

Abstract

The thesis analyses the sensation novels of Edmund Yates and Wilkie Collins with emphasis on the representation of devotion within the texts. The thesis examines the depictions of four distinct types of character, the wife, the female friend, the disabled male and the servant, and identifies a trend within the novels of Yates and Collins whereby characters defy the conventional power structures of class and gender, obtaining agency via acts of devotion that nevertheless also perform and reinforce conventional social structures. The devotion between characters can therefore be understood as a force that 'queers' identity, reconfiguring relationships in ways that unsettle the bounds of heteronormativity. The sensational devotion of Yates and Collins is analysed in the context of the periodical press with which both Yates and Collins were closely involved. By using periodical articles as indicators of contemporary opinion and argument, the thesis explores Yates's and Collins's divergence from cultural norms, a divergence that opens up new possibilities for the sensation genre. Via these discussions the thesis seeks to re-assert Yates as a significant member of the sensation canon.

Devotion and Identity in the Works of Edmund Yates
and Wilkie Collins

by

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Introduction

Whether it be a single act or a series of habitual acts through which the power of self-sacrifice is shown, or whether the absolute renunciation of selfish interests and purposes be testified by the consummation of all possible earthly self-sacrifice in the giving away of life itself, those who witness it cannot but admire...Self-sacrifice, in the abstract, is a virtue to be preached and practised; and there are few circumstances of ordinary life in which we can see it in practice without a sensation very different from that of cynical equanimity.

The Saturday Review, 1864¹

Devotion and queerness in and sensation fiction

A recurring motif of sensation fiction is the perseverance of heroic characters in unravelling the intricate plots that the genre is famous for and defending or avenging those they care about or desire. This motif is found in canonical sensation texts such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859), where both Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe work to try and protect Laura Fairlie, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), where Robert Audley's motivation is to uncover what happened to his friend George Talboys. This perseverance is also found in other classic sensation texts such as Collins's *Armadale* (1866), where the friendship between Allan Armadale and Ozias Midwinter is integral to the unravelling of the complex plot. Devoted attachment, then, is the solution to many sensation plots but these associations are often overshadowed by the fact that the genre as a whole plays on the stereotypes of devotion to mock the sanctity of the domestic sphere. This thesis will examine hitherto unexplored representations of devotion in sensation fiction utilising the novels of Edmund Yates and Wilkie Collins. By examining the depiction of devotion in four separate relationship types, this thesis will argue that devotion in sensation fiction can offer power to subjugated characters whilst challenging the stereotypes

¹ Anon, 'Self-Sacrifice', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 2 January 1864, pp13-14, p13 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 28th October 2011]

discussed in the contemporary periodical press and generating narrative suspense within the novels themselves.

Deriving from ecclesiastical Latin, the most common use of the word 'devotion' is in relation to religious duties, with the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* citing the first recorded use in this context as circa 1225. In the 1500s the *OED* records another use of the word, described as, 'The quality of being devoted to a person, cause, pursuit, etc., with an attachment akin to religious devotion; earnest addiction or application; enthusiastic attachment or loyalty.'² This devotion to a person forms the basis of this thesis with each chapter analysing a specific type of attachment: the devotion of a wife to her husband, female friends to each other, the disabled male to the woman he loves and the devotion of servants to their employers. The phrase 'akin to religious devotion' mentioned in the *OED* definition brings with it the connotations of devotion in its more common religious sense. These attributes include 'reverence', 'devoutness' and 'divine worship'. The application of these connotations to the practice of being devoted to another person allows for the intensity of the attachments to be realised: they are, as the *OED* suggests, akin to the worship of a deity.

In his 2007 article 'Henry James's *Brooksmith*: Devotion and its Discontents' Denis Flannery analyses devotion in a way which can be applied to intense human attachment. He explains that, 'Devotion to a deity involves adherence, certainly, but also has crucial narrative effects. The devotee initiates a narrative through the act or acts of devotion, part of which is to pass on to the divinity the power to direct the narrative of the devotee's life.'³ In terms of the devotion towards another person analysed in this thesis, the 'crucial

² 'Devotion, N.,' *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press) (Online) [Accessed March 18th 2014]

³ Denis Flannery, 'Henry James's *Brooksmith*: Devotion and its Discontents', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2007), pp89-106, p95 in *JSTOR* (Online) [Accessed: 4th March 2014]

narrative effects' which Flannery describes can be applied to each type of devotion discussed. The attention given by each devotee to their 'deity' propels the narrative and affects, to a greater or lesser degree, the outcome of the novel. Flannery goes on to say that:

There is a peculiar combination of rigidity and surrender in devotion that makes it part of a narrative will to power at the same time that it suggests either the surrender of all power to the object of devotion, or...creates a susceptibility to third parties and extraneous factors. It is not surprising then that the word also invokes a giving over to powers of evil and destruction, zealous susceptible service, and the pronouncing of a curse.⁴

The 'peculiar combination' Flannery identifies creates this 'narrative will to power' which is drawn from the devotee's attachment to their 'deity'. In terms of human devotion, it suggests that the devotee obtains agency from their attachment which they then use for the betterment of their 'deity'. Flannery's framing of devotion as something which encourages action is integral to this thesis. However, where I depart from Flannery's theory is his argument that devotion either suggests surrender or susceptibility. Sustained analysis of the Yates and Collins novels examined in this thesis will demonstrate that power is more fluid than Flannery allows. While devotion to the 'divinity' does 'direct' the life of the devotee, within the relationships depicted in several novels by Yates and Collins this power relationship is inverted, providing the devotee with the ability to 'direct the narrative' of the 'deity'.⁵

Within the sensation canon generally, devotion takes on a complex, and occasionally sinister, role. In challenging the sanctity of the domestic sphere, the sensation novel mocks the stereotypes of the devoted wife and loyal servants. Bruce Robbins points out that,

⁴ Denis Flannery, 'Henry James's *Brooksmith*: Devotion and its Discontents', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, p95

⁵ Further to this, Flannery's argument about 'giving over to powers of evil' is pertinent to the first chapter in this thesis on criminal wives: the devotion expressed by the wives is used for criminal purposes but their involvement in these criminal activities is sanctioned because it forms part of their wifely devotion.

‘There was in fact a sudden and well-documented new anxiety on the part of masters and mistresses about the damage that servant spies and informants could do. If they were groundless, the fears were nonetheless quite real.’⁶ These fears of danger within the home expand beyond employees to include interlopers within the family as well. Although Robbins concedes these fears were ‘groundless’, they still circulated and the sensation novel exploited and exacerbated them.

In two canonical sensation texts by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, the word ‘devotion’ is used in ways which dilute the intensity of its original meaning. These two texts invert devotion, taking the idea of something expressed by an inferior towards a superior and reversing it. This ploy is typical of a genre which inverts the domestic sanctity of the home and the beauty of the wife, to give but two examples of how sensation novels manipulate expectation. By showing devotion from the superior, more powerful, partner towards the inferior one, these two novels seemingly disempower the superior partner. In *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), when the title character begins to fear the revelation of the truth to the man she has bigamously married, she considers the effect she has had on him:

If Sir Michael Audley lived to be a hundred years old, whatever he might learn to believe of her, however he might grow to despise her, would he ever be able to disassociate her from these attributes? No; a thousand times, no. To the last hour of his life his memory would present her to him invested with the loveliness that had first won his enthusiastic admiration, his devoted affection.⁷

The ‘devoted affection’ she has won from Sir Michael has been based on the fabrication of her past and personality and the feminine attributes she lists in the paragraph prior to this, which include her ‘lovely smile’ and ‘bewitching manner’, only enhance the threat this beautiful woman poses to the home she has infiltrated. Lady Audley concedes ‘a semi-selfish tenderness’ where she considers the effect the coming revelations might have on Sir

⁶ Bruce Robbins, *The Servant’s Hand: English Fiction from Below* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), p108

⁷ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2007), p245

Michael, but this is subsumed into her satisfaction at 'bewitching' him into this 'devoted affection' in the first place. Here, devotion is used to mark the success of Lady Audley's schemes. The attachment Sir Michael has for his young wife is based on a complete fabrication and therefore undermines the potential for devotion to be inspirational. Instead of the typical power relationship which should exist – Sir Michael as the master of his wife – his devotion to an illusion weakens the power and agency he should derive from his position. This allows the concept of marital devotion and trustworthiness to be ranked alongside feminine fidelity and beauty as one of the mirages which sensation fiction seeks to mock and undermine.

In another of Braddon's most famous works, *Aurora Floyd* (1863), the titular heroine is also the subject of devotion from first her father and then her suitors. Her first fiancé, Talbot Bulstrode, adores her but her attachment is more circumspect:

Did Aurora love him? Did she make him due return for the passionate devotion, the blind adoration? She admired and esteemed him; she was proud of him...She revealed, too, a constant desire to please her betrothed husband, suppressing at least all outward token of the tastes that were so unpleasant to him.⁸

Although Aurora's admiration for him is a positive trait, it seems meagre in comparison with the 'passionate devotion' offered to her by her fiancé. Devotion in Aurora's case is merely something she has been taught to expect. It is mentioned again when she marries John Mellish later in the novel: 'It was impossible for any quarrel to arise between the lovers, for John followed his mistress about like some big slave, who only lived to do her bidding; and Aurora accepted his devotion with a Sultana-like grace, which became her amazingly.' (129) Here, again, the relationship appears unbalanced, with Mellish's devotion being accepted as Aurora's right. Like Sir Michael, the power which should be Mellish's is given to Aurora as he

⁸ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p76-77

does 'her bidding'. At the root of the novel is Aurora's ill-advised first marriage and subsequent accidental bigamy. The revelation of this suggests that, for all her beauty, Aurora does not encapsulate the feminine ideal. The slavish devotion of her husband and the passionate attachment of her earlier fiancé betray the fact that she has no comparable affinity for them, although she respects and admires them. Like Lady Audley, Aurora undermines the concept of devotion in the home because she is a type of interloper whose participation within the domestic sphere is based on a falsehood and a lack of conventional femininity. Once again, the powerful person in the relationship – the man – is seen to be disempowered by his affection for a woman. Both *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* toy with the conventional dynamics of devoted relationships because, alongside portraying an inversion of the typical power relationship between man and woman, neither of the women deserves the devotion their superior husbands bestow on them. These novels ultimately mock the devotion shown by these men, contributing to a pattern in sensation fiction which mocks the instability of the home and the conventional tropes which surround it.

In Yates's fiction and in some works by Collins, devotion is taken out of conventional and, sometimes, heteronormative constraints. Each of the four chapters in this thesis will analyse how devoted attachments operate at the heart of these novels, offering agency to characters that would be traditionally marginalised by the narrative. These representations of devotion are not on the periphery but are central to the novels and are important, sometimes invaluable, in the progression of the plots to their conclusions. These novels depict devotion not as something to be cynically manipulated, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*, but as a strong, positive force which can be utilised for the benefit of the characters involved.

In his article on *Brooksmith*, Denis Flannery also highlights the relationship that exists between devotion and queer culture and theory:

If queer culture is marked by reversal, action, impact, the questioning of category, the practice of critique, and saturation in the everyday, then the demands made, the indifferences shown, and the occasional rewards proffered by objects of devotion are also, I think, similarly and tellingly marked.⁹

Flannery's suggestion that queerness and devotion share certain traits encourages the consideration of them in conjunction with each other. The availability of both canonical and non-canonical nineteenth-century texts to queer interpretation is, by now, well-established.

In her book *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities*, Holly Furneaux documents how she uses the word:

In reading nineteenth-century materials I define queer as that which demonstrates that marriage and reproduction are not the only, or indeed the dominant or preferred, modes of being, and, in doing so, undoes an unhelpfully narrow model of identity as determined by a fixed point of sexual orientation. This book rejects a false logic that places marriage and the biological family as central to thinking about the Victorian and the Dickensian, in favour of an exploration of other forms of intimacy, affinity, and family formation.¹⁰

By following Furneaux and disregarding a 'narrow model of identity', this thesis is able to analyse the different models of family and love examined in Yates and Collins's sensation fiction. The 'other forms of intimacy, affinity and family formation' which Furneaux identifies are examined in chapters two, three and four of this thesis where unconventional relationships become central to the characters' motivations. Furneaux goes on to highlight how her work differs from other queer theorists:

This book, however, makes a case for the validity and importance of a variety of conjunctions outside and indeed, antithetical to, a central domain of queer theory as it is currently constituted: queer parenting, queer family, queer domesticity, queer tenderness, and queer happiness.¹¹

⁹ Denis Flannery, 'Henry James's *Brooksmith*: Devotion and its Discontents', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, p91

¹⁰ Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p9-10

¹¹ Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens*, p12

These concepts are alluded to throughout this thesis, with queer parenting and domesticity an integral part of the fourth chapter on servant devotion. By examining relationships that operate beyond the 'false logic' of the 'biological family', this chapter demonstrates the way unconventional family units transcend class divisions.

Chapter two, which analyses female friendship in two sensation novels, straddles the boundary between the traditional meaning of 'queer' and the homosexual connotations the word has acquired in the last century or so. In his essay on 'Queer Sensations', Ross F.

Forman explains that:

Recent scholarly interest in notions of affect and sympathy has also encouraged a re-evaluation of sensation literature in terms of queer dynamics that are not specifically – or not primarily – sexual, embracing analyses of female friendships and of the processes through which readers identify with and form sympathetic attachments to character and plot.¹²

The re-evaluation of 'queer dynamics' that Forman identifies can be applied to the homosocial friendships depicted in *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness*. The 'queerness' of the two sets of women arises from their agency: this is based both on the peculiar strength of the two relationships but also because of the ambiguous 'queer' nature of the friendships involved. In his chapter 'Queering the sensation novel' in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, Richard Nemesvari explains that, 'Queer characters both cause trouble *in* their narratives, by introducing conflict into the plot, and are troubling *to* their narratives, because they embody disruptive possibilities that are only barely containable.'¹³ In the novels examined in the third chapter of this thesis, the eccentricity of Miserrimus Dexter is self-evident but his effeminate nature also encourages an additional 'queer' reading of the text. Similarly, Lord Caterham is half-defined by his effeminacy and James Dugdale's status

¹² Ross G. Forman, 'Queer Sensation' in *The Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), pp414-429, p415

¹³ Richard Nemesvari, 'Queering the sensation novel' in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Andrew Mangham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp70-84, p71

in *A Righted Wrong* is as an outsider with a disability. These three disabled characters are distinguished by their devotion to certain women; this, in turn, is peculiar because their hopes will never be fulfilled. That ostensibly disenfranchised characters such as women and the disabled male obtain a degree of power from their queerness and queer devotion is a key focus in chapters two to four of this thesis.

Edmund Yates and sensation fiction

Alongside examining the role of devotion in sensation fiction, this thesis also seeks to situate Edmund Yates as a sensation novelist worthy of critical scrutiny. Although largely forgotten by modern critics, his novels of the 1860s and 1870s were works of sensation fiction that could and should be ranked alongside the novels of his better-known contemporaries, Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Although his attempts at sensational innovation have been denigrated by the scanty recent criticism of him, at least one contemporary reviewed his work favourably alongside that of Wilkie Collins.¹⁴ There is, however, little doubt that Yates treated his fiction more as a product to be sold in addition to his journalistic articles instead of works of art to be developed and honed. Deborah Wynne states that, 'Sensation novelists of the 1860s were seen by critics as producers of a popular "commodity" presented in instalments, inevitably associated with the commercial exploitation of the latest literary craze, rather than producing works of artistic merit.'¹⁵ This analysis correlates with the tone of contemporary reviews of Yates, as this review of one of his final novels in 1875 makes clear:

Mr. Edmund Yates does not aim very high as a novelist. He makes no pretensions to instruct or elevate, and seeks merely to amuse his readers, and that by forcible incident and broad drawing rather than by delicacy of manipulation. And he has his reward, for he

¹⁴ In *The Saturday Review* in 1867, see footnote 30.

¹⁵ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p11

is one of the writers whose works are not laid peacefully to rest at the end of the season, but undergo metempsychosis into the ranks of railway literature, with a regularity which shows that he understands his public.¹⁶

Here, the reviewer implies a correlation between Yates's understanding of 'his public' and the fact that he 'does not aim very high as a novelist' and, for some critics, the genre's reliance on recognisable sensational tropes differentiated it from the more serious and highbrow realist novel. However, as P.D. Edwards points out, most Victorian novels of the period include sensational incident of one form or another including adultery and murder:

Apart from their interest in crime it is doubtful that any one element could be found which is common to all the novels branded as sensational by one critic or another. But enough elements do recur, in enough novels, to make at least a rough general definition of the qualities of the sensation novel attainable; and in attempting such definition one is assisted by the attempts of many contemporary critics and some of the novelists themselves, as well as by what one can glean from comparing the actual novels.¹⁷

The imprecise nature of the 'sensational' label was cited by authors themselves as they sought to defend their own work against the negative associations the term evoked. In a preface to *Uncle Silas* in 1864, J. S. Le Fanu bristles at the overarching term:

May he be permitted a few words also of remonstrance against the promiscuous application of the term 'sensation' to that large school of fiction which transgresses no one of those canon of construction and morality which, in producing the unapproachable 'Waverley Novels', their great author imposed upon himself? No one, it is assumed, would describe Sir Walter Scott's romances as 'sensation novels'; yet in that marvellous series there is not a single tale in which death, crime and, in some form, mystery, have not a place.¹⁸

Le Fanu's defence confirms Edwards's assertion that contemporary critics played a role in categorising fiction, sometimes contrary to the beliefs and intentions of the author. In terms of Edmund Yates's labelling as a sensation author, he fits perfectly into Wynne's argument of the genre as a 'commodity'. In his *Recollections and Experiences*, first published in 1884,

¹⁶ Richard F. Littledale, 'New Novels', *The Academy*, 26 June 1875, pp656-657, p656 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 9th May 2014]

¹⁷ P.D. Edwards, *Some Mid-Victorian Thrillers: The Sensation Novel, Its Friends and Its Foes* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1971), p7

¹⁸ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2009), p3

Yates writes that, following the publication of his first novel *Broken to Harness* in 1864, 'I had struck a new vein, my writing was in great demand, and it was evident that I must make the most of the good fortune which had unexpectedly fallen upon me. From that time until the end of 1874 I was never without a novel or two in progress.'¹⁹ The implication in this statement is that the correlation between 'great demand' and money was a motivating factor in Yates's fiction writing, as it was too in his journalistic work.

Contemporary critics aided the categorisation of Yates's fiction as sensational. The *Fortnightly Review* in a critique of *Land at Last* (1866) said:

In judging a novel, all depends on the point of view. If our standard be high, we shall judge Mr. Yates severely. If our standard be that of the library, we shall judge him favourably. He makes us read him; which is something. He impresses us with an idea of his having a capacity for much better things; which is also something. But he offends us in many ways, partly by a kind of rollicking disregard for truth and sobriety, and partly by an union of the unreal with the prosaic, which, though I have styled it "fantastic realism," has nothing of fantasy except its remoteness from fact.²⁰

The reference to circulating libraries in this extract is one indication that the reviewer is 'judging' Yates as a sensational author. In addition, the offences mentioned, particularly the 'rollicking disregard' for sobriety certainly contributes to classification of Yates's works as sensation fiction. The idea of 'his having a capacity for much better things' is a recurring criticism in reviews of his novels, including in one very brief review of *The Yellow Flag* (1872) in *The Athenaeum*:

Turning out regulation three-volume novels by steam, with a regulation bigamy and the regulation sleeping-draught of impossible power successfully applied to a regulation heroine, is sorry work for a man of Mr. Yates's powers. We have no doubt it pays; and if the trashy 'Yellow Flag' follows, at an interval of three months, the trashy 'Waiting Race,' and a certain public buys both, no one, we suppose, has much right to complain. The execution of this novel is careless, and the characters are weak and ghostly, but there is

¹⁹ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1885), p294

²⁰ Anon, 'Causeries', *Fortnightly Review*, 15 April 1866, pp635-638, pp636-637 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

hardly a line in it which does not give the impression that Mr. Yates could, if he chose, write a better book.²¹

By mentioning the 'regulation' characteristics of a sensation novel, the reviewer confirms that Yates's three-volume novels fit firmly into this category. The language and tone of this piece is typical of critiques of his later novels which compliment Yates's literary ability but criticise the style and genre that he writes in. A review in *The Examiner* of *The Impending Sword* (1874) sums up the critics' attitude to his sensational novels:

Mr Edmund Yates is the Icarus of current fiction. At one time he promised to attain to a considerable altitude, but somehow or other his wings got scorched, the wax melted, and he fell into the sea of mediocrity, where he has since been floundering. Whether we shall ever see good work from him again is a question which he must decide; and judging from his latest novel he would seem to have given the negative to all hope.²²

Once more, this suggests exasperation with Yates's choice of material and style rather than his writing ability. These reviews demonstrate that Yates was regarded as a sensationalist author by his contemporaries, fulfilling one of P.D. Edwards's categorisation criteria for sensation fiction.

