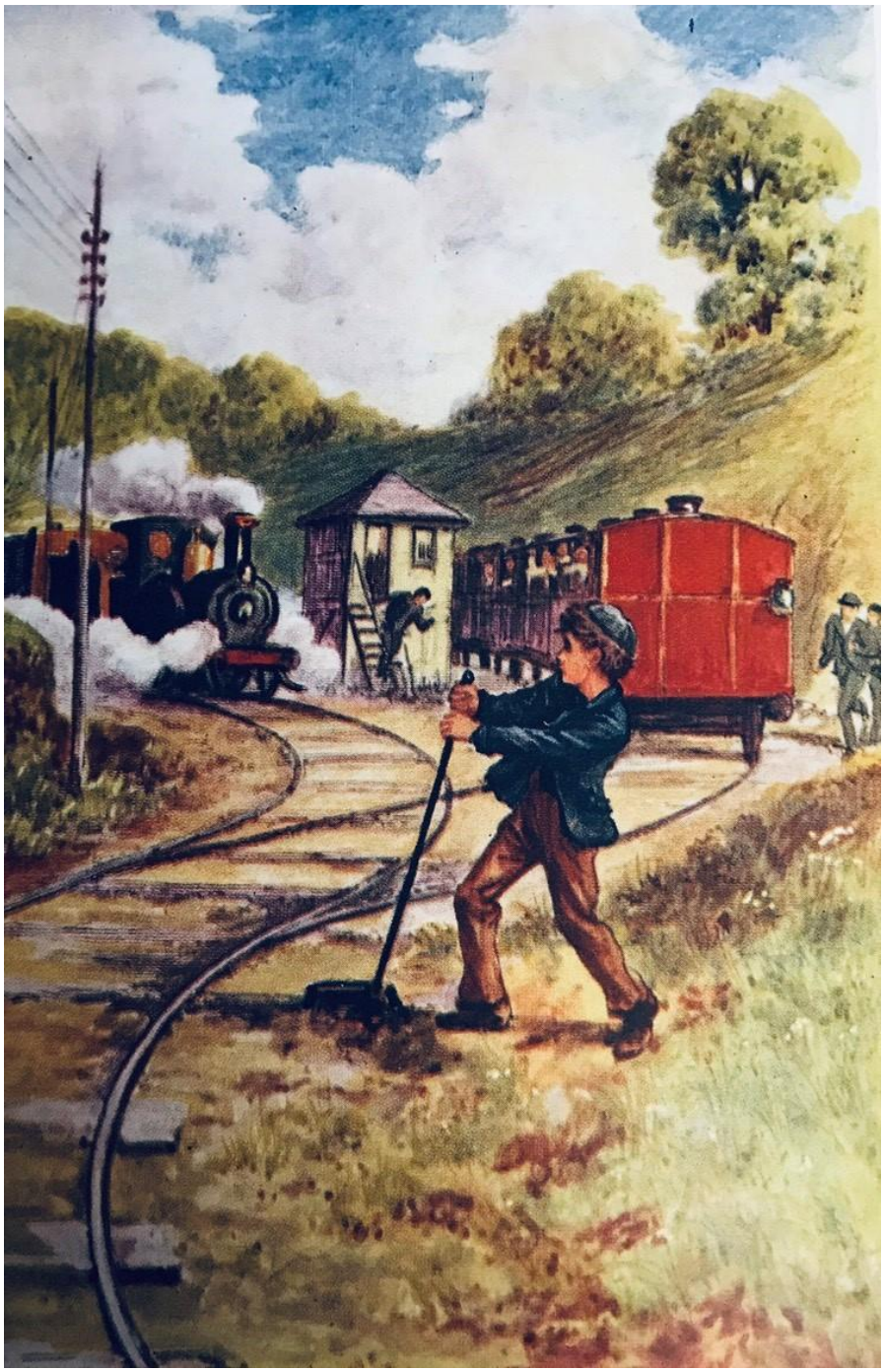

Illustration. 6 '*His hand seized the lever'* in *Heroes of the railway*, 1893.

two trains are parallel in the picture, the points having been switched so that the carriages can run to safety, but the steam engine of the mail-train is bearing down upon Mike and he is now in a position of great danger. The caption to the picture emphasises Mike's heroics: 'his hand seized the lever. It was done! The rescued crowd in the two trains knew not what had been their danger,' (*n.p* frontispiece). But his heroic act comes at a personal cost and Mike is described as 'quite white and deathly still, fallen backwards across a rough, bolted iron bar […] his blanched, damp little face turned up, and his long eyelashes closed heavily,' (Keane 54). As both passengers and railway employees react to Mike's accident and injuries, there is a hierarchy to their responsiveness.