Yates's nineteenth-century critical reception identifies his sensationalism while modern criticism and content analysis confirms it. His inclusion in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011) edited by Pamela K. Gilbert indicates that critics are beginning to pay attention to Yates's sensational credentials. The essay concerning him, written by Andrew Radford, primarily focuses on Yates's bohemian sensationalism:

Yates's signal contribution to the sensation genre...is his often acerbic depiction of the ambitious civil servants and journalistic hacks that dream of occupying the more rarefied social space designated as "Upper Bohemia." In this elaborate network of metropolitan gentleman's clubs, theatrical and sporting venues, thresholds of difference are marked

²¹ Anon, 'Novels of the Week', *The Athenaeum*, 21 December 1872, p807 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

²² George Barnett Smith, 'Mr Edmund Yates's Last Novel', *The Examiner*, 13 June 1874, p627 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

then dissolved as lowly clerks watch their affluent employers mingle freely with lionised actors, minor aristocrats, and other privileged figures of the London glitterati.²³

Radford's analysis of Yates's niche in the sensation genre focuses on this bohemianism, a specialism which differentiates him from the other major authors in the genre. However, while this establishes his 'signal contribution' to the genre, it deflects attention from the similarities between Yates and the other sensation authors. Focusing on content, Edmund Yates ranks alongside Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon in terms of sensational plotting. Writing on the genre, Lyn Pykett argues:

The sensation plot usually consisted of varying proportions and combinations of duplicity, deception, disguise, the persecution and/or seduction of a young woman, intrigue, jealousy, and adultery. The sensation novel drew on a range of crimes, from illegal incarceration (usually of a young woman), fraud, forgery (often of a will), blackmail and bigamy, to murder or attempted murder. Formally sensation fiction was less a genre than a generic hybrid. The typical sensation novel was a catholic mixture of modes and forms, combining realism and melodrama, the journalistic and the fantastic, the domestic and the romantic or the exotic.²⁴

Edmund Yates clearly fulfils the criteria of the sensation novel as defined here by Pykett. In only the novels analysed in this thesis there are several crimes including murder, forgery, bigamy and the victimisation of virtuous heroines.

This thesis seeks to build on the recent renewed critical interest in Yates by making a stronger claim for his centrality within the sensation canon. In his essay, Radford acknowledges that Yates is frequently compared to Wilkie Collins. There are several reasons why a comparison between them is practical: firstly, as will be seen, Yates was explicitly referred to as a sensation novelist alongside Collins; secondly, their individual relationships with Charles Dickens offer a fruitful platform for comparison of their output, and, finally, they were writing at the same time, with all of Yates's novels published within a twelve year

²³ Andrew Radford, 'Edmund Hodgson Yates' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), pp319-331, p320

²⁴ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 1994), p4

period when Collins was also active as a novelist. In addition, while any comparison involving Mary Elizabeth Braddon – both a contemporary of both men and a close colleague of Yates’s – may have been beneficial, limitations of space and scope preclude it. All the novels examined here were published in volume form in the heyday of sensation fiction between the years of 1860 and 1875. This incorporates the entirety of Yates’s output while eliminating the novels of Collins’s later career, some of which strayed towards didacticism and were modelled on scenarios in earlier texts. In terms of the novels selected, this thesis analyses the more explicitly sensational novels of Yates’s career as an author, disregarding some of his early domestic writing. The Collins novels examined here are some of his most popular works, all of which are still in print and visible in bookshops as representative texts of the sensation genre. Therefore, they provide a valuable counterpoint to the relatively obscure novels of Edmund Yates. This thesis primarily focuses on relationship types which are found elsewhere in the sensation genre and, indeed, in Victorian fiction more generally. Even in the three Yates novels examined here, *Land at Last* (1866), *Black Sheep* (1867) and *The Impending Sword* (1874), all of which have strong references to bohemianism, the relationships which this thesis analyses are largely separate from the bohemian strands of the novels. Instead of focusing on the different types of sensationalism that Yates and Collins practice, then, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the more nuanced differences between them in terms of plot and character development and highlight areas of similarity which situate them both in opposition to generic conventions. It will argue that Yates’s manipulations of these conventions encourage a reading of his work that considers him as more innovative than has previously been allowed.

P.D. Edwards’s 1980 bibliography of Yates and his 1997 book *Dickens’s ‘Young Men’: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* form the bulk of

criticism on Yates. In his 2015 book on George Augustus Sala, Peter Blake highlights the dearth of criticism on both men: 'The title of Edwards's work, *Dickens's Young Men*, underlines how canonical Dickens had become and how neglected and marginal Sala (and Yates) had remained...'²⁵ This has begun to be remedied in recent years with Andrew Radford's chapter in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* giving an insight into what differentiates Yates's sensation fiction from his more lauded contemporaries. A third major source used in this introduction is Yates's own *Recollections and Experiences*, published in 1884. P.D. Edwards utilised this autobiography extensively in his book, whilst simultaneously referring to Sala's autobiographical works. He writes that, 'Yates's *Recollections and Experiences* was written soon after he turned fifty and is much more reliable; but except for one chapter written for the fourth edition, it stops twenty years before his death.'²⁶ Despite caveats that *Recollections and Experiences* cannot be regarded as an unbiased reflection of Yates's life and career, it does offer a useful insight into his motivations and relationships with others, especially his friend and mentor Charles Dickens. It also frames Yates as primarily invested in his journalistic work, as the later chapters of the autobiography which refer to his ownership of *The World* make plain. In *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, Edwards points out that, 'Though Yates was less inclined to disparage his own fiction than Sala, both seemed to assume that they would be remembered, if at all, as journalists rather than as novelists.'²⁷ This assumption may be based on access to the letters of both men but it is also evident in the way that Yates approached his fiction. In addition, his autobiography only mentions his novels briefly while much more space is given to his journalistic pursuits and

²⁵ Peter Blake, *George Augustus Sala and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press: The Personal Style of a Public Author* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p6

²⁶ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men': George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1997), p3

²⁷ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p96

relationships with other journalists. In a sense, Yates himself relegated his novels to a footnote of his life. A brief examination of Yates's life and journalistic career will allow his fiction to be considered in context and will suggest that his descent into formulaic sensationalism was partly due to his financial instability.

The son of two well-known actors, Yates began working for the Post Office just before his sixteenth birthday and continued in that employment for a quarter of a century. His parentage gave him some prestige in his early life. For instance he was elected to the Garrick Club aged only seventeen, and it also impacted upon his writing career, as P.D. Edwards notes: 'As a young man he enjoyed free entry to the theatres, and this was to shape his career crucially.'²⁸ His first literary appointment was as drama critic for the *Court Journal* and he fulfilled several such roles during his career, including a seven year stint as chief drama critic at the *Daily News*. Yates claims that he was spurred into this career by seeing the critics at the theatre and growing to envy them:

It was a most pleasant way, and the only way which occurred to me, of gratifying two strong aspirations – to make myself a name of some kind, and to earn some money in addition to my official salary. I wanted to be something more than a clerk in the Post Office, to be known as something else than the everlasting "son of – Adelphi, you know."²⁹

Here, Yates identifies that stepping out of his father's shadow was a primary consideration, along with the additional money it would earn him. That the extra money was the more strongly motivating factor is indicated by the sheer volume of literary work he took on alongside his position as a clerk. However, he also sank money into ventures such as *The Train*, a periodical he edited that only ran for thirty months and which resulted in him losing a substantial amount, and a failed play, *Tame Cats*, which lost him money and contributed to him being declared bankrupt in 1868. So, while financial considerations were ever-

²⁸ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p24

²⁹ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p147

present for Yates, he seems to have taken risks on literary ventures that a man exclusively focused on money may not have done. Later in life, he continued to take risks in his literary career. When proprietor of *The World* in 1883, he was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for criminal libel, of which he served just under two following an appeal to the Home Secretary about his health.

In his early literary years he wrote pieces for *Bentley's Miscellany* and *Chambers's Journal* and in 1854 he compiled some of his sketches into a book, *My Haunts and Their Frequenters*. This book was gifted to Charles Dickens early in their friendship, suggesting that, even as a relatively inexperienced author, Yates was eager for recognition from the man who would later influence his fiction. He also developed his 'personal journalism' in the *Illustrated Times* as 'The Lounger at the Clubs', the style of which became one of his trademarks and worked in tandem with the bohemianism of his fiction which differentiated his work from that of his contemporaries. In 1862 *The Cornhill* criticised this type of writing as manufactured:

The real and the ideal loungeur form the strongest contrast...The real loungeur is quite a different sort of person. He is probably a middle-aged, and rather stupid man, of moderate means, who eats a mutton-chop at two, reads newspapers, and dawdles till seven, then dines, and ponders and dozes over a book till bedtime, without hearing any rumours whatever.³⁰

The implication here is that the 'stupid man' fabricates his stories but, as has already been noted, Yates's access to society was given to him by the prestige of his parents. In his essay 'Edmund Yates: The Gossip as Editor' in 1985 Joel H. Weiner notes:

He "Americanized" the British press by introducing the personal interview to it. He made short paragraphs and titbits a part of the currency of the press, a decade before the publishing changes initiated by George Newnes. He removed parliamentary politics from the centre of newspaper reading and substituted "light literature" for it. He gave his backing to investigative reporting and parliamentary sketch writing. He made "gossip"

³⁰ Anon, 'Journalism', *The Cornhill Magazine*, July 1862, pp52-63, p62 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 10th June 2014]

essential reading because in the *World* and elsewhere it began to compete with the remainder of the press.³¹

Weiner highlights the importance of Yates's innovation in terms of his editorial style and ability to turn gossip into saleable material. An obituary in *The Speaker* acknowledges

Yates's contribution to the society journalism style of writing specifically:

When Mr Yates conceived the idea of a society journal, he had his eye on attractive metal which is by no means ephemeral. He had the happy thought of admitting inquisitive plebeians to a sixpenny peep-show of the aristocracy. It was almost as good as standing on a brilliant staircase and rubbing elbows with rank and fashion. The panorama of balls and routs and dinners, of tiaras and toilettes, was unfolded, not by an imaginative artist in a novel, but by real spectators of real coronets, with the real names of exalted personages, together with anecdotes of the privacy which they were affable enough to unlock for the general diversion. The showman soon found that he had plenty of coadjutors.³²

Once more, pecuniary interest is suggested as Yates's motivation for developing his literary work. In addition, the reference to Yates as a 'showman' creates the sense that he was not particularly interested in the seriousness of his journalism, only in its popularity. P.D.

Edwards says of Yates's attitude to this line of work that:

The exposure of vice and corruption in high places was never his real forte as a personal journalist. What he delighted in most was personal combat, with enemies and friends alike, and the prize, when he had them on the hip, was not so much their disgrace or humiliation as the demonstration of his own mental or moral superiority.³³

This analysis tallies with *The Speaker's* representation of Yates as a 'showman'. The 'personal combat' Edwards describes appears theatrical in nature and reinforces the idea that Yates was at the heart of journalistic circles in these years, responding to fellow writers and sparring with them rather than fabricating stories in the manner suggested by *The Cornhill*.

³¹ Joel H. Weiner, "The Gossip as Editor" in *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England* ed. Joel H. Weiner (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp259-274, p260

³² Anon, 'A Society Journalist', *The Speaker: The Liberal Review*, 26 May 1894, pp581-582, p582 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 10th June 2014]

³³ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p45

Yates's first editorship was on the *Comic Times* in 1855, a newly-established rival to *Punch*. This venture lasted only three months and led to the discarded contributors forming a new magazine, *The Train*, where Yates was also installed as editor. This magazine, in turn, lasted only thirty months. One of his most successful positions came in 1860 when he was employed as 'assistant or working editor' to George Augustus Sala on *Temple Bar*: 'It kept me constantly occupied; for Sala had so much literary and journalistic work to do that, beyond giving his name to the cover and the supervision to the printed sheets, he left more of the detail to me.'³⁴ Sala appears to implicitly corroborate this in his *Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala* (1895) by pointing out that he joined the staff of the *Daily Telegraph* and was responsible for writing 3000 words per day for them. This position at *Temple Bar* not only provided Yates with a regular outlet and honed his editorial skills but it also brought him into contact with Mary Elizabeth Braddon and he claims he detected some 'latent genius' in her early submissions to the magazine. It was also the place where his first novel was serialised. In *Recollections*, he explains that someone had promised a novel they could not deliver and it was suggested he step into the breach:

Such an idea had never entered my mind, or, if it had, had been summarily dismissed with a feeling that, though I had written short tales by the score, I had not sufficient staying power for a continuous story. But now somehow the idea was not so repugnant to me. I had long had certain vague ideas, germinated by the surroundings in which I lived, floating in my mind, and I thought perhaps I might be able to weave them together. At all events, I told the proprietor that I was prepared to throw myself into the breach – a suggestion which he received, if without any expression of enthusiastic delight, at least without a refusal.³⁵

³⁴ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p276

³⁵ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p291

This, again, is characteristic of Yates's attitude towards his work.³⁶ His bohemian environment had supplied ideas which would develop into *Broken to Harness* and influence aspects of much of his future work.

His obituary in *The Academy* suggested that his fear of 'staying power' had some grounding in fact:

If his longer novels, full as they are of unmistakable good qualities, were not of the first rank, that was because, to an order of mind continually receptive of all that is passing around it, the *oeuvre de longue haleine* is less congenial than the briefer effort. For the big work, if it is to be of the finest quality, a measure of seclusion and mental detachment is indispensable; and seclusion and mental detachment were never welcome to Mr Yates.³⁷

This 'order of mind' *The Academy* identifies not only relates to the interest Yates took in things around him and the number of literary projects he was involved in, but can also be connected to his financial motivations: dedication to novels in 'seclusion' would impact upon his ability to produce other work. In the 1870s Yates himself conceded that his novels were becoming stale:

The regular income – so regular, though not very large – had stopped for ever, and I was wholly dependent upon my own brains for provision for my family. I was in full work, it was true; but I was constantly asking myself how long that would last. I had been writing novels for nearly ten years, and though I had fortunately had no experience of "drawing a blank" on my brain coverts, I could not help feeling I had pretty nearly told all I had to tell, and that future attempts would be but a going over of the old ground.³⁸

The fact that he wrote another eight novels after coming to this conclusion is indicative of his focus on fiscal stability. It is clear that several of his later novels do go over 'the old ground' in terms of character types and plot twists but this 'old ground' was a problem of 1870s sensationalism as a whole, not merely Yates's contribution to it.

³⁶ He actually recounts earlier in *Recollections* that he began writing a serial novel for the *Illustrated London Magazine* in 1855 which folded when the periodical closed. He took on a commission originally given to his friend Frank Smedley, at a lower rate than Smedley would have been paid for it.

³⁷ F.W, 'Edmund Yates', *The Academy*, 26 May 1894, p437 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 10th June 2014]

³⁸ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p397

Perhaps the most damaging piece of controversy which impacted Yates's legacy were the rumours that he collaborated on several of his best-selling works with Frances Cashel Hoey, with Hoey allegedly writing the whole of one novel. Yates had a habit of making enemies – P.D. Edwards details in *Dickens's 'Young Men'* some of his many quarrels – and two of these in particular proved long-lasting. Anthony Trollope was furious with his colleague at the Post Office when Yates published a tale that had, Trollope assumed, been confided to him in private. In his entry on Yates for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, P.D. Edwards explains that, 'Trollope never forgave him, castigating him furiously in a cancelled passage of his *Autobiography*, and helping to spread the probably spurious story that several of his novels had in fact been written, or partly written, by Frances Cashel Hoey.'³⁹ William Tinsley's feud with Yates originated from what he perceived as Yates's bad management of *Tinsley's Magazine*. In the *Oxford DNB* entry for Hoey, Edwards frames the story in these terms:

Hoey privately confirmed that the collaboration had occurred, though rejecting Tinsley's assertion that he had been unaware of it at the time. But Tinsley apparently had not preserved the manuscripts partly or wholly in her hand, and in their absence, and that of any discernible signs of composite authorship in the novels as published, the story remains barely credible.⁴⁰

The language used in the two entries – 'probably spurious story' and 'barely credible' – is demonstrative of the lack of proof surrounding the rumours. In his *Random Recollections*, Tinsley gives his account of the deceit practiced upon him but also, perhaps, betrays his motives:

Even when he had *The World* newspaper, worth about ten thousand pounds a year to him, Yates never seemed to remember the days when my handwriting was worth thousands of pounds to him; and when my turn came to be in monetary troubles, and I

³⁹ P. D. Edwards, 'Yates, Edmund Hodgson (1831–1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (Online) [Accessed 26th May 2014]

⁴⁰ P. D. Edwards, 'Hoey, Frances Sarah Cashel (1830–1908)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 (Online) [Accessed 26th May 2014]

asked him to help me, the aid he sent me I returned; but that was a foolish act, for he did not send a large sum. I was the more hurt because I knew he had settled with some very influential men in the City whom he did not care to attack in his paper or meet in society whilst owing them money.⁴¹

This passage clearly betrays a grudge against Yates for forgetting his benevolence in the past. However, Tinsley also has to be careful when discussing the rumours that Hoey wrote part of *Black Sheep*, serialised in *All the Year Round*, as he clearly does not want to implicate Dickens in the deceit:

Of course, if Mr. Yates told Mr. Dickens or Mr. Wills that he employed an amanuensis that would have been a fair reason for the serial not going to the office in his own handwriting. However, there is one thing quite certain, that, when Mr. Dickens printed "Black Sheep" in his journal, he quite believed Mr. Yates was sole author of the work. And I am quite sure in my own mind that the great novelist would not have tolerated the partnership without putting the two names to the book.⁴²

The certainty Tinsley evinces here once more undermines his argument. The relationship between Yates and Dickens is discussed in more detail below, but the possibility that Yates practised this deceit on Dickens seems unlikely. Circumstantially, there is the fact that *Black Sheep* was the first novel Yates serialised in *All the Year Round* and which came about after he had accepted Dickens's input on *Land at Last*. Also placing the allegations in doubt is Yates's own account of Dickens's editorial style:

As an editor Dickens was most painstaking and conscientious: outside contributors, whose articles had passed the first critical ordeal of Mr. Wills's judgement, and had been referred to "the Chief," received thoroughly impartial attention from him, while for his friends he could not take too much trouble or show too much interest.⁴³

This suggests collaboration with Hoey would have been difficult to conceal, especially considering Dickens's interest in Yates's earlier novels that were published elsewhere.

⁴¹ William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, 2 vols (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co. Ltd, 1900), i, p142

⁴² William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, i, p140-141

⁴³ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p309

P.D. Edwards analyses the collaboration rumours thoroughly in his 1980 bibliography, coming to no definite conclusions. In *Dickens's 'Young Men'* he points out that, 'If it was true, Hoey must have been an extraordinarily accomplished mimic and Yates must have spent many hours scanning what she had written for telltale signs of her authorship.'⁴⁴ In terms of workload, collaboration would surely be used for Yates to ease his burden, not add to it by proofreading all that Hoey had written. The catalogue of Yates's papers held by the University of Queensland compiled by Edwards and Andrew Dowling in 1993 concludes that they do not hold the key to the ongoing authorship question:

Disappointingly, however, none of them offers any clues to the solution of the principle mystery of Edmund's literary career: the alleged "ghosting" of parts or the whole of several of his seventeen or eighteen novels by a fellow-novelist, Frances Cashel Hoey...While the Edmund Yates Papers include the manuscript of the autobiographical *Recollections and Experiences*, they do not contain the manuscripts of any novels. This may argue either that Edmund attached no particular value to his work as a novelist or that he had good reason for not keeping the manuscripts.⁴⁵

Again, these papers promote speculation instead of a resolution to the mystery and continue to allow Yates's novelistic reputation to be overshadowed by these thus-far unsubstantiated rumours. In any case, unless fresh evidence comes to light, they can never be substantiated or disproved. In terms of this thesis, several novels discussed are rumoured to be partly Hoey's work. However, I maintain that even *A Righted Wrong*, the novel claimed to be written completely by Hoey, bears some hallmarks of Yates's earlier work and characterisation. Edwards examines the case of *A Righted Wrong* in his bibliography, pointing out that it includes echoes of Yates characters in novels where his authorship is undisputed and that there are physical descriptions of a school which only Yates could have contributed. He concludes:

⁴⁴ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p198

⁴⁵ Peter Edwards and Andrew Dowling, *The Edmund Yates Papers in the University of Queensland Library: Victorian Fiction Research Guides* (Queensland: University of Queensland, 1993), p11

All in all, the internal evidence for attributing *A Righted Wrong* to Hoey would carry little weight – indeed would pass unnoticed – but for Tinsley’s assertion that it, and it alone, was written entirely by her: the fact that it shows fewer definitive signs of Yates’s hand than any of the other novels on which collaboration allegedly occurred certainly strengthens Tinsley’s whole case but by no means establishes it beyond doubt.⁴⁶

Once more, the uncertainty surrounding the allegations makes certainty either way impossible. However, ultimately, Yates’s descent into more formulaic sensationalism, as discussed above, could easily be blamed for *A Righted Wrong*’s distance from bohemia and its integration into more traditional domestic settings.⁴⁷

Edmund Yates and Wilkie Collins

Edmund Yates was connected to Wilkie Collins by their mutual friendship with Charles Dickens but their style of fiction writing also links them together. Yates’s sensational credentials are enhanced by an 1867 review of *Black Sheep* in *The Saturday Review* which explicitly couples him with his contemporary: ‘It is the merit of writers like Mr. Edmund Yates or Mr. Wilkie Collins that they leave the conventional moves as far behind as they can, and invent rules and combinations for themselves, which are successful in proportion to their ingenuity.’⁴⁸ This demonstrates that not only did the reviewer categorise Yates as a sensationalist author but he was considered alongside Collins as a key figure within the genre. They are also referred to in tandem by a later writer in *The Academy* who, when discussing another author’s work, writes that, ‘Mr Hopkins has evidently devoted himself to the works of novelists like Mr Wilkie Collins and Mr Edmund Yates, until a natural but

⁴⁶ P.D. Edwards, *Edmund Yates, 1831-1894: A Bibliography: Victorian Fiction Research Guides* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p32

⁴⁷ For a breakdown of what is known about the Yates/Hoey rumours see Appendix A.

⁴⁸ Anon, ‘Black Sheep’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 10 August 1867, pp190-191, p190 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

perhaps not laudable desire has come upon him to imitate those masterpieces.⁴⁹ This sentence is as much of a criticism of John Baker Hopkins as it is a compliment to Collins and Yates but, again, it demonstrates that the two were occasionally linked. In addition, Yates evidently respected Collins in the early years of their acquaintance. In 1857 – before the publication of any of Collins’s standout novels – he wrote about him in his ‘Men of Mark’ series in *The Train*, praising his forethought in planning. In the piece, Yates discusses attention to craft in a manner relevant to his own novelistic endeavours in the next two decades:

To be successful it is necessary, first, that he should have powers, and secondly, that he should devote time, patience, and reflection to their proper employment. On himself it entirely depends whether his work shall be a lying legend of impossible people, or a broad and noble picture of real things and real men. Very few are there who have really seen or known anything which the world would be gratified or amused by hearing; fewer still who have the gift of composition, and who can produce their matter in a form calculated to please not only the general public, but the select few whose opinion is really worth caring for.⁵⁰

The ‘time, patience, and reflection’ that Yates identifies here as vital to success may not, as we have seen in *The Academy* obituary cited above, have been something he applied to his own fictional work. In highlighting these qualities in relation to Collins, Yates allows an interpretation of his busy career which suggests that his dedication to his novel writing was not at the same level as Collins’s. However, from the reviews of Yates’s work already cited it can be seen that he also had the ability necessary to succeed in the field.

Andrew Radford, in his essay in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, tries to identify the reason for the critical neglect of Yates, discussing his sensationalism in relation to contemporaries like Collins:

⁴⁹ George Saintsbury, ‘New Novels’, *The Academy*, 23 May 1874, pp570-571, p570 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 10th June 2014]

⁵⁰ Edmund Yates, ‘Men of Mark: W. Wilkie Collins’, *The Train: a First-Class Magazine*, June 1857, pp352-357, pp353-354 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 11th June 2014]

Recent critical indifference seems to validate the downbeat reaction of the *Saturday Review* to Yates's *A Righted Wrong* (1870), which proposed that Yates lacked the patience, idiosyncratic vision, and single-minded devotion to craft to follow in the footsteps of his more lauded contemporaries Collins and M.E. Braddon, who transcended the sensation school they helped create by consistently subverting their audience's generic and sentimental expectations. Yates merely offered variations on the tawdry excesses of sensational paraphernalia...⁵¹

On the one hand, this tallies with the jobbing attitude to fiction Yates displayed and, particularly, the judgement of the obituary in *The Academy* which interrogates his dedication to fiction. It is true that Collins is 'lauded' as one of the originators of the genre, as Lyn Pykett explains in her 1994 book *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone*:

Collins was the master of all of the main elements of the sensation genre: the construction and unravelling of an intricate, crossword puzzle plot, the atmospheric scene, the mysterious, prophetic dream, obsessive and disordered mental states, overtly respectable villains, and bold, assertive and/or devious and scheming heroines and villainesses.⁵²

Here, Pykett sums up not only the elements that made Collins's fiction so popular but the attractions of the sensation genre as a whole. Collins's range of heroines from the meek, manipulated Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White* to the determined Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* and the conniving Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale* are prototypes whose attributes were frequently appropriated by lesser sensational novelists. His stylistic touches, too, were adopted by imitators:

The narrative structure and methods of narration of sensation novels are organised around concealment and the prolongation of mystery...In Collins's sensation novels this game of narrative hide-and-seek was pursued by means of multiple narrators, or by the creation of multiple-narrator effects through the use of letters, journals and other documents. Collins's use of multiple narrators with their linked and overlapping narratives creates an impression of verisimilitude or actuality.⁵³

⁵¹ Andrew Radford, 'Edmund Hodgson Yates' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert, p321

⁵² Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone*, p14

⁵³ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone*, p37

Collins's impact on the genre he helped create is undeniable, although the success of his stylistic imitators varied greatly. It is possible to see Collins's influence in the construction of Edmund Yates's 1870 novel *A Righted Wrong* where the considerable changes in circumstances between the second and third volume are partially mitigated by the use of letters which allows the resonance of the death towards the end of the second volume to remain undiluted. These explanatory letters are reminiscent of those used 'between the scenes' in Collins's *No Name*. The 'paraphernalia' of sensation that Collins cultivated, then, was indeed utilised by lesser-known sensation authors, including Yates.

However, it is important to note that, as Collins's career progressed, he was accused of utilising his fiction more for propaganda purposes in novels such as *Man and Wife* (1870) and *The Law and the Lady* (1875), which both examine points of law and contain societal critiques, with *Man and Wife* including a preface where Collins explicitly states that he has a didactic aim in writing the novel:

The Story here offered to the reader differs in one respect from the stories which have preceded it by the same hand. This time the fiction is founded on facts, and aspires to afford what help it may towards hastening the reform of certain abuses which have been too long suffered to exist among us unchecked.⁵⁴

The aspiration Collins himself identifies here suggests that an engagement with moral reform has superseded his fictional aspirations. The reviewer in *The Saturday Review* identified failings in this respect:

Moral aims generally spoil any novel in which they are prominent, and we think that they have led in this case to some serious artistic faults. If one moral is generally too much, two morals are surely unjustifiable. Mr Collins might be content with assaulting running and boat-racing without breaking a lance at the same moment against all our marriage laws.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p5

⁵⁵ Anon, 'Man and Wife', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 9 July 1870, pp52-53, p53 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 11th June 2014]

This criticism of Collins's 'moral aims' is tempered by a generally favourable review in which the reviewer admits to reading the book in one sitting. However, it is evident that Collins's avowed moral argument has caused the novel to be seen not only as a work of fiction but as a polemic, something *The Saturday Review* is unsure about. The reviewer in *The Athenaeum* similarly expresses doubts about the use of fiction to combat social abuses but also found the novel to be enjoyable, adding that, 'The plot is, indeed, less complicated than the plots of former fictions by the same hand; there is no great mystery to be elucidated.

Notwithstanding, no reader can fail to be interested, deeply interested, in the story.'⁵⁶ This suggests that the cornerstones of Collins's fiction – complexity and mystery – are lacking in this novel and, though it is interesting, there is the sense that Collins's moral crusade altered the way in which his fiction manifested itself. In *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins*, Pykett notes that:

On the question of Collins's merits as a storyteller, the critical refrain remained substantially the same in the closing decades as it had been in the first decades of his career: he was by turns praised for his skill in storytelling and plotting, and blamed for being a mere or mechanical plotter. The only new note, perhaps inevitably given the length of his career, was that he was now accused of repeating himself, and even of self-parody.⁵⁷

This demonstrates that, while Collins, in Andrew Radford's words, did transcend the 'sensation school' which he 'helped create', he was accused in later novels of 'repeating himself', surely a description which can be compared to the 'variations' of 'sensational paraphernalia' which Radford identifies in Yates.

Radford also refers specifically to the deviants in Yates's and Collins's work, pointing out that Yates is more conservative in this sense: 'Unlike Collins, to whom he is most frequently compared, Yates does not depict with the same unflinching rigor aberrations in

⁵⁶ Anon, 'Novels of the Week', *The Athenaeum*, 9 July 1870, pp45-47, p46 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 11th June 2014]

⁵⁷ Lyn Pykett, *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p110

the rituals of romantic coupling. His wrongdoers are subject to the expected retributive narrative corrections.⁵⁸ The assertion that Yates's novels end in 'expected' ways may be less a criticism of Yates than it is a comment on Collins's work. In *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* (2003), Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox state in their introduction that: 'Wilkie Collins's fictional world is, undeniably, a world populated by oddballs, misfits, and grotesques, characters who sometimes engage in startling and even shocking behaviour.'⁵⁹ This articulates what made Collins both so popular with contemporary readers and appalled contemporary critics. However, it is worth remembering that the perceived danger of sensation fiction came from its immersion in traditional settings, as Patrick Brantlinger points out in his 1982 essay 'What Is Sensational about the "Sensation Novel"?: 'Although not every tale that has come to be labelled a sensation novel involves a mystery...many imply by their very structures that domestic tranquillity conceals heinous desires and deeds.'⁶⁰ The 'domestic tranquillity' Brantlinger identifies implies a degree of normalcy, something against which Collins, with his collection of 'oddballs, misfits, and grotesques', seems to immediately clash. The milieu of sensation fiction is assumed, as Winifred Hughes explains in *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (1980):

With the sensation novelists proper, the social background is assumed without being depicted; anarchy keeps breaking forth but it is free floating, attaching neither to social institutions nor even to obsessed and demonic villains, of which there are remarkably few. This phenomenon in itself registers a new uncertainty about the sources of violence and passion, an uneasy feeling that they are close to home and no longer so easily accommodated by conventional morality and religion.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Andrew Radford, 'Edmund Hodgson Yates' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert, p322

⁵⁹ Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, 'Introduction' in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* eds. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), ppxi-xxv, pxvi

⁶⁰ Patrick Brantlinger, 'What Is "Sensational" about the "Sensation Novel"?:', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (June 1982), pp1-28, p3 in *JSTOR* (Online) [Accessed: 11th June 2014]

⁶¹ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p66

The 'social background' includes a normalcy which some of Wilkie Collins's characters are in opposition to, most notably Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady*. The invasion of the recognisably tranquil domestic sphere, then, is less obvious in some of Collins's novels. Even *The Woman in White* (1860) includes two 'oddballs' in the form of Marian Halcombe and Count Fosco. Edmund Yates's fiction, on the other hand, is more recognisably domestic with some 'misfits' but fewer of them than in Collins's work. In this sense, then, Yates fulfils the criteria of sensationalism even while Radford's criticism of Yates as inferior to Collins in terms of 'wrongdoers' remains valid.

Concluding his analysis of Yates's work in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, Radford identifies the major complaint against Yates in relation to his contemporaries whilst suggesting there is more to be seen:

What little recent scholarship exists on Yates tends to buttress the mid-Victorian perception of a "synthetic" writer heavily reliant on the stylistic and thematic mannerisms of more acclaimed contemporaries such as Dickens, Braddon, Collins, and Trollope. The truth, however, is more complex...we should pay closer attention to his slyly sardonic and parodic fictional strategies which complicate the reader's responses to the sensational motifs in his work.⁶²

The charge of Yates being a 'synthetic' writer is a complex one to address in the wider context of sensation fiction, since the genre as a whole was considered to be manufactured. Many of the criticisms levelled at the genre have been rebuffed but there is nevertheless an emphasis on plot over characterisation which permeates Wilkie Collins's fiction, particularly his later works with an avowed moral purpose. As previously noted, sensation fiction was considered a saleable commodity' by contemporaries and, as such, certain tropes and types would be regularly incorporated into novels to satisfy generic expectations. Labelling Yates as 'synthetic' therefore is not an abnormal assessment of the sensation novel, but it was an

⁶² Andrew Radford, 'Edmund Hodgson Yates' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert, p329

assessment that Collins disliked, as Bachman and Cox point out: 'Collins was not, in his own mind, a writer who placed plot and sensation above all, as the unfair stereotypes of his suggest.'⁶³ As we have already seen, in contrast to Collins, Yates prioritised money and prolificacy above art. However, the 'sardonic and parodic fictional strategies' which Radford identifies are accompanied, as this thesis will argue, by variations in characterisation and plot progression which refute the allegations of Yates as a completely 'synthetic' writer.

Yates, Collins and print culture

The journalistic culture which surrounded Collins and, especially, Yates has already been discussed. It is evident that Wilkie Collins focused more on fiction while Yates diversified according to what appeared to be the most lucrative literary endeavour at the time. However, this is not to say that his approach to editing was haphazard. He claims in *Recollections* that he was selected as editor for *The Train* due to his perceived reliability: 'I was chosen editor, principally because my ways of life were less erratic than those of most of my friends, and my Post Office occupation would give me a certain amount of stability in the eyes of those business people with whom we should have to deal.'⁶⁴ Ultimately, this 'stability' failed and the magazine folded, as we have seen. However, this editorship took place only shortly after Yates's friendship with Dickens began. T.H.S. Escott suggests that observance of Dickens at work aided Yates as an editor:

From the founder of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* Edmund Yates gained his first knowledge of the technique of magazine management, and learned his earliest lessons in the art of gauging and satisfying the public taste in the periodical press. Not perhaps quite unconsciously, and in the true actor's spirit, at certain conjunctures of life, Edmund Yates may have moulded his conduct, and his words after a Thackerayan pattern; but, as he learned business in the Post Office, so it was from Dickens that he

⁶³ Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, 'Introduction' in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* eds. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, pxiv

⁶⁴ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p223

drew the knowledge which enabled him to conduct the magazine of *Temple Bar* first, and his own newspaper of the *World* afterwards, with such substantial success.⁶⁵

The split here seems to be between Thackeray the showman and Dickens the pragmatist, with Yates's editorial success more prevalent when he followed Dickens's example. Once more, this is an indication of the impact Dickens had on Yates's career or, at least, the impact that Yates's close friends attributed to Dickens. His editorial success on *The World* is discussed in several locations, including the memoirs of Joseph Hatton (1882):

For example, within the past few years a complete change has taken place in the high-priced journalism of London. *The World* is among the most successful of the new weekly papers. An editor and writer of much varied experiences, a *flâneur* on a daily paper, an official of the Post-office, the intimate friend of Dickens, a novelist and a playwright, Mr. Edmund Yates is a conspicuous figure of these journalistic days.⁶⁶

As a 'conspicuous figure', Yates has clearly attained respect in journalistic circles and the success of *The World* certainly appears to be as 'substantial' as Escott paints it. That Yates abandoned novel-writing soon after establishing *The World* demonstrates that, not only had he run out of ideas for novels, but that he considered journalism to be the cornerstone of his career.

Whilst more renowned for his fiction, Wilkie Collins nevertheless wrote journalistic pieces for the *Leader*, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* before his most famous novelistic successes. The periodical press grew exponentially in the nineteenth century as Matthew Rubery points out:

While the earliest periodicals appealed almost exclusively to an upper-middle-class male readership, the audience for print expanded throughout the century following technological improvements in the publishing industry. One of the most striking aspects

⁶⁵ T.H.S. Escott, 'Edmund Yates: An Appreciation and a Retrospect', *The New Review*, July 1894, pp87-97, pp90-91 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 25th May 2014]

⁶⁶ Joseph Hatton, *Journalistic London: Being A Series Of Sketches Of Famous Pens And Papers Of The Day* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), p85-86

of the periodical press was the variety of material produced for readers formerly ignored by publishers: women, children, tradesmen, servants and other marginal groups.⁶⁷

This success, assisted by increased literacy rates in the poor, created a plethora of titles, some of which lasted for only short periods, such as Yates's ventures *Comic Times* and *The Train*. In his article for *Household Words* on 'The Unknown Public' Wilkie Collins dissected several typical periodicals:

I have already said that the staple commodity of the journals appears to be formed of stories. The five specimen copies of the five separate weekly publications now before me, contain, altogether, ten serial stories, one reprint of a famous novel (to be hereafter referred to), and seven short tales, each of which begins and ends in one number. The remaining pages are filled up with miscellaneous contributions, in literature and art, drawn from every conceivable source. Pickings from *Punch* and *Plato*; wood-engravings, representing notorious people and views of famous places, which strongly suggest that the original blocks have seen better days in other periodicals; modern and ancient anecdotes; short memoirs; scraps of poetry; choice morsels of general information; household receipts, riddles, and extracts from moral writers; all appear in the most orderly manner, arranged under separate heads, and cut up neatly into short paragraphs. However, the prominent feature in each journal is the serial story, which is placed, in every case, as the first article, and which is illustrated by the only wood-engraving that appears to have been expressly cut for the purpose.⁶⁸

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates the variety that the periodicals offered, placing fiction at the forefront of their issues and therefore highlighting the draw of the serialised story. John Sutherland in *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers* (1995) points out the difficulty with that from a novelist's standpoint: '*All the Year Round* used up novelists at prodigious speed. Twenty thousand words a month, a three-decker in just over half a year was a faster mode of production than many could trust themselves to keep up to.'⁶⁹ The rigours of serialisation were evidently demanding, but it was a method of publication that both Collins and Yates regularly used. As Deborah Wynne discusses in *The Sensation Novel*

⁶⁷ Matthew Rubery, 'Journalism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* ed. Francis O'Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) ,pp177-194, p184

⁶⁸ Wilkie Collins, 'The Unknown Public' in *Household Words*, 21 August 1858, pp217-222, p221 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 26th May 2014]

⁶⁹ John Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), p55

and the Victorian Family Magazine (2001), some editors used the space of the periodical intelligently: 'Victorian readers were invited by editors to adopt an intertextual approach to magazines by reading each issue's texts in conjunction with each other, encouraging the making of thematic connections between the serial novel and other features through the power of juxtaposition.'⁷⁰ This 'intertextual approach' created a more comprehensive experience for the reader and, once again, highlighted the serialised novel.