The railway porter is ‘slow’ and ‘stupid’ whereas the stationmaster ‘understood with a silent gaze of horror’. The passengers’ reactions range between: ‘asking in bewilderment all sorts of conflicting questions’; being in ‘dead silence of pity and suspense’; to those that are able to offer more active help such as providing ‘a bottle of powerful smelling salts,’ and ‘brandy,’ (Keane 55). Whilst all these efforts are well meaning, only one passenger has the specific expertise to help. The passenger is Miss Mysie--the heroine of the first story in the diptych. The reader is reminded that Miss Mysie has witnessed such an accident before:

> That other still well-remembered history of the escape of a night-mail from falling into the sea over a broken embankment, which had taken place twelve years before, a few miles from the present scene, and where the rescuer had been our old friend Fool-Patsy,’ (Keane 65).

However, in Mike’s case he undergoes a ‘slow convalescence’. Unlike Fool-Patsy’s elapsed fame, Mike’s heroism is widely reported and ‘Ballycor was quite famous in the newspapers for some weeks,’ (Keane 64). Beneficence is shown to the boy from sources wider than his own rural community, or the railway company with responsibility for the line, and a trust is established for Mike’s ongoing care:

> Then someone suggested a practical outcome of all this talk and sympathy, and when it became known that though poor little Mike was slowly getting better, he was still in sad danger of spending his life as a hopeless cripple, other people beside the railway company opened their purses generously, and, through the rector, his father received money enough to pay for his education liberally if it could be so used, or else to place him beyond risk of future want, (Keane 65).

There is a similarity between the provision of money to secure Mike’s future and the protection of the child in *Gerald’s dilemma*; in both cases protection is given by the community in the face of the railway company’s dereliction. As in the case of *Gerald’s dilemma* and “Fool-Patsy”, this story deploys the trope of the railway accident to weigh the relative merits of action and thought, calculation and instinct, individual and community. No single variable is found to be sufficient, and the reader is encouraged to see the problem in all its complex, multi-layered contingency.

To conclude, in both texts—and indeed in all three stories--there is a tension between individual heroics and wider social structures. Although acts of heroism are applauded, they are also regarded with ambivalence. In all these stories it is unclear who should be responsible for the on-going care of any individual involved in a railway accident, or of anyone who strives to prevent an accident through

an act of heroism. Whilst there is evidently an individual responsibility to maintain one's own safety and to be accountable for actions undertaken, each text reveals flaws in this approach to accident prevention. Because the railway accident doesn't discriminate between passenger and bystander, nor are all passengers able to take responsibility for their own safety, individual responsibility cannot be equally or readily allocated. As we have seen in *Gerald's dilemma*, children lack the foresight for accident prevention or risk management and need advocating for. Similarly, Fool-Patsy has little concept of the danger he places himself in in *Heroes of the railway* and whilst Mike has an understanding of the dangers of the railway, he acts upon instinct influenced by his father's role as a signalman, his father's loyalty to the company he works for, and his own indebtedness to his father's employer. What both these texts express is the necessity of a nuanced attitude towards risk and accountability during the late nineteenth-century. On the one-hand, railway travel had become an intrinsic part of the fabric of society, so taking risks—including the risk of being involved in a railway accident--was necessary. However, on the other-hand, risk brought with it uncertainty, instability and a need for accountability. Of the two texts, *Gerald's dilemma* places the most weight on establishing liability for the accident, although liability is ascribed to the individual, and perhaps the community, rather than to wider public or the employer. Throughout the text the narrative is composed of cause and effect; each action has a consequence by which liability can be apportioned and amends can be made. In *Heroes of the railway* the accident is more an act of God, and as such blame cannot be placed on any one individual. Instead, the text places onus on one personage—in each instance a juvenile character--to try and prevent an accident from occurring, largely through feats of unviable heroics. The text honours such feats but at the same time laments their continuous necessity, pointing discreetly to liability at a community or company level. Indeed, what both texts have in common is support from a wider community. In *Gerald's dilemma* there is evidence that both railway employees and strangers from the communities the railway lines served, are prepared to step in to find and secure the safe return of the lost child. The accident has repercussions both along the geography of the railway line, and through the railway company's chain of command. In *Heroes of the railway* the recurrence of serious railway accidents on the same stretch of line--twelve years apart—gives some members of the community preparedness in how to act in such circumstances. Although the first accident is fatal to Fool-Patsy, in the second the signalman's boy is injured though alive. To a degree, the beneficent reaction of the community is similar in both *Gerald's dilemma* and *Heroes of the railway* in as much as provision is made for Frank and Miss Austin's care, and the signalman's boy's ongoing treatment and education by those that are not indebted to their upkeep. All three stories balance the exorbitant personal costs of railway accidents against the beneficial lessons to be learned about responsibility, risk and the limits of individual agency in a complex world.