Other journals are important to this thesis for their reviews and commentary on the sensation genre. Chief amongst these are *The Athenaeum*, the only magazine to review every one of Yates's novels, and *The Saturday Review*, which reviewed many sensation novels and frequently expressed opinions on the genre. In an 1867 review of *Black Sheep*, it differentiated between types of sensation fiction:

An important distinction ought to be drawn among the various kinds of novels which are commonly all lumped together as sensational. There is sensation and sensation. One form of it is vulgar and ludicrous, implying very little in the writer except an unscrupulous defiance of everything like reason and possibility. The other is free from the crude monstrosities which are commonly identified with sensation, and implies a sustained intellectual exercise on the part of the author. The penny story which, with its thrilling woodcut, gives a pleasure nicely proportionate to its horrors to the cook and the knife-boy once a week, is the finest specimen of sensation in its undeveloped stage. *Black Sheep* is a good example of the more worthy sort of sensational art.⁷¹

This distinction, while obviously complimentary to Yates, separates the cheap periodicals from the more expensive ones. Some authors, like Mary Elizabeth Braddon, worked in both spheres but the tone of this article suggests that the merit which is to be found in 'the other' form of sensation was vastly superior to the cheaper novels.

The circulating libraries also had an impact on the popularity of fiction, particularly Mudie's powerful one. Lyn Pykett explains that, 'Between them, Mudie's and Smith's were the major purchasers of hardback fiction and were able to negotiate purchasing deals with

⁷⁰ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*, p3

⁷¹ Anon, 'Black Sheep', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, p190

the main publishers of fiction. Mudie's decision to buy or reject a particular novel and the exact size of his order could determine its success or failure.'⁷² This power was criticised by contemporaries, particularly because Mudie's decisions were not based on literary values, as *The Saturday Review* points out in 1860: 'It seems that Mr. Mudie has been accused of regulating his purchase of particular publications, not by the demand for them, but by his personal preferences; and this, it is urged, is a breach of contract with the public.'⁷³ Pykett references Mudie's opposition to the title of *The New Magdalen* (1873), when Collins feared that standing firm might result in the book being ignored by Mudie. While he could be a capricious purchaser, his catalogues are microcosms of the expansive world of Victorian fiction. R.C. Terry points out that, 'In minor fiction the major interests lie in the sensation novel, the romance or domestic love story, and the adventure tale, either historically or geographically exotic. Miss Braddon with forty-six titles is obviously the queen of crime. Mrs Henry Wood and Edmund Yates also command an audience.'⁷⁴ By situating Yates within that grouping, Terry implies that he was sanctioned by Mudie's catalogue. This would have aided his readership and offers another reason why writing novels proved to be such a pecuniary boon to him. It also reaffirms his place at the centre of the literary establishment as a sensation author, as he is grouped alongside Braddon and Wood, both proponents of the sensation genre.

The critical reception of Collins and Yates and their relationships with Dickens

⁷² Lyn Pykett, *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins*, p82

⁷³ Anon, 'Mudie's Library', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 3 November 1860, p550 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 27th May 2014]

⁷⁴ R.C. Terry, *Victorian Popular Fiction, 1860-80* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), p12

The overarching theme of this thesis is the devotion of one person towards another. In touching on the break between Dickens and his wife in *Recollections*, Yates betrays the fact that the word can also be applied to his relationship with his mentor:

It is not for me to apportion blame or to mete out criticism. My intimacy with Dickens, his kindness to me, my devotion to him, were such that my lips are sealed and my pen is paralysed as regards circumstances which, if I felt less responsibility and less delicacy, I might be at liberty to state. As it is, I am concerned with the man, and I shall content myself with remarking that it was fortunate for him that just at this time Dickens was opening up a new field of labour.⁷⁵

This passage correlates with the tone of the chapter as a whole which concedes some criticism but ultimately betrays Yates's laudatory attitude towards his friend. The 'devotion' that Yates mentions precludes him from writing on matters that might embarrass his friend's legacy. Yates's biographical narrative finds a significant parallel in much of his fiction, where there is a considerable emphasis on the devotion of one person to another which intertwines with the plots, rendering them dependent, in several cases, on this devotion in order to progress.

The relationships between Collins and Dickens and Yates and Dickens were crucial for the development of the two younger writers. Both of them not only wrote for his magazine and contributed stories to his Christmas numbers, but also socialised with him. In Collins's case, this created a mould which he eventually broke out of but, in Yates's work, there is the sense that he remained dedicated to the type of writing which would please his mentor. In a rare critical mention of both Collins and Yates together, Una Pope-Hennessy, in her 1945 biography of Dickens, framed these relationships in these terms:

The old equal friendships were a thing of the past, they had been replaced by intimacies with younger men, like Wilkie Collins, George Sala, Percy Fitzgerald, Edmund Yates. To some extent their relations to him were sycophantic, for they were all definitely inferior

⁷⁵ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p301

in character and ability to the older men who had dropped away, and they all derived their livelihood from him.⁷⁶

This is a simplistic analysis, especially considering the critical re-evaluation of Collins which has taken place in the decades since this pronouncement. For instance, labelling them as 'sycophantic' discounts the well-documented influence of Collins's *The Moonstone* on Dickens's unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. However, both Collins and Yates undeniably derived a portion of their livelihood from Dickens and relied on him for guidance. This raises the question of how much influence he had on their novelistic careers and whether they felt constrained by this influence.

Sue Lonoff's 1982 book *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship* examines how Collins was influenced by the requirements of his audience and also discusses his relationship with Dickens. Lonoff depicts him, like Yates, as a man as concerned with monetary matters as with writing itself: 'Collins's dedication to the art of fiction was not unalloyed. He was as interested in making money as he was in writing well, and earned a reputation for shrewdness in his business dealings that threatened to outweigh his reputation as a popular novelist, at least in publishing circles.'⁷⁷ This 'shrewdness' that Lonoff identifies connects Collins with the mercenary motives already identified in Yates. However, there is also the sense that Collins's attention to his fiction outstripped Yates's, whose original prompt to write book-length fiction came directly from necessity. In her 1991 biography, Catherine Peters explains that:

In January 1862 Wilkie finally made the decision, in the air since the success of *The Woman in White*, to leave the staff of *All the Year Round*. He had outgrown the apprentice's overalls, and they were becoming a straitjacket...Wilkie continued to be

⁷⁶ Una Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens* (London: The Reprint Society, 1947), p426

⁷⁷ Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1982), p22

associated with the magazine as a contributor, and Dickens appreciated his reasons for going, and was friendly and concerned.⁷⁸

Here, Peters demonstrates that Collins's focus was on his growth as a writer and what enabled him to step out of Dickens's shadow. The editorial constraints of *All the Year Round* were hampering his development and, indeed, a few pages earlier Peters acknowledges that Collins was worth more to the periodical than it, with a relatively modest salary, was worth to him at that stage in his career. In contrast, in *Recollections*, Edmund Yates explains how difficult he found leaving the Post Office after twenty five years working for them:

Of course for many years by far the larger portion of my income had been the produce of my pen, and I had never had any difficulty in placing anything I wrote. But would that be the case when, with all my time at my disposal, the supply would be vastly increased? The ranks of the novelists were swelling year by year; already the halcyon days of large payments were past, and publishers were declaring they could not give their former prices, owing to the increase of competition. Could I go again into journalistic harness, special reporting, reviewing, dramatic criticism? and, even if I could, should I get the employment? I was no longer in the first freshness of youth, and many men of rising reputation were pressing forward and making their presence in the field fully recognised by me and my coevals.⁷⁹

Admittedly, Yates retired from the Post Office in 1872, a decade after Collins parted company with *All the Year Round*. However, their ages at these moments of decision were not vastly different: Collins was 38 in 1862 while Yates was 41 in 1872. That Yates hesitated, despite the 'larger portion' of his income already earned by writing, also indicates that his attitude towards literary pursuits were that they were a means to a financial end. For Collins, though, the creative 'straitjacket' Catherine Peters identifies as constraining him at *All the Year Round* held him back artistically and not financially. Collins's attention to his craft is more obviously unequivocal than Yates's.

⁷⁸ Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Limited, 1991), p239-240

⁷⁹ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p387

Collins's relationship with literary critics and his audience similarly seems more combative than Yates's. Sue Lonoff touches on Collins's relationship with the critics in *Wilkie*

Collins and His Victorian Readers:

Collins scoffed at the English critics, but nevertheless they affected his work, though not in the ways that they intended. Their charges goaded him into taking the offensive in increasingly polemical prefaces, forced him to define and clarify his purposes, and probably fostered the ambivalence inherent in his attitudes toward fiction and the public. Undoubtedly, they strengthened his determination to write as he saw fit, but they also deterred him from pursuing approaches that might keep his books from selling.⁸⁰

The uneasy relationship Lonoff identifies here – a clash between Collins's artistic desires and his need for some critical support – is reiterated elsewhere. In a letter to his mother following the success of *The Woman in White* in 1860, he writes, 'The critics may go to the devil – they are at the book still as I hear, but I see no...reviews.'⁸¹ In the same letter he boasts about how much the novel is making him. However, this disregard for critical acclaim was not absolute, as Lyn Pykett notes in *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins*: 'Despite his frequent protestations that he neither read nor heeded reviewers, Collins had collected three scrapbooks of reviews of his fiction by the time of his death, and both his letters and prefaces reveal that he was familiar with the details of the critical praise and blame that his novels received.'⁸² This confirmation that Collins was familiar with the criticism heaped upon him accounts for the vehemence of some of his polemic prefaces. His evident attention to these reviews influenced, as Lonoff acknowledges above, the complex relationship which existed between Collins and his critics.

⁸⁰ Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers*, p56

⁸¹ 'Wilkie Collins to Harriet Collins', 12 September 1860 in *The Letters of Wilkie Collins: Volume I, 1838-1865* eds. William Baker and William M. Clarke (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p188

⁸² Lyn Pykett, *Authors in Context: Wilkie Collins*, p105

The 'straitjacket' which Catherine Peters identifies as holding Collins back when he worked on the staff of *All the Year Round* also impacted his novels to an extent. In her 1980 article on the friendship between Collins and Dickens, Sue Lonoff points out that:

Collins himself was anxious to please – perhaps too anxious. He listened to Dickens, learned from Dickens, and attained the Victorian success that he desired. But the anxiety to please restricted him, too, so that even his best work now impresses some readers with a sense of potential that remained unfulfilled, of skills that were allowed to atrophy.⁸³

His anxiety to please Dickens may have become less pronounced following his decision to leave the staff of *All the Year Round*. Certainly, Catherine Peters notes that Collins rebelled slightly in the writing of *No Name*:

Magdalen Vanstone's interrogation of the lawyer was left intact: Wilkie's severe, intelligent and ruthless heroine remained most un-Dickensian. Nor did he accept any of the twenty-six rather banal titles Dickens suggested for the novel. He was grateful, however, for the meticulous care with which Dickens attended to the details of the later sections of the story, involving complicated legal points, and adopted almost all his amendments. It was the last time Dickens was to be so closely involved with a Collins novel.⁸⁴

Here, Peters creates the impression of a writer beginning to be liberated from his mentor. The implication seems to be that Collins was happy for Dickens's help on factual matters but he was more inclined to be creatively in control. Six years later Dickens made his famous proclamation about *The Moonstone* (1868) being 'wearisome' and the dynamic of their intellectual relationship seems by this time to have altered permanently.⁸⁵ While there is no doubt that Dickens had a significant impact on Collins's fiction, that Collins felt it necessary to break the 'straitjacket' suggests the relationship hampered him on some level.

⁸³ Sue Lonoff, 'Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (September 1980), pp150-170, p157 in *JSTOR* (Online) [Accessed: 24th May 2014]

⁸⁴ Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins*, p241

⁸⁵ Critics have pointed out that the Collins/Dickens relationship was strained by personal problems between Charles Collins and his wife, Dickens's daughter. A good explanation of this comes in Arthur A. Adrian's 'A Note on the Dickens-Collins Friendship' in the *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* in 1953.

Edmund Yates's relationship with Dickens fits more readily into the 'sycophantic' category identified by Una Pope-Hennessy. Certainly, in the chapter of his *Recollections* dedicated to Dickens, Yates appears to be awestruck by his friend, even fourteen years after his death. He writes:

To Charles Dickens there are references full and frequent, throughout these volumes. That it should be so is a pleasant necessity; for during the last years of his life he was so large a feature in mine, his influence over me as friend, counsellor, companion, and employer, was so powerful, and his regard for me so great, that the record of my career during that period owes much of whatever interest it may possess to his connection with it.⁸⁶

The tone of this is undoubtedly deferential and creates the impression that Dickens had a significant impact on his career. Yates also draws attention to this 'great' regard Dickens held him in which portrays him as a favourite of a literary master and therefore displays him in a positive light. Here, Yates garners recognition for his own work by mentioning Dickens's interest in him. Certainly, Dickens was involved in one of the occurrences in Yates's life that he was most famous for: his expulsion from the Garrick Club following an argument with W.M. Thackeray in 1858. Yates had written a sketch about Dickens and followed it up the next week with one on Thackeray. P.D. Edwards explains:

Whereas the portrait of Dickens had been restricted to a single paragraph dispassionately describing his appearance, the portrait of Thackeray was decidedly unflattering, not only with regard to his appearance but also with regard to his manner and conversational style. Thackeray demanded an apology. Yates, after taking advice from Dickens, refused. Thackeray then referred his complaint against Yates to the committee of the Garrick Club, of which they were both members. He maintained, no doubt correctly, that Yates must have made nearly all his observations of his appearance and manners at the Garrick.⁸⁷

The situation escalated and, after failing to apologise, Yates was expelled from the Garrick Club. In his book, Edwards further explores the dynamics that caused this situation to materialise, noting that Dickens's separation from his wife had been announced on the

⁸⁶ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences*, p296

⁸⁷ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p59

same day the sketch appeared – hardly coincidental, especially considering Dickens’s belief that Thackeray had been spreading rumours about the separation at the Garrick Club. Here, Yates’s loyalty to Dickens demonstrates itself and, as the incident appears in many biographies of both Dickens and Thackeray, it has become one of the most memorable incidents of Yates’s life. In addition, Yates’s friend, T.H.S. Escott writes of the incident:

The truth is that, but for the untoward intervention of Dickens, the affair would, soon after its inception, have languished into a natural death, and would certainly never have involved the withdrawal of one who was then little more than on the threshold of his literary career, from the society to which, naturally and properly, he deemed it pleasant and profitable to belong.⁸⁸

Escott suggests that Yates got caught in the crossfire between Dickens and Thackeray but, certainly, he seems to have put himself there, demonstrating his loyalty to Dickens in opposition to Thackeray, whom he admits in his *Recollections* was an inspiration to his adopting a literary career in the first place.

P.D. Edwards notes that Dickens was not the most important influence on Yates’s fiction but there are still suggestions that his reactions impacted upon Yates’s progression.

For instance, Edwards writes of Dickens’s reaction to Yates’s second novel:

The dismay Dickens expressed about *Running the Gauntlet* sprang partly from the resemblance he noticed between the actress-adventuress in Yates’s novel and Lydia Gwilt, the decidedly Balzacian villain-cum-heroine of Wilkie Collins’s latest novel, *Armadale*, then being serialised in the *Cornhill*. But there was little else in *Running the Gauntlet* that he liked much better...⁸⁹

This ‘dismay’ springs partly from an unwholesome air in the novel, which Dickens referred to directly when he wrote to Yates about it. The impression is merely that the novel is un-Dickensian and Edwards notes that Yates sought Dickens’s advice on his next novel, *Land at Last*, before serialising two other novels in *All the Year Round* in 1867 (*Black Sheep*) and 1869 (*Wrecked in Port*). Edwards hypothesises about these novels in *Dickens’s ‘Young Men’*:

⁸⁸ T.H.S. Escott, ‘Edmund Yates: An Appreciation and a Retrospect’, *The New Review*, p89

⁸⁹ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens’s ‘Young Men’*, p93

They passed muster presumably because, in place of the relatively detached, implicitly acquiescent presentation of vice in the two earlier novels, they offer a warm emotionalism and melodramatic exuberance more in Dickens's own style. Indeed, for good measure they even throw in some open plagiarism or pastiche, as if proclaiming allegiance to him from the rooftops (and implicitly renouncing less desirable influences such as Sala and Balzac). An objective reader would hardly agree that the air of Yates's fiction did in fact grow more wholesome as a result; all that happened was that it grew too sensational, too hot and sticky, to be any longer mistaken for the ostensibly temperate air of polite society.⁹⁰

Here, Edwards depicts Yates's eagerness to please Dickens as overtaking other 'less desirable influences'. It is reminiscent of Sue Lonoff's description of Collins as 'anxious to please' his mentor. That 'emotionalism and melodramatic exuberance' gave way to 'hot and sticky' sensationalism in Yates's case is perhaps unsurprising: his jobbing attitude to fiction may have become more pronounced following Dickens's death in 1870 and his work certainly becomes more sensationally formulaic in his later novels.

It is clear, then, that their friendships with Dickens had a tangible impact on both Collins and Yates's fiction and placed them at the heart of the nineteenth-century literary establishment. However, while Collins broke out of the 'straitjacket' of his mentor, there is the sense that Yates did not. Even so, following 'Dickens's own style' is not necessarily a criticism of Yates: it may have contributed to Yates's differential treatment of two character types examined in this thesis who depart from the sensational norms established by Collins and his peers. The divergent paths of the two friendships suggest a more durable devotion on the part of Yates towards his mentor.

Thesis overview

The first chapter of this thesis analyses the role of the wife as devoted accomplice in *Black Sheep* (1867) by Edmund Yates and *The Woman in White* (1859) and *No Name* (1862) by

⁹⁰ P.D. Edwards, *Dickens's 'Young Men'*, p95

Wilkie Collins. It argues that the representation of Harriet Routh in *Black Sheep* defies conventional sensational depictions of women and that she is afforded equality with her husband where her counterparts in Collins's novels are not. It examines the definition of devotion in marriage and, in particular, the sensation fiction genre before looking at the print cultural context surrounding devotion and the impact of conduct books such as Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Wives of England* (1843) on societal views of women. It then proceeds to analyse the three devoted wives in Yates's and Collins's work in comparison to the deviant women at the forefront of sensation fiction and then in comparison with each other.

Chapter two discusses the portrayal of female friendship as a catalyst for plot complication and resolution in two novels – *The Silent Witness* (1875) by Edmund Yates and *Man and Wife* (1870) by Wilkie Collins. It argues that Yates is more revolutionary in his use of two female protagonists, but that he fails to create a climax that is engineered solely by the women involved. It first analyses the representation of female allies in the sensation genre before examining the homosocial and homoerotic connotations of such relationships using Sharon Marcus's *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007) as a guide, and looks at the depiction of female friendship in the periodical press of the time. The chapter then analyses *The Silent Witness* and *Man and Wife* in detail to establish how Yates and Collins utilised the role of female friendship within their novels.

The third chapter examines the portrayal of three disabled men in sensation novels – Lord Caterham of Yates's *Land at Last* (1866), James Dugdale of Yates's *A Righted Wrong* (1870) and Miserrimus Dexter of Collins's *The Law and the Lady* (1875). It argues that, while all three men demonstrate devotion to the object of their affections, Yates's characters defy the conventions of disabled people in sensation fiction by not fulfilling the negative connotations associated with them and instead becoming allies to the heroines. It examines

the way disability was regarded by the contemporary periodical press and looks at other examples of disabled characters to contrast with Caterham, Dugdale and Dexter before analysing the representation of the three men and their devotion to the women they love.

Chapter four examines representations of servant/employer relationships in four sensation novels: *The Impending Sword* (1874), *Black Sheep* (1868) and *A Righted Wrong* (1870) by Edmund Yates and *No Name* (1862) by Wilkie Collins. It discusses the rhetoric surrounding servants and superiors in the contemporary press and then analyses the characters in detail in terms of their loyalty to their masters, the peculiar families these relationships create and how they impact the plots of the novels.

This thesis aims to show that Yates's depiction of devoted characters demonstrates that he is more innovative in characterisation and plotting than has previously been allowed. Chapters two and four will examine the similarities between Yates and Collins's depictions of female friendship and servant/employer relationships, while chapters one and three will analyse the differences in their depictions of wives and disabled men. In the conclusion I will argue that the representation of the four different types of devotion offer an opportunity to analyse Yates's work in ways that take him beyond his label as a 'synthetic' writer and it will be seen that characters often define themselves in terms of their devotion, illustrating that it is an integral aspect of the novels in question. This centrality invites a reading of Yates's work which focuses not on machinations of plot but on the devoted relationships between characters which form a recurring motif within his work.

Wifely Devotion

Not afraid of her trustworthiness, of her fidelity, of her staunch and unshrinking devotion; Stewart Routh was just as confident, as of the fact of his existence, that his wife would cheerfully have given her life for him, as she gave it to him...

Black Sheep, 1867¹

Marriage in sensation fiction

In 1864 *Reynolds's Miscellany* and *The London Journal* both repeated a piece of intelligence they had gained from the *Madras Times* on the subject of 'Womanly Devotion' according to *Reynolds's* and 'A True Wife' on the part of the *Journal*. Although Australian newspapers later cast doubt on the credibility of the report, the phrasing of the article betrays its attitude towards wifely devotion. It is brief enough to quote in its entirety:

Every one will remember the celebrated case of Sir John Dean Paul, the fraudulent London banker. A recent copy of the *Madras Times* gives some curious information concerning him. Immediately after he was sentenced to penal servitude, Lady Paul realized all the property settled upon her, and proceeded without delay to Sydney, where she purchased a beautiful seat in the suburbs. Her husband having arrived at a penal settlement in another part of Australia as one of a gang of convicts, the wife of the convict-baronet applied to the Government for his services, and was permitted to employ him as her "assigned servant." We need scarcely add, that having thus released him from unpleasant restraints, she placed all her newly-purchased property in his hands, and has since led a very quiet life in his company.²

The baronet's fraud gained him a notoriety still remembered several years later. If this revelation is fabricated then it deliberately hinges on the devotion of a wife to her husband in the most unbecoming of circumstances, which necessitate subterfuge and misdirection on the part of the woman. The alleged case of Lady Paul suggests a conflict between moral conduct and loyalty towards a spouse. While the law of the period did not permit a wife to testify against her husband, in the story related by the article Lady Paul acts above and beyond the lawful duty of a wife. The article's title, 'Womanly Devotion', contextualises her

¹ Edmund Yates, *Black Sheep*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867), ii, p178

² Anon, 'Womanly Devotion', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 29 October 1864, p300 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 28th October 2011]

actions within the bounds of her marriage and, even if the story is indeed fabricated, implies that her actions can be explained by the very fact of her marriage. This brief tale is comparable to the kinds of plots and subplots found within the pages of sensation fiction which find a role for the wife of the criminal anti-hero. It is significant that it is Lady Paul who is the active participant in the supposed plot to extract Sir John Dean Paul, acting when her husband cannot. The brief story is driven forward using a series of verbs such as 'realised', 'purchased' and 'applied' which highlight Lady Paul's role as the active party, creating a complex relationship between devotion and agency. This chapter explores three novels in which wifely devotion and female agency similarly exist alongside each other. The women's compliance with the domestic ideal of subservience to their husbands manifests itself, as Lady Paul's compliance does, in activity outside the conventional realm of the domestic. This makes their activities both transgressive, because they include those beyond the domestic, and sanctioned, due to the fact they are undertaken in their roles as dutiful wives.

One of the recurring themes of sensation fiction is the danger posed by a wife towards the home. This is seen noticeably in Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), where a wife abandons her family to abscond with her lover before returning in disguise as a governess, and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), in which the wife is a bigamist ready to kill to keep her secret. Situating the sensation novel primarily within the home allowed sensation novelists to satirise the feminine ideal, as most clearly seen in the characterisation of Lady Audley. In addition, the genre contributed to wider anxieties about women in society, as Lyn Pykett explains: 'Sensation novels reproduce and renegotiate broader cultural anxieties about the nature and state of respectable femininity and the domestic ideal at a time when women and other reformers were clamouring for a widening

of women's legal rights and educational and employment opportunities.'³ In the sensation novel, these anxieties generally take the form of a woman overstepping the boundaries of 'respectable femininity', or an unrespectable woman infiltrating the home. Richard Fantina and Kimberly Harrison comment that:

Time after time, sensation novels take as their subject the domestic sphere, almost gleefully hammering at the Victorian facade of the harmonious home. The institution of marriage in these novels is often seen as a weapon to be wielded for financial gain. Love, in the sensation novel, often has very little to do with it.⁴

Chipping away at the 'facade of the harmonious home', the sensation novel explores the ways households are established and conducted and how the woman at the heart of it (often a wife, sometimes bigamously so) has the ability to disrupt the home instead of protecting it.

By positioning marriage as a 'weapon', Fantina and Harrison suggest that the sensation novel criticises one of the institutions at the heart of society. It critiques the mercenary marriage in novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret*, *The Woman in White* and *No Name*, which scrutinise the feminine ideal and interrogate what constitutes the angel and the demon. Similarly, Andrew Mangham, writing about a different novel by Braddon points out that, '*Aurora Floyd* is a book that seems to support the idea that women were divided into angels and demons. It is a dichotomy that has overshadowed studies of Victorian representations of women for years.'⁵ Of course, 'angels and demons' are found within most sensation novels, and indeed Victorian novels more generally, one serving as the antithesis of the other. Writing on Dickens and gender, Catherine Waters explains that, 'The

³ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 1994), p10

⁴ Richard Fantina and Kimberly Harrison, 'Introduction' in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* eds. Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), ppix-xxiii, pxii

⁵ Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p66

representation of these domestic angels helps to define the middle-class ideal of the family in opposition to the values and practices held to characterise other social groups.⁶ The middle-class domestic angel, then, comes to represent something more than domesticity when it is satirised in the sensation novel. The genre, often described as a middle-class phenomenon, usually offers an ostensibly respectable ending featuring the triumph of angel over demon. For example, in Wilkie Collins's 1866 novel *Armadale*, the anti-heroine is the ruthless Lydia Gwilt who plans to marry Allan Armadale to obtain his fortune and, later, to kill him. Her rival, Miss Milroy, is weak and vacillating, an average woman with few interesting features. A contemporary reviewer noted that, 'It is unfortunate that so little can be said for that plump young schoolgirl, whose good looks seem to be her only merit.'⁷ While Lydia is fascinating to the reader, Miss Milroy is boring. Nevertheless, the marriage between Miss Milroy and Allan Armadale is the concluding event of the novel, offering a finale that is perfunctory and which gives the impression that the conventional characters are being rewarded. It is an example of the sensation genre's tendency to offer an obligatory marriage which creates a conventional conclusion to a novel and thereby validates the reader's enjoyment of it. Lyn Pykett explains the dichotomy of the wife in the sensation novel: 'Thus the woman who looks and (ostensibly) acts like the angel in the house turns out to be a demon in the house, who commits crimes in order to obtain socially sanctioned goals such as a good marriage.'⁸ The representation of the demon which Pykett identifies here is counteracted at the end of a typical sensation novel by the marriage of an

⁶ Catherine Waters, 'Gender, family, and domestic ideology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens* ed. John O.Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp120-135, p100

⁷ Anon, 'Armadale', *The London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art and Science*, 16 June 1866, pp680-681, p681 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 1st January 2012]

⁸ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from the Woman in White to the Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishing, 1994), p50

angel such as the insipid Miss Milroy. This draws a clear line between the demon who has been expelled from the home and the angel who is sanctioned to live within it.

The characters examined in this chapter, however, complicate this dichotomy, possessing traits of the angel whilst carrying out the work of a demon as sanctioned by their husbands. Nina Auerbach explains:

In contrast to her swooping ancestors, the angel in the house is a violent paradox with overtones of benediction and captivity. Angelic motion had once known no boundaries; the Victorian angel is defined by her boundaries. Yet the stillness of this new icon is invested with powers that earlier athletic angels did not possess, for as masculinity is superseded by her presence, so is creative divinity. This new angel takes orders from no father-creator, but becomes herself the source of order.⁹

This 'violent paradox' Auerbach identifies is integral to the understanding of the three wives this chapter will go on to examine. One of the characters, *No Name's* Mrs Wragge, is undoubtedly captive. Madame Fosco of *The Woman in White* is 'defined by her boundaries', controlled by her husband and at his command. The third, Harriet Routh of Edmund Yates's *Black Sheep*, is ostensibly defined by the boundaries of the home but she becomes the 'source of order' which Auerbach discusses: she advises and assists her husband on matters far removed from the home and, ultimately, is the source of his downfall. All three of these novels utilise the devotion of a wife to facilitate the criminality of a husband. *Black Sheep* transcends the typical subservient relationship of a husband and his angel to demonstrate the effects of a wife choosing to aid and identify herself with her criminal husband.

Devotion of a wife towards her husband is generally depicted in two ways: in the first instance as the natural result of a conventional marriage between conventionally good characters, as in the case of Laura Fairlie and Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White*, or, in the second instance, as a false mask worn by a woman to attain her goals, as represented in

⁹ Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), p72

Lady Audley's Secret and *Armadale*. This chapter will seek to argue that a small number of novels invert this dichotomy by creating conventional marriages for immoral characters. These marriages conform to the ideal espoused by contemporary periodicals and conduct books, as they demonstrate female subservience and male dominance in the household. In the case of these three sensational villains, marriage actually aids the success of their schemes and complicates the moral landscape of marital devotion as represented in the contemporary press.

The representation of wifely devotion in periodicals and contemporary publications

Discussion of the role of women within society and marriage itself was a staple ingredient of contemporary periodicals, illustrating the importance of the issue whilst serving to highlight the virtue of self-sacrifice they often articulate. Indeed, an anonymous author in the *Examiner* wrote in 1870 that, 'Whenever scarcity of topics provokes languor in the editorial columns of some daily journals, a never-failing source of excitement is found in the discussion of the difficulties and dangers of matrimony in modern times.'¹⁰ These 'difficulties' include whether to marry, advice on desirable traits in a partner and detail about what should be expected from married life. Many pieces reaffirm the belief that women belong in the home and offer praise to those conforming to this belief. For example, an article in *Sharpe's London Magazine* in 1862 opens with this statement: 'It is within the circle of her domestic assiduity that we must go to judge of the true worth of a woman – to make a correct estimate of her forbearance, her virtue, and her felicity.'¹¹ This situates a woman's worth primarily in relation to her domestic life and celebrates the traits that she

¹⁰ Anon, 'Marriage Made Easy', *The Examiner and London Review*, 1 October 1870, pp626-627, p626 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 15th February 2014]

¹¹ F.H. Stauffer, 'The Wife at Home', *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, February 1862, pp98-99, p98 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 7th November 2011]

demonstrates in the home. The mention of 'true worth' implies that any work undertaken outside the domestic sphere is inferior to her family duties. Other articles advised on the education of women after their weddings, like this one from *The London Journal* in 1872:

Therefore, we have dared to assert that a woman, when married has not only to set about the task of learning much, but unlearning much of what brightened and filled up the existence of her own partially responsible maidenhood. She has to learn how to accommodate herself to her new position, so as to occupy it with a chaste dignity, which will not alone deserve, but command respect, from whatever quarter it may be due.¹²

'Chaste dignity', the primary characteristic necessary for a wife here, connotes restraint and submission. That this will 'command respect' identifies the value that is placed on this domestic dignity by contemporary society and indicates an inherently paradoxical relationship between devotion and agency in the context of marriage: while a wife must restrain herself and submit, she will 'command respect' for this subjection. The allusion to the ability to 'accommodate herself to her new position' highlights that the woman's assimilation into her new environment is paramount to domestic success. As this chapter will demonstrate, in Yates's *Black Sheep* Harriet Routh accommodates herself to a household which prospers due to the criminal enterprises of the husband. This satirises conventional marriage by endowing this criminal marriage with the same elements that successfully combine in a conventional household: Harriet must learn to assimilate herself to her husband's lifestyle and subsequently operates in his circle with the 'chaste dignity' recommended by *The London Journal* article.

A recurrent theme in periodical articles is that a wife's devotion to her husband and the home can be to the benefit of both. A brief piece in *The London Journal* in 1866 says, 'No woman ever loved to the full extent of the passion, who did not venerate where she loved, and who did not feel humbled (delighted in that humility) by her exaggerated and over-

¹² Anon, 'Education of Wives', *The London Journal*, 3 August 1872, p77 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 15th November 2011]

weening estimate of the superiority of the object of her worship.’¹³ This piece encourages not only subservience but the ‘worship’ of a man who may not, the article concedes, be worth the devotion. It implies that this earthly love is equal or superior to love felt for a deity whilst also diminishing a woman’s status in society to merely the devotee of a potentially undeserving man. This domestic ideology does not appear to identify a difference between a deserving husband and an undeserving one. An article in *The Saturday Review* in 1863 on wives expands on this idea of veneration:

Her knowledge of his character she uses not for any selfish ends of her own, but with a single view to his happiness. Not a day passes that she does not firmly, but unobtrusively, interpose to save him from some deed or word that might leave a sting of regret, or tend to lower him in his own eyes, or in the eyes of others. By her keen sense of the ridiculous she prevents his becoming the object of ridicule, and by her womanly forethought a thousand petty vexations are removed from his path.¹⁴

While the hypothetical woman in *The London Journal* reveres her husband in the background and with seemingly little knowledge of his character, the picture *The Saturday Review* paints is of a woman still in the background but utilising her talents for the good of her spouse. Her ‘knowledge of his character’ and her ‘womanly forethought’ helps her husband to maintain his standing in the world. It portrays a household where the wife has power but would never use it for ‘selfish ends’ and instead dedicates her energy to enriching her husband’s life. The antithesis of this model is the unappreciated devotee depicted in *The Sunday at Home* in 1873: ‘But in silence and obscurity, day by day and night by night, to devote time, and health, and life itself to the welfare of another – a devotion possibly unappreciated, unrequited, unrecorded – this is a yet higher and nobler form of

¹³ Anon, ‘Woman’s Love’, *The London Journal*, 16 June 1866, p372 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 15th February 2014]

¹⁴ Anon, ‘Wives’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 19 December 1863, pp779-780, p780 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 28th October 2011]

self-sacrifice.¹⁵ This article encourages devotion to another as ‘higher and nobler’, whether appreciated or not. Taken within the context of marriage, this statement can be applied to the wife devoting her ‘time’, ‘health’ and ‘life itself’ to her husband. All three of these articles encourage subservience and devotion as part of a conventional and moral life, with *The Sunday at Home* piece making direct links to Christianity. The three women examined in this chapter conform to this ideal, offering all aspects of themselves to their criminal husbands, with varying degrees of success. These women devote ‘life itself’ to their husbands but, in the cases of Madame Fosco and Harriet Routh, they obtain power by doing so. While their unwavering devotion assists their husbands, their complicity in criminality complicates the impression of them as conventional wives by combining immoral elements with these ostensibly respectable marriages.

By directly referencing specific paragons of wifely virtue, some articles illustrate the desirable traits of wives by example. An article by Ingleby Scott in *Once a Week* in 1861 focuses on ‘representative wives’, commending the devotion of women who have aided their husbands through difficult periods. Several mentioned are historical examples but Scott pinpoints the attractiveness of these individuals: ‘It is, after all, the devotedness that captivates us every one, in the contemplation of special conjugal cases. The devotedness is the vivifying power of the ability, and therefore greater than the ability; and it is full of sacredness and charm where the superior faculty does not exist.’¹⁶ Scott suggests, then, that the attempt at devotion is worthwhile even if the execution fails due to woman’s inferior abilities. Simultaneously, he manages to celebrate the loyalty of a faithful woman while denigrating her intellect, highlighting his estimation of the importance of the former. He

¹⁵ Anon, ‘Self-Devotion’, *The Sunday at Home: a Family Magazine for Sabbath Reading*, 5 July 1873, pp424-426, p424 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 28th October 2011]

¹⁶ Ingleby Scott, ‘Representative Women. Wives – Madam Lavalette, Lady Fanshawe, Mrs. Patton’, *Once a Week*, 16 February 1861, pp203-207, p204 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 15th November 2011]

also implies that there is no higher calling for a wife than devotion to her husband in his final paragraph about the more contemporary Mrs Patton: 'We may never hear of her again: but we scarcely need to know more. What could we ask further, after being presented with the true image of a perfect wife, heroic in proportion to the extremity of her trial?'¹⁷ This idea of a 'perfect wife' suggests that women who devote themselves to a lesser extent to their husbands are inferior to Mrs Patton and those mentioned alongside her. Scott also mentions the historical example of Countess Lavalette, who is further discussed in *Temple Bar's* series 'Daughters of Eve' in 1862, during Yates's co-editorship of the periodical. The countess was famous for switching places with her prisoner husband and allowing him to escape custody. The author of the article admits selecting her, 'first because she constitutes a very brilliant and beautiful example of wifely devotion',¹⁸ and he praises her for her courage and devotion throughout the piece, despite the fact her husband was a staunch supporter of Napoleon Bonaparte and therefore an enemy of the British. This, again, gives the impression that devotion by a wife should be praised even if the recipient is not deemed worthy of such loyalty. The author explains of the series as a whole that, 'Necessarily a type often repeated in this series of notable women will be the affectionate, faithful, devoted and self-sacrificing wife. It seems to the writer, and he trusts the reader will share his opinion, that in no higher or more beautiful character can a daughter of Eve appear.'¹⁹ The idea that 'devoted wife' is the highest honour the author can bestow on a woman firmly reiterates that her worth depends on her loyalty towards her husband and the domestic sphere. This series also once more connects the self-sacrificing wife with religiosity with the

¹⁷ Ingleby Scott, 'Representative Women. Wives – Madam Lavalette, Lady Fanshawe, Mrs. Patton', *Once a Week*, p207

¹⁸ Anon, 'Daughters of Eve', *Temple Bar*, June 1862, pp414-429, p414 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 3rd January 2012]

¹⁹ Anon, 'Daughters of Eve', *Temple Bar*, p414

title 'Daughters of Eve'. The assumption that the reader will share his opinion of wifely devotion indicates that the anonymous author believes it is the common one. The sacrificial qualities demonstrated by Countess Lavalette are represented by Collins and Yates in the characters of Madame Fosco and Harriet Routh. These women act to protect husbands who do not necessarily deserve it in the view of moral society. However, the act of devotion itself deserves, and obtains within the texts, praise despite the criminality of Count Fosco and Stewart Routh.