Conclusion

It is evident that the railways are an important feature of the Victorian cultural scene, and this is apparent in the diverse ways in which railways figure in art and literature. Throughout this dissertation I have concentrated on the specific representation of the railways in late nineteenth-century popular fiction. It is my suggestion that such fictional representations demonstrate that a diverse and complex relationship existed between the railways and the people they served. Rather than assuming that any fictional representation will classify the impact of the railways as positive or negative, it is my suggestion that the relationship between author, reader and the railways was inevitably more complex.

The first chapter draws attention to depictions of the heroism and bravery of the engine-driver and to the dedication they were supposed to offer to their role and occupation. Exploring fictional depictions of the engine-driver in *The Iron Horse* and *Mark Dennis*, it becomes apparent that the role was held in some esteem. This is clear in the depiction of their high standards of literacy, and their accountability. However, in these works the engine-driver and his family are subject to significant sacrifice and compromise. The texts in this chapter illuminate for their readers the discrepancy between living the fast life of the engine driver and adhering to Victorian standards and the sanctity of hearth and home. Ultimately, this is depicted as a near-impossible feat and each text concludes with the death of a main protagonist. Industrial modernity is portrayed as at once glamorous and socially costly.

Chapter two centres on the passengers' experience of railway travel in the railway carriage in *Maggie's message* and *The Pennycomequicks*. Comparing the fictional experiences of several characters across different ages, gender and class, it becomes clear that in the nineteenth-century one of the attractions of the e railway carriage for fictions was that it didn't have clear rules or boundaries and afforded a temporary respite from social conventions and expectations. Such an indeterminate space gave the authors in this chapter the freedom to experiment with representations of character, to play imaginatively and to give impressions of characters that might, in other settings, seem transgressive. The temporary nature of the carriage setting ensured a return to custom when the railway journey ended and as such provided an experimental but safe space for both writer and readers' flights of fancy.

The final chapter studies representations of the railway accident and the opportunities this raised for individual heroics in fiction. In *Gerald's dilemma* and two stories from *Heroes of the railways*, the railway accident is an inevitable but tragic feature of railway operations. The accidents that occur in the texts in this chapter demonstrate how the accident can be a rich source of learning, but only if the circumstances of the accident explored and fault is accountable and answered for. Where the accident

becomes commonplace the blame is shared and liability is not shouldered, leading to a sense of futility and frustration. In the texts in this chapter, accidents tend to be treated as personal and individual misfortunes, rather than incidents from which social or systemic lessons can be learned.

To conclude, all these texts point to requirements for writers of late nineteenth-century popular fiction to supply readers with fictional representations of the railways that were varied, richly populated with recognisable characters, that avoided cliché and aided the reader to understand and inhabit the nuanced spaces of the railway network. Whilst I acknowledge that this is not the only way in which to view the railways in Victorian fiction, it does, when placed alongside current and past theories, open a different way of thinking about the place of the railways in reading, in literature and popular fiction of the nineteenth-century. Furthermore, and to my mind perhaps most importantly, I have added some hitherto forgotten texts to the known body of railway fiction.

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