One of the most popular conduct books of the mid-Victorian period was *The Wives of England* (1843) written by Sarah Stickney Ellis, one of a series of works on women, daughters and mothers. In *The Wives of England* Ellis unequivocally depicts marriage as the best use of a woman's capacity for devotion:

It is only in the married state that the boundless capabilities of woman's love can ever be fully known or appreciated. There may, in other situations, be occasional instances of heroic self-sacrifice, and devotion to an earthly object; but it is only here that the lapse of time, and the familiar occasions of every day, can afford opportunities of exhibiting the same spirit, operating through all those minor channels, which flow like fertilizing rills through the bosom of every family, where the influence of woman is alike happy in its exercise, and enlightened in its character.²⁰

In this analysis, Ellis situates married life as the ultimate aspiration for women. The persistence of a wife's love for her husband is more praiseworthy than the 'occasional instances' of devotion to 'earthly objects'. She writes that only marriage ensures a woman's love can be 'fully known or appreciated', implying that the daily sacrifices of domestic life are worth more than single acts of self-sacrifice. It places marriage above all, reiterating the 'minor channels' through which women are forced to act, describing them as positive because they can 'flow like fertilizing rills'. This frames subservience as a state from which 'influence' can be exercised in a manner which has a positive effect on the household.

²⁰ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Wives of England* (New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1843), p110

Barbara Caine in her 1992 book *Victorian Feminists* points out that, 'Ellis regarded women's subordination as natural and as a reflection of their intellectual inferiority. Hence she counsels acceptance and resignation – sometimes on the grounds that women are themselves to blame for what they suffer.'²¹ Caine's analysis links Ellis's views with those of Ingleby Scott detailed above: the inherent belief in women's intellectual inferiority coloured how they were expected to act within society. Sarah Stickney Ellis does not allude to wives with husbands who perform illegal acts; the closest she comes to this is in the chapter entitled 'Trials of Married Life', which offers advice on how to deal with intemperance and unfaithfulness. There is the suggestion, however, that the deterioration of a man's character should be identified by his wife:

A true-hearted woman, herself impressed with the importance of moral and religious principle, will ever be most watchful of her husband's safety in this respect...Women, too, are often remarkably quick-sighted to the minor shades of good and evil; and they are thus sometimes enabled to detect a lurking tendency to what is wrong, before the mind of man is awakened to suspicion. (140-141)

Ellis alludes here to an idealised ability for a wife to notice variations in her husband's character before he is aware of them and endows her with preternatural powers to analyse her husband. It also, however, suggests that a wife has more capacity for guiding her spouse than her inferior position in society would indicate. Ellis goes on to say that a wife can, even in business matters, lay the problem before her husband to make him see his error. This is significant because it implies a degree of equality between the sexes. However, there is no mention of a woman taking on an equal share of any work outside the home or even participating in work-related activity from within the home as Harriet Routh does in *Black Sheep*. A wife's role, according to Ellis, is solely to support her husband. While the archetypal sensation heroine inverts Ellis's model by serving her own interests ahead of her

²¹ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p51

spouse's, the criminal wives examined in this chapter defy simple categorisation. They are, using Ellis's parameters, ideal wives, and yet they assist their husbands, to varying degrees, in their criminal activities. This puts them in a position of power whilst simultaneously portraying them as respectable wives.

'The curse of an unholy alliance': Representations of marital devotion in the works of Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates

Dutiful wives aiding the criminality of their husbands undermine the dichotomy of conventionally good and evil women which pervades the sensation novel. These women are, in one sense, criminal, but their primary motivation is loyalty, something which society can condone as an integral aspect of a successful domestic life and marriage. Utilising physical depictions of dignified women, Collins and Yates create the impression that these wives are honourable and staid. However, the level of patriarchal control in Collins's novels is much more pronounced than in *Black Sheep*, where Harriet Routh acts of her own free will throughout. Unlike in *The Woman and White* and *No Name*, then, the level of collusion on Harriet's part relies on an overriding desire to aid her husband. Her involvement in his schemes relies on active choices made by her as she assimilates herself to Routh's lifestyle. This assimilation is referred to within the text while Madame Fosco's alteration from a 'foolish' woman to a 'matronly' wife is not: devotion is simply the state in which the reader encounters her. The way these women are perceived by their husbands is also important to their representation as conventionally good and devoted wives. Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge are controlled by their husbands in a manner which ensures that, though Count Fosco does not survive the novel, both the Fosco and Wragge marriages remain consistent and based on unquestioning and unthinking devotion. Conversely, Harriet Routh's choice to

submit to her husband and her submersion in his criminal activities ultimately leads to the fragmentation of their relationship and his death.

An integral aspect of many nineteenth-century novels is the courtship plot and, indeed, most sensation novels revolve around questions of marriage and are resolved by a conventional alliance. Lyn Pykett explains that, 'In the sensation fiction of the sixties the happy ending of marriage and an integrated social life and/or the final triumph of bourgeois virtue remained a possibility.'²² The 'happy ending' of conventional marriage for respectable characters occurs, as we have seen, in many sensation novels. Marriage is often considered, as the periodical articles have demonstrated, to be the pinnacle of a woman's achievement and so, in these three novels, the most important event of the woman's life has already taken place. Despite this, these women participate in subplots and assist their criminal husbands, rendering these conventionally uninteresting characters as contributors to the main plots of the novels. The way in which the three marriages take place establishes the disparity between husband and wife in Collins's two novels whilst creating a more complex marriage in *Black Sheep*. In *The Woman in White*, Madame Fosco is said, during the narrative of lawyer Mr Gilmore, to have met her foreign husband late in life, an event that prompted her brother to strike her from his will. There is no detail given about their union, apart from to explain how it has changed her.

No Name presents a mentally ill woman as the unwitting victim of greed and oppression who has no choice in the tasks she is ordered to do. The reader learns that prior to her marriage Mrs Wragge was a waitress in a dining room and Captain Wragge was a customer:

²² Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: from The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishing, 1994), p71

‘He used to swear – oh, didn’t he use to swear! When he left off swearing at me, he married me. There was others wanted me besides him. Bless you, I had my pick. Why not? When you have a trifle of money left you that you didn’t expect, if that don’t make a lady of you, what does? Isn’t a lady to have her pick? I had my trifle of money, and I had my pick, and I picked the captain – I did. He was the smartest and the shortest of them all. He took care of me and my money. I’m here, the money’s gone.’²³

Mrs Wragge’s speech patterns and behaviour provide an insight into the basis of her marriage to Captain Wragge. Her small inheritance has made her popular amongst the diners, none of whom, it is implied, want to marry her for any other reason apart from the money she is to possess. She is a commodity, chosen by the captain for what she can bring to him. The idea that she ‘picked the captain’ because he was the ‘smartest’ only enhances the impression that she was manipulated into the marriage. Mrs Wragge’s value at the time of her marriage came from her inheritance and another one is expected in the future, which is part of the reason Wragge still utilises her. This marriage was founded on mercenary motivations and Mrs Wragge then submits to her husband, as any good wife should, and attempts to follow all his orders, no matter the criminality of them. Sue Lonoff points out that Collins, ‘knew already that the reading public would welcome some comic relief. But certainly Matilda and Horatio Wragge...are constructed on Dickensian principles.’²⁴ This construction means that the relationship is rendered humorous and the semi-abusive interactions between husband and wife are condoned on these grounds. An example of this from the Dickens canon can be found in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) in the characterisations of Mr and Mrs Quilp:

Over nobody had he such complete ascendancy as Mrs Quilp herself – a pretty little, mild-spoken, blue-eyed woman, who having allied herself in wedlock to the dwarf in one of those strange infatuations of which examples are by no means scarce, performed a sound practical penance for her folly, every day of her life.²⁵

²³ Wilkie Collins, *No Name* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p206

²⁴ Sue Lonoff, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1982), p48

²⁵ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001), p29

This 'penance' is offered by complete subservience to her husband in a manner replicated in *No Name*. While Quilp is more of an outright villain than the roguish Wragge, their methods of subjugation are similar. The humour involved in the Wragges strand of the narrative means that the more troubling aspects of coercion and force demonstrated are not fully explored, and this is the only relationship of the three examined in this chapter to survive the novel.²⁶

The marriage of Harriet and Stewart Routh in Yates's *Black Sheep* focuses on active choice from the outset. By documenting that Harriet nursed Routh back to health, Yates simultaneously portrays her as a compassionate woman and one with power over her husband – literally, the power to defeat death:

Declaring that her countryman should not perish like a dog, she there and then devoted herself to attendance on the sick man. It need scarcely be told that Lady de Mauleverer, protesting against "such extraordinary conduct," intimated to Miss Creswick that her connection with her noble charges must cease at once and for ever. (i, 61)

Sacrificing her work as a governess means that, from the beginning, Harriet is putting Routh ahead of herself. However, this sacrifice also puts her in a position to secure his love.

Miriam Bailin points out that, 'The sickroom in Victorian fiction is a haven of comfort, order, and natural affection.'²⁷ By situating their first encounters in the sickroom, Yates appropriates this 'haven' for Harriet and Routh before the onset of their marriage. It places their union in the context of 'comfort', creating a domestic sanctuary of the type extolled in the periodical articles cited above. Yet it also represents Routh as weak and Harriet as the woman nursing him back to health.²⁸ From the very start, then, she is depicted as someone

²⁶ Catherine Peters has noted in *The King of Inventors: A Life of Wilkie Collins* that the Wragges were based partly on family friends of his mother, as documented in her papers.

²⁷ Miriam Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p6

²⁸ Nursing was often discussed in the periodical press in the years following the Crimean War and Florence Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* was published in 1859 (London: Harrison). An article on Nightingale in *The*

with control and influence. This devotion to Routh's health gives her the power to control his destiny, something brought into sharper focus as the novel progresses and she attempts to protect his interests.

The beauty of typical sensation anti-heroines is often used to emphasise the value placed on pretty women and to satirise it. For example, Robert Audley's first impressions of his new aunt in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* centre on her physical attractiveness: 'She's the prettiest little creature you ever saw in your life, George... Such blue eyes, such ringlets, such a ravishing smile, such a fairy-like bonnet – all of a tremble with heartsease and dewy spangles, shining out of a cloud of gauze.'²⁹ That the pretty 'little creature' is a bigamist and attempted murderer by the end of the novel is an expression of cultural anxiety about the dangers of female sexuality in a society which values beauty. Similarly, Lydia Gwilt in Collins's *Armadale* is immediately attractive to Ozias Midwinter: 'As he came within sight of her face, he stopped in ungovernable astonishment. The sudden revelation of her beauty, as she smiled and looked at him inquiringly, suspended the movement in his limbs and the words on his lips.'³⁰ Lydia's beauty, and its effect on Midwinter, comes to influence much of the rest of the novel. The archetypal sensation heroine, then, uses her attractiveness to further her schemes. In contrast, the wives of criminals in *The Woman in White*, *No Name* and *Black Sheep* are seen to be matronly and decent. This deviation from the sensational norm helps maintain the impression that these wives are respectable and condoned by society because they fit the profile of conventional wives.

Leisure Hour in 1868 discussed her 'self-devotion' to her tasks, linking the most famous nurse of the era with devotion to her work (A Doctor's Wife, "Hints on Sick-Nursing", *The Leisure Hour: a Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 23 May 1868, pp327-332 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 4th December 2014]). In addition, it is also worth noting that many early nurses were from religious orders, blurring the boundaries between religious devotion and devotion to others.

²⁹ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2007), p46

³⁰ Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (London: Penguin Classics, 2004), p266

Madame Fosco in *The Woman in White* is characterised by the alteration in both her appearance and personality since her marriage. She has become the physical embodiment of an ideal wife, creating the impression that she has been subdued by her devotion to her husband. Marian Halcombe documents the change in appearance in her diary:

The hideously ridiculous love-locks which used to hang on either side of her face, are now replaced by stiff little rows of very short curls, of the sort that one sees in old-fashioned wigs. A plain, matronly cap covers her head, and makes her look, for the first time in her life, since I remember her, like a decent woman.³¹

These 'stiff' and 'short' curls of hair are mature in contrast to her 'ridiculous love-locks' and Marian even labels them as 'old-fashioned', furthering the idea that Madam Fosco herself is now old-fashioned in manner. The 'matronly cap' is another sign of the alteration wrought by married life, implying decorum and order. Marian's avowal that it makes her seem 'like a decent woman' is a direct opinion from one of the most trusted characters in the novel that Madame Fosco's physical alteration is a progressive change. It therefore implies that the marriage which has accomplished this alteration is also a positive one.

In *No Name*, Mrs Wragge is similarly depicted as matronly, though her descriptions are tempered by her obvious psychological illness. Her first appearance, as seen by Magdalen Vanstone, creates the image of attempted matronliness:

The captain threw open the door of the front room on the first floor; and disclosed a female figure, arrayed in a gown of tarnished amber-coloured satin, seated solitary on a small chair, with dingy old gloves on its hands, with a tattered old book on its knees, and with one little bedroom candle by its side. The figure terminated at its upper extremity, in a large, smooth, white round face – like a moron – encircled by a cap and green ribbons; and dimly irradiated by eyes of mild and faded blue, which looked straightforward into vacancy, and took not the smallest notice of Magdalen's appearance, on the opening of the door. (202)

Here, the 'tarnished' gown and 'dingy old gloves' indicate the same type of adherence to out of date fashions that are attributed to Madame Fosco. The 'cap and green ribbons'

³¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p218

suggest appropriate wifeliness, giving the impression of a modest woman. However, the passage treats Mrs Wragge as an object, echoing the way her husband treats her throughout the novel. Captain Wragge frequently harangues her about her appearance, trying to make her conform to his expectations: "Down at heel again!" shouted the captain, pointing to his wife's heavy flat feet as they shuffled across the room. 'The right shoe. Pull it up at heel, Mrs Wragge – pull it up at heel!" (210) Wragge's commands regarding her appearance form part of his absolute control over her. In this sense, she is an ideal wife attempting to conform, however unsuccessfully, to her husband's diktats about how she looks. However, Barickman, MacDonald and Stark identify another aspect to Mrs Wragge's domestic appearance:

Mrs Wragge's failings are not presented only as abnormalities, but as symptoms of two problems posed by conventional ideals for her sex. First, she is troubled by the discrepancy between ideals of femininity and ideals of wifely duty. She equates femininity with such things as small, soft, white hands and pretty bonnets. Collins' conventional heroines – Norah Vanstone or Laura Fairlie – show that passivity is part of the same ideal, soft hands signifying a ladylike abstention from work. But wifely duty, as Mrs Wragge discovers, can involve vigorous activity on behalf of one's husband.³²

Due to the type of servitude Captain Wragge expects from his wife, the ideals of femininity identified in the depiction of Mrs Wragge are completely at odds with the ideals of wifely duty. While she sees femininity as delicate and clean, dwelling on Magdalen's pretty hands for instance, her unusual stature along with her role as the captain's virtual slave offer little scope for indulgence in the type of femininity she so values. There is no 'ladylike abstention from work' available for Mrs Wragge because her wifely commitments do not allow for it.

In *Black Sheep*, Harriet is portrayed in similarly unflattering terms to Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge. This, again, gives credence to the idea that she is a conventionally good

³² Richard Barickman, Susan MacDonald and Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins, and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p124

wife, not reliant on her looks to the extent that Lady Audley or Lydia Gwilt are. The first physical description of her is unflattering:

See her now as she comes quietly into the room – a small compact partridge of a woman with deep blue eyes in a very pale face, with smooth shining light brown hair falling on either side in two long curls, and gathered into a clump at the back of her head, with an impertinent nose only just redeemed from being a snub, with a small mouth, and a very provoking patable chin. (i, 68)

Although her 'curling hair' could seem conventionally attractive, it is offset by the 'clump' she gathers it into and her unappealing nose. The reference to a partridge could also suggest several things. In *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), for example, Charles Dickens uses the bird to invoke a certain bodyweight: 'Plump as any partridge was each Miss Mould, and Mrs. M. was plumper than the two together.'³³ Charles Reade uses the comparison in *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861) to imply protectiveness: 'Then was heard a sigh. It burst from the owner of the shop: he had risen from slumber, and was now hovering about, like a partridge near her brood in danger.'³⁴ Mary Elizabeth Braddon combines the two approaches in *John Marchmont's Legacy* (1863) when Mrs Arundel talks of taking Mary home with her: 'I shall take you home to Dangerfield with me, my poor love...and I shall nurse you, and make you as plump as a partridge, my poor wasted pet.'³⁵ The use of the bird in relation to Harriet Routh is both a commentary on her physical appearance and an indication of her attitude towards her husband and other people. Biblical connotations place the partridge as a bird that steals the eggs of other birds and hatches them as her own. In the Biblical passage the partridge fails to benefit from her theft: 'When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert them / and in the end they will

³³ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1844), p302

³⁴ Charles Reade, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1901), p125

³⁵ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *John Marchmont's Legacy* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co Ltd, 1863), p377

prove to be fools.³⁶ Throughout the narrative Yates positions Harriet as the potential thief of another's son, as she takes George Dallas under her wing and away from his mother. She is certainly portrayed as an actress, fooling Dallas into believing that she is his friend and not his enemy. The connotations of a partridge, then, suggest an unattractive and dishonest woman.

Madame Fosco, Mrs Wragge and Harriet Routh are all devoid of conventional physical beauty, the implication being that their wifely credentials are increased by this fact. They do not bewitch men with their femininity, which Tatiana Kontou suggests is the key to female deception in the sensation novel: 'The appearances of sensation heroines conceal hidden, dangerous selves – helping these protagonists commit their crimes and (however temporarily) to escape detection or punishment.'³⁷ There is no conventional beauty which can mask 'dangerous selves' in any of these women. Instead, they are all characterised by their staid appearances and ordinariness. These appearances are as deceptive as the beauty of conventional sensational heroines, corrupting the ordinary physicality of a dutiful wife into the facade of a criminal accomplice.

The physical alteration of Madame Fosco is compounded by the changes in her attitude since her marriage. These also give the impression of a woman tamed, one who has submitted to the dominance of a husband, obliterating the woman who existed before. Marian Halcombe notes in her diary that prior to her marriage she was a 'vain and foolish woman' but this has changed: 'As Madame Fosco (aged three-and-forty), she sits for hours together without saying a word, frozen up in the strangest manner in herself.' (218) The identification of this strange 'manner' seems to criticise the alteration but Marian then

³⁶ *The New English Bible*, Jeremiah c17; v11 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p935

³⁷ Tatiana Kontou, 'Parallel Worlds: Collins's Sensationalism and Spiritualist Practice' in *Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays* ed. Andrew Mangham (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp37-55, p42

writes positively of it: 'For the common purposes of society the extraordinary change thus produced in her, is, beyond all doubt, a change for the better, seeing that it has transformed her into a civil, silent, unobtrusive woman, who is never in the way.' (219) By identifying this as a 'change for the better', Marian defends the societal values of docility and obedience in a woman like Madam Fosco who was previously flighty and overdramatic. Madame Fosco has been transformed into a 'civil' and 'unobtrusive' woman, ostensibly an ideal wife. She has no opinions beyond those given to her by her husband, which is a distinct alteration to her personality prior to her marriage when she advocated women's rights and freedom of speech. Marian Halcombe's also notes that, 'The rod of iron with which he rules her never appears in company – it is a private rod, and is always kept upstairs.' (225) This suggests that Countess Fosco is subject to stringent private controls, with her husband governing her behaviour and while, Marian recognises this, she does not condemn it. Nina Auerbach comments that, 'The Countess' metamorphosis into a model of smouldering and suppressed wifehood is a chilling parallel to Laura's more flamboyant metamorphosis into addled and helpless child, for nothing in the novel denies that the Countess Fosco is an exemplary British woman.'³⁸ Indeed, her 'metamorphosis' has created the ideal wife for Count Fosco as she serves his needs and interests under his instruction, although Auerbach's use of the words 'smouldering' and 'suppressed' signal that the alteration may herald danger. The count himself, in his own portion of the narrative, refers to her 'unhesitating devotion' and points out that a woman's private opinions do not take precedence over her marital obligations: 'No! They charge her unreservedly to love, honour and obey him. That is exactly what she has done. I stand, here, on a supreme moral elevation; and I loftily assert her accurate performance of her conjugal duties.' (628) These 'conjugal duties' which Fosco

³⁸ Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*, p142

mentions mean that a wife is completely subservient to his will with no will of her own. Here, Collins explicitly describes the danger that society has presented to itself by advocating this wholehearted obedience to the will of a husband. Madam Fosco is an exemplary wife, loyal to her husband, but this loyalty is towards a man engaged in criminal activities, rendering it subversive despite the conventionally positive impression it gives of the Fosco marriage.

Mrs Wragge's motivations for her loyalty to her husband are markedly different to Madame Fosco's, since there is no definite choice in her situation. Her loyalty is borne out of fear of upsetting Captain Wragge and invoking his wrath. Barickman, MacDonald and Stark point out that, 'During marriage to Wragge she has disintegrated altogether under demands which suit him without any reference to whether they suit her. Her self-isolation, passivity, and withdrawal from willed activity are the results.'³⁹ This 'withdrawal' they identify has created a wife who attempts to accede to her husband's incessant demands, with little success. Her relationship with him is crystallised during Magdalen's first day with them: 'Captain Wragge was presiding at the tea-tray, with the air of a prince in his own banqueting-hall. At one side of the table sat Mrs. Wragge, watching her husband's eye, like an animal waiting to be fed.' (209) Here, Mrs Wragge's relationship with her husband is equated to that of animal and master by Collins, with the captain as the 'prince' whilst she is the 'animal', constantly on her guard. This representation of loyalty is similar to Madame Fosco's as she waits for the count's opinion before venturing her own and, indeed, Madame Fosco is also directly compared to an animal when Marian notes she watches the count with 'the look of mute submissive inquiry which we are all familiar with in the eyes of a faithful dog' (219). The animal parallel gives the impression of unthinking loyalty with both women

³⁹ Richard Barickman, Susan MacDonald and Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relations*, p124

subservient to their husbands and depicted, therefore, as model wives. However, Mrs Wragge's situation is portrayed as tragic because this 'animal' like loyalty she displays to her husband betrays no sense of choice. Her devotion is mechanical, borne out of fear in comparison to Madame Fosco's which is seemingly borne out of genuine submission to her husband's will.

Unlike Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge, Harriet Routh is portrayed as an intelligent helpmate to her husband who adapts to her marriage. This creates the impression of parity between them, or at least a partnership which works to their mutual advantage. Harriet's submission to her husband's criminal career is described after she challenges him about his lifestyle:

And her husband, with the nearest approach to harshness that before or since he had ever assumed, told her that his time for that kind of thing was passed and gone for ever, that she must forget all the childish romance that they had taught her at the Institution, that she must sink or swim with him, and be prepared to cast her lot with that kind of existence which had become his second nature, and out of which he could never hope to move. (i, 64)

Here, Harriet is faced with the reality of marriage to Routh and discovers she must 'sink or swim with him'. While Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge become obedient and docile, Harriet becomes an active participant in her husband's life: 'As the dyer's hand assimilates to that it works in, so gradually did Harriet Routh endue herself with her husband's tone, temper, and train of thought, until, having become almost his second self, she was his most trusted ally, his safest counsellor in all the strange schemes by which he made his life.' (i, 63) There is a marked difference in language between this and descriptions of Madame Fosco or Mrs Wragge. Instead of slave or animal imagery, Yates creates the impression of a helpmate. As his 'second self' and 'most trusted ally', Harriet occupies a place alongside him, instead of being completely subservient to him. There has been submission at the beginning, certainly

– submission both to Routh and to the concept of wifely duties in a criminal context – but it is succeeded by active participation in his schemes where she becomes his ‘safest counsellor’. She uses her excellent memory to maintain knowledge about heirs coming into their fortunes and the latest prospects on the race tracks while using her arithmetic skills to calculate odds for these races amongst other things. She is an indispensable ‘ally’ to him and one who can manipulate clients on his behalf. She fulfils the role of wife as helpmate and enabler but her husband’s criminal activities, and her participation in them, render this devotion as subversive.

All three women have to adapt to their new role as wives, with varied levels of success. In the case of Madame Fosco, this adaptation results in a complete transformation into an obedient woman who does not venture opinions without ascertaining they align with her husband’s. In Mrs Wragge, it increases her terror of having to remember things and the persistent harassment from her husband forces her mental state to further deteriorate. Harriet Routh, however, rises to the challenges posed by her marriage and demonstrates how intellectual abilities can aid her husband. In *The Wives of England*, Sarah Stickney Ellis explains that difficulties within marriage should be confronted to the detriment of the wife’s happiness: ‘Many of these, however, may be greatly ameliorated by a willingness to meet them in a proper way; but more especially, by an habitual subjection of self to the interests, and the happiness, of others.’⁴⁰ This ‘habitual subjection of self’ that Ellis identifies is evident in all three women. However, while it consumes Madame Fosco and alarms Mrs Wragge, Harriet Routh embraces it and emerges as the epitome of the helpful and devoted wife.

⁴⁰ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Wives of England*, p128

The inequality in the Fosco and Wragge marriages is evident by the level of control exercised by the husband which reveals a complete lack of independence on the part of the wife. Madame Fosco is entrusted with tasks by the count but there is no indication of collusion, only compliance. In his confession, Fosco writes of getting some key information: 'Who could I find capable of travelling to London by the train she travelled by, and of privately seeing her home? I asked myself this question. The conjugal part of me immediately answered – Madame Fosco.' (619) In the count's own words, Madame Fosco is confirmed as the obedient servant depicted by other narrators; the 'conjugal' weapon to be used by Fosco when necessary. Her usefulness to him is based on this compliance and, now they are married, there is no question of her acting against his wishes. Similarly, Mrs Wragge's usefulness to her husband is based on her obedience. However, while Count Fosco learns how to control his wife, Captain Wragge's constant haranguing has had the opposite effect, making Mrs Wragge potentially more ineffectual now than when they first married. As a criminal accomplice, she is a liability rather than an asset. The 'buzzing' in her head makes it difficult for her to learn the lies he tries to teach her but he also enjoys tormenting her: 'Do you know whose Skin you are in at this moment? Do you know that you are dead and buried in London; and that you have risen like a phoenix from the ashes of Mrs Wragge? No! you evidently don't know it. This is perfectly disgraceful.' (328) Here, Wragge takes deliberate pleasure in confusing his wife. If he wanted to explain the situation in a way she would understand he would not use the phoenix analogy. The underlying comic element of the characters means that the obstacles Mrs Wragge places in the way of his schemes have a humorous slant that is not visible in the more serious Fosco marriage. However, the impression that Mrs Wragge is there merely to serve the captain's needs is frequently reiterated: 'When breakfast was over, Mrs Wragge received her orders to retire to an

adjoining room, and to wait there until her husband came to release her.' (350-351) The use of the word 'release' suggests a more physical level of captivity than is necessary for Count Fosco to control his wife. It underlines the power the captain has over his wife and the extent to which he enjoys utilising it. Both Count Fosco and Captain Wragge command their wives, then, albeit more covertly in the count's case. They see this as their right, reinforcing the view that a wife should be subservient to her dominant husband. Agency, in these two cases, is wholly removed because, while the wives act, they do so at the behest of their husbands and are not active participants in making plans, instead only doing as they are bid.

Stewart Routh's perception of his wife's usefulness is markedly different to Fosco and Wragge's, and it is his valuation of her which makes her so effective against his enemies. In this way, the relationship is based more on understanding and comradeship than either the Fosco or Wragge marriages. Harriet does not only do as instructed, as Madame Fosco does, but she forms her own opinions and her own plans in order to aid their overall schemes. One comment by Routh in the first volume demonstrates how unusual it is for her to get something wrong: 'Harriet, for the first time in your life, I suppose, you very nearly mismanaged a bit of business I intrusted to you.' (i, 112) By revealing that he trusts her on business matters, Routh is ostensibly copying Fosco's method of wifely control, but Harriet here has had the autonomy to make her apparent mistake, autonomy Madame Fosco would not have been allowed. Harriet salvages the situation herself immediately without the need to confer with her husband or seek his permission. In addition, her usefulness stretches beyond ideas and plans; Routh also appreciates the effect she has on other men, including George Dallas: 'Amenable? He is a good deal more than that; he is devoted. You know whose doing that is, Harry, and so do I. Why, when you laid your hand on his shoulder I saw him shiver like a leaf, and the first few words from you

stilled what I thought was going to be a heavy storm.’ (i, 114) This is said proudly, applauding the devotion his wife has managed to inspire in her quest to serve his own interests. Harriet has obtained agency here by inspiring devotion from others which she then uses to aid her husband. This subsequently places her in higher esteem with Routh. A few lines later he objectifies her in a similar manner to the way Wragge objectifies his wife: ‘No man knows better how to appraise the value of his own goods – and you are my goods, are you not, Harry, and out and away, the best of all my goods?’ (i, 115) Although this sentence situates Harriet as Routh’s property, signifying a similarity to Fosco and Wragge’s method of wifely management, the pride expressed by the word ‘best’ and the familiarity suggested by the use of ‘Harry’ creates a very different impression of their relationship compared to the passive obedience of Madame Fosco or the wilful haranguing of Mrs Wragge. In terms of the law, a wife was indeed her husband’s property: Routh’s assertion is therefore rooted in legal fact but with the implication that he appreciates her true worth and participation in his criminal activities.

One striking similarity between these three devoted wives is their shared childlessness. Françoise Basch points out that, ‘The contemporary feminine ideal was that of Wife and Mother.’⁴¹ In these three novels a crucial aspect of this is missing, giving the impression that these women, despite their devotion to their husbands, are in some way inferior creatures. Often, sensation novels end with motherhood or the prospect of it: Laura and Walter Hartright have had a child at the culmination of *The Woman in White* while the sisters in *No Name* are young enough to start families and in Braddon’s *Aurora Floyd* the birth of a son is heralded in the epilogue. Conversely, neither Lady Audley nor Lydia Gwilt have children during their deceitful marriages to Michael Audley and Ozias Midwinter

⁴¹ Françoise Basch, *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, 1837-67* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), p53

respectively. The fact that Madame Fosco, Mrs Wragge and Harriet Routh do not have children appears to complicate their placement as the 'feminine ideal'. Indeed, Madame Fosco is likely too old by the time of her marriage to bear children and there is no evidence to suggest that the union between Captain and Mrs Wragge is a sexual one. However, the relationship between Harriet and Stewart Routh has a noticeable basis in physical affection.

Her first appearance in the novel draws attention to this:

See how she steals behind her husband, her dark linsey dress draping her closely and easily, and not making the slightest rustle; her round arm showing its symmetry in her tight sleeve twining round his neck; her plump shapely hand resting on his head; her pale cheek laid against his face. Devoted and affectionate! No simulation here. (i, 68)

This description implies physical possession on Harriet's part as she twines her arm 'round his neck' and lays her cheek 'against his face'. By explicitly stating that there is 'no simulation here', Yates contextualises their marriage as one based upon physical affection and devotion, aided by the narrator's voyeuristic depiction of the scene. Later, when she delivers positive news to him, Routh reacts in this way:

He looked pale and haggard, and he stood by the bedside in silence. But she – she sat up, and flung her arms round him with a wonderfully good imitation of her former manner; and when she told him all that had passed, her husband caught her to his breast with passionate fondness and gratitude, and declared over and over again that her ready wit and wonderful fortitude had saved him. (i, 272)

The 'passionate fondness', coupled with the fact this scene takes place in the bedroom, are indications that their relationship is an enjoyably physical one and yet they do not have children. The level of devotion Harriet offers to Routh leaves none for anybody else: 'I care for nothing on earth (and I never look beyond this earth) but *you*. I have no interest, no solicitude, for any other creature. I cannot feel any, and it is well. Nothing but this would do in my case.' (i, 74) This analysis does not seem to allow even for a child. The phrase 'I cannot feel any' documents the intensity of her devotion to Routh and how much it has taken from

her: there is no room for anyone else in her heart. This single-minded loyalty to her husband, while admirable in one respect, has therefore eliminated the possibility of Harriet embracing motherhood and so she does not conform completely to the 'feminine ideal'. In this sense, Harriet, along with Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge, can be seen as subversive: instead of their devotion being spread out across a domestic household, the focus of it is solely their husband. Their wifely devotion is not compromised by the second identity of 'mother', which would necessarily split their focus and diminish the level of devotion they could offer their husbands.

Ultimately, the fates of the three men are all different and, in the case of Stewart Routh, is influenced directly by his wife. The manner in which these three couples end their respective novels offer their own critiques of devotion and domestic submission. Madame Fosco is faithful to her husband even as their plan unravels towards the end of *The Woman in White*. This reiterates how she has been tamed, but also demonstrates the protective streak she usually masks by her impassive demeanour. Early in the novel, Marian Halcombe notes her potential for jealousy:

The only approach to an inward thaw which I have yet detected under her outer covering of icy constraint, has betrayed itself, once or twice, in the form of a suppressed tigerish jealousy of any woman in the house (the maids included) to whom the Count speaks, or on whom he looks with anything approaching to special interest or attention. (219)

The 'inward thaw' Marian identifies highlights the weak spot in Madame Fosco's temperament. She has been tamed by her husband but the 'tigerish jealousy' betrays something uncontrollable by Fosco's 'management'. The animal-like devotion he has developed in her has inspired the jealousy which prompts her to watch his interactions carefully. By conditioning her into this animal loyalty, he has given rise to the one thing Marian can identify in her diary as defying the 'icy constraint' of Madame Fosco's

personality. This protectiveness is present during Walter Hartright's interview with the count towards the end of the novel: 'Madame Fosco took a book from the table – sat down – and looked at me, with the steady, vindictive malice of a woman who never forgot and never forgave.' (610) This 'vindictive malice' is the result of Hartright's attack on her husband and she tells him: 'I have been listening to your conversation with my husband,' she said. 'If I had been in *his* place – I would have laid you dead on the hearth-rug.' (610) This statement reiterates her animal-like loyalty and illustrates the lengths she would go to in order to protect her master. However, it also indicates that she has considered what she would do in her husband's place. This complicates the idea of her as nothing more than a devoted slave, not only because it reaffirms her protective streak but because she has acknowledged that she has opinions that diverge from her husband's, something she has previously denied. It therefore frames her loyalty as more choice than mere 'taming'. Her final situation in the novel following Fosco's death confirms that her loyalty to him is based on more than just his 'management' of her:

Fresh funeral wreaths continue, to this day, to be hung on the ornamental bronze railings round the tomb, by the Countess's own hand. She lives, in the strictest retirement, at Versailles. Not long since, she published a Biography of her deceased husband. The work throws no light whatever on the name that was really his own, or on the secret history of his life: it is almost entirely devoted to the praise of his domestic virtues, the assertion of his rare abilities, and the enumeration of the honours conferred on him. (641)

The attention that Madame Fosco shows to her husband's memory highlights the extent of her devotion to him. The 'fresh funeral wreaths' and the elaborate nature of the tomb suggest a devotion that outlasts his life, which is simultaneously demonstrative of a wife mourning her husband in a manner which would be respected by conventional society. The way he mastered her during their courtship and early marriage has succeeded in creating a woman who continues to live her life by his rules even when he is no longer able to enforce

them. The sacrifice of the rest of her life to his memory either suggests the complete sublimation of her will to his own, which has already been thrown into doubt by her expressing a divergent opinion to Walter Hartright, or that she truly was a willing and cognizant accomplice to his schemes, not merely a tamed animal.

In *No Name*, the battle between Captain Wragge and Mrs Lecount is one of the more humorous elements of the story, pitting two intelligent and resourceful people against each other. Midway through the novel, Mrs Wragge demonstrates the liability she poses to her husband's schemes as she forgets herself when talking about a dress to Mrs Lecount, who has come to try and trick her: 'Don't please, there's a good soul! It's an awful big one, I know; but it's modelled, for all that from one of Magdalen's own.' (460) By letting Magdalen's true identity slip, Mrs Wragge has imperilled her husband's plot to marry Magdalen to Noel Vanstone. A few pages later she accidentally compounds the problem by mentioning where she's seen one of Magdalen's dresses before, giving Mrs Lecount another link in the chain of evidence against Magdalen and Captain Wragge. She is, then, more of a hindrance to the dramatic plot of Magdalen's marriage to Noel Vanstone but she adds a layer of tension to the essentially comic battle of wills between Captain Wragge and Mrs Lecount. Her final position in the novel is as the captain's public advertisement for his new medicinal venture:

'Even Mrs Wragge contributes her quota to this prodigious enterprise. She is the celebrated woman whom I have cured of indescribable agonies from every complaint under the sun. Her portrait is engraved on all the wrappers, with the following inscription beneath it: – "Before she took the Pill, you might have blown this patient away with a feather. Look at her now!!!" (711)

Mrs Wragge's usefulness to Captain Wragge has been reignited by this venture. Having collected her second inheritance, primarily the reason he kept her in his life, it might be

expected that he would dispense with her services but, now that he has another use for her, they can end the novel as a comic, Dickensian couple with no fracture between them.

While in *The Woman in White* and *No Name* the bond between husband and wife remains essentially static throughout, *Black Sheep* details the chasm which emerges between Harriet and Stewart Routh as a direct consequence of their criminal activities. After Routh has committed murder, Harriet is affected by what they have done:

She *was* changed. Changed in face, in manner, in voice, in the daily habits of her life. The light had faded from her blue eyes, and with it their colour had paled. Her cheek had lost its roundness, and there was something set and stony in her face. It had been calm, now it was rigid. Her voice, still low and refined, was no longer musical, and her words were rare. (ii, 111-112)

These physical alterations are a direct result of the plan they have concocted and executed. The description of her face as once 'calm' and now 'rigid' and her voice as 'no longer musical' reiterates the effect the murder has had on her. It portrays her as susceptible to the horror of what they have done, attitudes previously suppressed by her devotion to her husband. Her relationship with Routh has also altered:

Her determination had assumed a sternness which had not before marked it, her identification of herself with Routh had become more than ever complete. The intensity of the passion with which she loved him was hardly capable of increase, but its quiet was gone. The pliable ease, the good-fellowship, the frank equality of their companionship, had departed; and though her attention to his interest, her participation in his schemes, were as active and unceasing as ever, they were no longer spontaneous, they were the result of courageous and determined effort, sustained as only a woman can sustain effort which costs her acute and unrelenting suffering. (ii, 112-113)

The murder, then, has drastically changed their marriage, with the 'frank equality of their companionship', crucial to the success of their schemes, having now disappeared. Similarly, part of her value lay in her 'spontaneous' contributions to her husband's schemes, which previously highlighted the agency she obtained as Routh's wife and accomplice. The fact that she now has to prepare herself for these tasks and it requires 'courageous and

determined effort' reaffirms how the fabric of their relationship has altered. This strips away her agency by creating the impression that she is also a victim of Routh. The power structures of their relationship, which supplied Harriet with opportunities to act spontaneously, have been replaced by mechanical participation. What was previously a choice by Harriet has altered into subservient compliance and one effect of this change is to create sympathy for her. Now she is the mechanical accomplice, in the style of Madame Fosco, who fulfils her tasks due to duty and not desire. This is a marked alteration from her status as eager accomplice in the first volume. For Routh's part, his attitude to Harriet has now shifted because he has the potential to rise in the world:

Not afraid of her trustworthiness, of her fidelity, of her staunch and unshrinking devotion; Stewart Routh was just as confident, as of the fact of his existence, that his wife would cheerfully have given her life for him, as she gave it to him, but the man's nature was essentially base, and the misused strength, the perverted nobility of hers crushed and frightened him. He had not felt it so much while they were very poor, while all their schemes and shifts were on a small scale, while his every-day comforts depended on her active management and unflinching forethought. But now, when he had played for a great stake and won it, when a larger career was open before him – a career from which he felt she would shrink, and into which he could never hope to force her – he grew desperately afraid of Harriet. Desperately tired of her also. He was a clever man, but she was cleverer than he. (ii, 114)

These thoughts of Routh's betray his selfishness in comparison to his wife and confirm the fact that their relationship has been based on false comradeship. By mentioning Harriet's 'misused strength' and 'perverted nobility', Routh is recognising there are fundamental differences between their personalities, despite the fact these have previously served them well in the low circles in which they moved. The qualities which have been valuable to him in the past, including her 'trustworthiness' and 'fidelity' will be irrelevant in his new career. Acknowledging that she will 'shrink' from it is essentially an acknowledgement that she will become more of a hindrance than the help she has previously been to him and the fact that he is 'desperately tired' of her also stems from this. By confirming that she is 'cleverer' than

he, Routh hints that he resents her intellectual superiority and that he feels trapped. Later in the second volume, the divisions between them become more pronounced:

The curse of an unholy alliance had fallen upon these two, and was now beginning to make itself felt. Each was desirous to conceal from the other the devices to which they were compelled to resort, in order to keep up the false appearances to which they were condemned; in all their life there was no time in which they were free from restraint, except in solitude. But, though the effect was in each case the same, the origin was widely different. Harriet suffered for her husband's sake; he, entirely for his own. (ii, 202-203)

The 'unholy alliance' the narrator identifies is a result of the murder which has clearly pulled them apart. Never 'free from restraint', even with each other, means that all confidence between them is at an end. By distinguishing between the origins of their difficulties, Yates again affirms that their 'companionship' was, in fact, an illusion: Harriet's usefulness has diminished and Routh cares far more about himself with little regard for her, while the devotion he has enjoyed for years continues to be her sole motivation because of the extent in which she has embroiled herself into his schemes. If she had been a passive observer to his crimes rather than a willing accomplice, the division between them may not have occurred. Utilising her agency has resulted in Harriet being too close to Routh's crimes and too far away from the feminine ideal that resides solely in the domestic sphere and does not aid her husband with his business dealings. Routh ultimately embarks on an affair with a woman more suitable to his new social position, who reveals the truth about the identity of his murder victim. He is forced to discuss this matter with Harriet who is already secretly aware of his new romance. Her response is still to claim their unity: 'We will talk this out, Stewart, and I will not shrink from anything there is to be said about it; but you must hear me then, in my turn. We are not like other people, Stewart, and our life is not like theirs. Only ruin can come of any discord or disunion between us.' (iii, 36) Despite his infidelity, Harriet is committed to rescuing her husband. This exchange solidifies the reversal of power

within their marriage, with the phrase 'in my turn' suggesting a transactional situation where once there was equality. Their relationship has deteriorated but, as she has said earlier, she identifies herself completely now with Routh and the murder he has embroiled them both in and she still holds stock in his words soon after their marriage that they should 'sink or swim' together. Harriet has remained static and loyal while Routh's prospects and ambitions have altered, inexorably separating them.

Routh's arrest for murder and subsequent suicide can be seen as a direct result of the fracture of his relationship with Harriet which, in turn, is a consequence of her active participation in his criminal schemes. The agency she obtained from Routh serviced them both until the intensity of the connection between them was severed by Harriet's guilt and Routh's desire for a more conventional wife. Harriet suggests they flee England, aware that there is a weak link in their armour but unable to identify it. However, Routh's affair and the fact that Harriet has served her purpose for him leads him to reject the idea, prompting Harriet to tell him:

'I don't threaten you in saying this – no threats can come from me, nor would any avail – but in your treachery to me, its own punishment will be hidden, ready to spring out upon and destroy you. Scorn my influence, slight my counsel, turn a deaf ear to the words that are inspired by love such as only a wretch like me, with no hope or faith at all in Heaven, and only this hope and faith on Earth, can feel – and see the end.' (iii, 45)

Here, Harriet explicitly states that his 'treachery' towards her will have consequences, not from her own jealousy or revenge but because he no longer listens to her good judgement and she rests the blame for his eventual arrest on his discarding her. This exchange identifies the fact that Harriet is aware of her usefulness to Routh which, in turn, suggests that she has obtained agency and equality from being able to act in tandem with him. However, the very qualities which aided them in earlier days have become, to Routh, a beacon of danger:

The uncomplaining, active, hard-working, inventive, untiring comrade, the passionately loving wife, the shrewd, unscrupulous, undaunted, steel-nerved colleague, was nothing more to him now than a dangerously sharp-witted, suspicious woman, who knew a great deal too much about him and was desperately in his way. (iii,166)

These positive traits, once so useful, have become something to fear. In a throwback to *Lady Audley's Secret*, the 'dangerously sharp-witted' wife is now the enemy within, not the ally, and has the power to destroy him. This gives the impression that unceasing wifely devotion, of the type which joins a criminal husband to his willing accomplice wife, will ultimately backfire. This is not the obedient servitude of Madame Fosco or the attempts by Mrs Wragge to maintain the illusions her husband requires, but the partnership of a husband and wife who are both actively planning criminal acts. As such, the manner in which it unravels – with fidelity, mistrust and status problems at the core of the breakdown – suggests that immersion such as Harriet's is doomed to failure. This comradeship has also succeeded in isolating her:

It had occurred to her once...to think whether, had she had any other resource but her husband, had the whole world outside of him not been a dead blank to her, she could have let him go...She cared nothing for liberty, she who had worn the chain of the most abject slavery, that of engrossing passionate love for an unworthy object, willingly, had hugged it to her bosom, had allowed it without an effort to alleviate the pain, to eat into her flesh, and fill it with corruption. (iii,190)

By equating her 'engrossing passionate love' to the 'most abject slavery', Harriet confirms that her relationship with Routh has been unhealthy. The honesty which differentiated their marriage in the first volume has disintegrated and their love has filled Harriet 'with corruption'. This can be seen as implicitly extolling the virtues of the separation of spheres. Madame Fosco and Mrs Wragge are explicitly inferior to their husbands, deferring to them in matters of business and following orders. Harriet and Stewart Routh invert this and the deterioration of their relationship can be seen as a warning against wifely agency in marriage.

Harriet's final act of devotion to her husband is in spite of his infidelity, lack of love and his physical violence towards her. It echoes the sublimation of Madame Fosco's life to the memory of her husband, as she smuggles prussic acid in to his cell for the purpose of suicide, something they have previously discussed, stating, 'I have obeyed you to the last, as from the beginning.' (iii, 296) This frames their relationship in terms of complete subservience when, during the first volume at least, it appeared that Harriet was a willing accomplice to his crimes. The physical and mental alteration the murder has wrought on her has dulled her sense of herself but not her sense of wifely loyalty. Like Madame Fosco, she is faithful to the end. However, Harriet chooses death alongside her husband instead of life: 'And no more tired wayfarer had ever sat down to rest, even in the pitiless London streets, than the woman who had wandered about until the friendly night had fallen, and had then come there to die, and have done with it.' (iii,306) The comradeship they shared in life before their rupture is thus replicated in death and the exhaustion she feels is as much due to her criminal lifestyle as it is to recent events. It is a denunciation of the type of woman she has become: in her endeavours to be the ideal wife there is now no longer a place for her in society.

Of the three, the Wragge marriage is the only one which succeeds beyond the pages of the novel, but this suits Collins's humorous depiction of them. Mrs Wragge will continue being a tool of her husband's schemes in a loveless marriage. Count Fosco's own narrative explains his wife's devotion: 'But I remember that I am writing in England; I remember that I was married in England – and I ask, if a woman's marriage obligations, in this country, provide for her private opinion of her husband's principles? No!' (628) This implicit criticism of a system which gives a wife no ability to reject her husband might be disingenuous, given the sheer level of Madame Fosco's devotion to her husband, but it does absolve her of a

certain amount of blame. This is replicated in *Black Sheep* when the murder victim's father expresses compassion for Harriet when told she is Routh's accomplice: 'Perhaps so, to a certain extent...but she is to be pitied, too. I saw that. I saw a little way into her life at Homburg, and, from all George has told me, I would be as little hard with her as possible.' (iii, 275) This pity towards the woman who colluded in the murder of his son places the blame for the act squarely on Routh. It assumes a level of coercion which did not seem to exist in the first volume when Harriet cheerfully assisted her husband in his crimes. *The Saturday Review* praised the depiction of Harriet and her devotion:

Mr Yates does not at all outrage probability in the absolute devotion of his heroine. An absolutely devoted woman is capable of anything, even to the remorseless consignment of an innocent life to the gallows. Hence, though we feel the whole atmosphere in which the incidents of the story are placed to be thoroughly artificial and unreal, still the thoroughgoingness of the heroine is such that we do not feel that she is artificial or unreal at all. Given the circumstances, we can understand the nature of the woman driving her to act as she does. The other people in the book are all drawn with pains, but they are tame by comparison with the arch plotter.⁴²

This review confirms that Yates does not 'outrage probability' in the depiction of Harriet and her loyalty, labelling her as the most inartificial and realistic aspect of the book. Calling her the 'arch plotter' situates her as equally culpable and the phrase 'capable of anything' frames her devotion to Routh as uncompromising and highlights the agency she obtained as part of their marriage. The reviewer's identification of Harriet as a controlling force within Routh's plots demonstrates that she has gained power from her nominally subservient role as a wife. However, the pity felt by the murder victim's father allows history to be rewritten, making Harriet another of Routh's victims: by brushing away her sins as simply the by-product of being a good wife, Yates allows her to end the novel as something of a redeemed heroine, in a similar manner to *Armada's* Lydia Gwilt.

⁴² Anon, 'Black Sheep', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 10 August 1867, pp190-191, p191 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

The portrayal of these three wives complicates the dichotomy of conventionally good and evil women within the sensation novel. On the one hand, they are submissive wives obeying the will of their husbands and behaving as society expects them to. On the other, they are participating in criminality whilst underneath the protective umbrella of being a conventionally good wife. The unconventional dynamics of these relationships, particularly the Routh marriage, highlights the inherent contradiction of the contemporary ideal of the devoted wife, attentive to her husband's needs and wishes. In doing so, they demonstrate the fact that this ideal is not always a constructive force within society. These three women show that the threat to society may not only come from the Lady Audleys who use deceit to try and infiltrate polite society but from the respectable wives who are merely guilty of showing the level of devotion to their husbands that society expects of them.

Female Friendship and Devotion

As friendship is the basis of all true loves, it is equally – nay, more important that the latter should be submitted to the same test in relation to its ultimate aim, which ought supremely to be, the moral and spiritual good of its object. Indeed, without this principle at heart, no love is worthy of the name; because, as its influence upon human nature is decidedly the most powerful of any, its responsibilities are in the same proportion serious and imperative.

The Daughters of England, Sarah Ellis, 1842¹

Representation of female friendship in sensation fiction

In July 1856 Wilkie Collins published 'The Diary of Anne Rodway' in *Household Words* as a two part story. It has been credited with pioneering the female detective, which Collins would go on to cultivate in his later work, whilst also providing an authentic portrait of a working-class woman. However, at the heart of the story is a friendship between two women which affects Anne deeply. She writes in her diary:

I would give many a hard day's work to know what to do for Mary's good. My heart warmed to her when we first met in the same lodging-house two years ago, and, although I am not one of the over-affectionate sort myself, I feel as if I could go to the world's end to serve that girl. Yet, strange to say, if I was asked why I was so fond of her, I don't think I should know how to answer the question.²

The strength of affection is highlighted after Mary's death, when Anne not only pawns her possessions in order to help pay for her friend's funeral, but also follows what clues she has to solve the mystery of Mary's accident. Her efforts are diluted by the return of her sweetheart, who takes control of the amateur investigation. The friendship, though, is fundamental to the plot and, indeed, has a lingering effect on Anne, even on her wedding day, as the final lines of the story suggest:

¹ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character & Responsibilities* (London: Fisher, Son & Co, 1842), p321

² Wilkie Collins, 'The Diary of Anne Rodway' in *Sensation Stories* ed. Peter Haining (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2004), pp113-147, p117

I got up to-day early enough to go alone to the grave, and to gather the nosegay that now lies before me from the flowers that grow round it. I shall put it in my bosom when Robert comes to fetch me to the church. Mary would have been my bridesmaid if she had lived; and I can't forget Mary, even on my wedding day!³

The fact that she 'can't forget Mary' a year after her death, along with the implications of her taking flowers from Mary's grave to her wedding and subsequently into her married life, is evidence of the strong bond between them. Ultimately, though, Mary's death is necessary to facilitate the amateur detective strand of the plot. In a later novel, Collins utilises once more the theme of two close female friends, arranging the novel in a manner which ranks the reconciliation of these friends above the progression of the heterosexual marriage plots.

In her 2007 book *Between Women: Friendship, Desire and Marriage in Victorian England*, Sharon Marcus identifies that novelists do not regard friendship between women as a driving force: 'Unlike marriage, however, female friendship is rarely a locus of compelling narrative suspense, for it is seldom subject to courtship's vagaries, conflicts, obstructions, and resolutions.'⁴ However, both Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870) and Edmund Yates's *The Silent Witness* (1875) use friendships between women as the foundation of their narratives and these friendships are subject to the 'conflicts, obstructions, and resolutions' that Marcus identifies as the preserve of heterosexual courtship. These two novels focus on the sacrifices made for one woman by another and these relationships are integral, not incidental, to the plot. These friendships involve the exchange of money, goods, confidences and, perhaps most importantly, the withholding of secrets if one friend deems it is in the best interests of the other. In several ways, these friendships mimic marital conventions, with one more dominant woman making decisions which impact them both for the perceived good of the more subservient woman. By doing

³ Wilkie Collins, 'The Diary of Anne Rodway' in *Sensation Stories* ed. Peter Haining, p147

⁴ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p79

this, Collins and Yates explore the possibilities of female homosociability as an alternative social structure to the sensational pattern of dominance and submission that characterises the marriage plot in most sensation fiction and in these two novels particularly. While these parallel social structures never truly depart from heterosexual patterns of marriage, this in itself highlights the entrenchment of heterosexual structures in the work of Collins and Yates.

The female friendships in *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* are dependent on the differences between the women involved. These allow the relationships to function more like a marriage than a mere friendship. Many of the canonical sensational heroines appear to exist in isolation or, if they have female friends, these friendships rely on the similarity of the individuals. These friendships are often dysfunctional or they demonstrate women at their most manipulative. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, the anti-heroine has a friendship of sorts with her maid, Phoebe, but this becomes transactional on several occasions. Phoebe is utilised in part by Braddon to show the similarity between maid and mistress:

The likeness which the lady's-maid bore to Lady Audley was, perhaps, a point of sympathy between the two women. It was not to be called a striking likeness; a stranger might have seen them both together, and yet have failed to remark it. But there were certain dim and shadowy lights in which, meeting Phoebe Marks gliding softly through the dark oak passages of the Court, or under the shrouded avenues in the garden, you might have easily mistaken her for my lady.⁵

In this extract Braddon toys with the fluidity of identity and later goes on to show how two manipulative women working together can exploit it. Class boundaries within the novel are also blurred when it appears that the maid could impersonate the mistress, a further demonstration of this identity fluidity. However, the mistress is the impostor all along,

⁵ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997), p85

revealing the two women to be even more closely identifiable with one another. The 'striking likeness' between the two emphasises their sameness and the friendship which has developed between them is based on shared characteristics and secrets. Braddon uses these similarities to emphasise Lady Audley's roots, but Phoebe is also used to show how easily this type of friendship can deteriorate. Phoebe's loyalty to her husband-to-be overrides her loyalty to Lady Audley and he blackmails Lady Audley after Phoebe admits her mistress's secret to him. This ultimately demonstrates the artificiality of the friendship: Phoebe betrays Lady Audley and is unable or unwilling to sacrifice herself to protect her friend. The text does, however, reiterate their sameness in one of the final passages relating to their friendship, when Phoebe realises that her mistress has set fire to her home with her husband and Robert Audley inside. When Phoebe begs her to deny it, Lady Audley instead tells her: 'Get up, mad woman, and go back and look after your goods and chattels, and your husband and your lodger. Get up and go; I don't want you.' (259) Her mutually beneficial friendship with Phoebe comes to an end with Lady Audley's declaration that Phoebe is 'mad'. This final confrontation between them shows their sameness once more: Lady Audley calls Phoebe a 'mad woman' when her own dark secret is that she herself is mad. The representation of female friendship based on sameness in *Lady Audley's Secret*, then, demonstrates that it is not based on any self-sacrificing regard but is instead a mutually beneficial transactional arrangement. The breakdown of Lady Audley's friendship with Phoebe is actually due to their shared self-centredness and drive, suggesting that a relationship built on similarity alone cannot be a successful one.

In two other Wilkie Collins novels there are notable instances of friendship reliant on shared characteristics of the individuals. His 1866 novel *Armadale* documents a dysfunctional friendship between its anti-heroine Lydia Gwilt and her mentor Mrs

Oldershaw via the medium of letters. They are quite literally partners in crime, with Mrs Oldershaw advising Lydia on how best to attract Allan Armadale into marriage to obtain his fortune. However, Lydia's tone towards her 'friend' is disparaging at times. She writes: 'Good-by, Mother Oldershaw. I rather doubt whether I am yours, or anybody's affectionately, but we all tell lies at the bottoms of our letters, don't we? If you are my attached old friend, of course I must be.'⁶ While this letter highlights the honesty and ease of the relationship between the pair, it is not the letter of a faithful friend and suggests transaction rather than affection. Mrs Oldershaw responds:

It is a thousand pities your letter was not addressed to Mr. Armadale; your graceful audacity would have charmed him. It doesn't affect me; I am so well used to it, you know. Why waste your sparkling wit, my love, on your own impenetrable Oldershaw? – it only splutters and goes out. Will you try and be serious, this next time? (163)

This response demonstrates a relationship between the pair which goes beyond the level of conventional friendship. It displays honesty and an understanding between them and shows a friendship based on shared characteristics of manipulation and deceit. Furthermore, it is transactional, with Lydia gaining knowledge of Armadale and the money to pursue him through Mrs Oldershaw who expects recompense from Lydia:

As to the money, in the first place. I will engage to find it, on condition of your remembering my assistance with adequate pecuniary gratitude, if you win the Armadale prize. Your promise so to remember me, embodying the terms in plain figures, shall be drawn out on paper by my own lawyer; so that we can sign and settle at once when I see you in London. (167)

It is evident from the mention of the lawyer that this is not a friendship based on trust but on mutual profit. The subversive relationship which emerges from these letters only works because the women share a desire for money and the drive to obtain it by duplicitous means. Mrs Oldershaw's reference to the lawyer reinforces the fact that these women will

⁶ Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p162

betray each other if it suits their own needs, rendering their relationship merely transactional and lacking the self-sacrificing instincts which are evident in the two friendships examined in this chapter.

Another friendship based on similarities can be found in Collins's 1868 novel *The Moonstone* in the relationship between Rosanna Spearman and Limping Lucy which explicitly focuses on their shared physical differences. The narrator at this point in the book is Gabriel Betteredge, who depicts the friendship in these terms:

Rosanna's acquaintance with them had begun by means of the daughter, who was afflicted with a misshapen foot, and who was known in our parts by the name of Limping Lucy. The two deformed girls had, I suppose, a kind of fellow-feeling for each other. Any way, the Yollands and Rosanna always appeared to get on together, at the few chances they had of meeting, in a pleasant and friendly manner.⁷

This description by Betteredge concentrates on the physical differences of the women which indicate their similarities. In addition to these disabilities, they are of a similar social class which, again, highlights a foundation to their friendship of sameness rather than difference. Despite the fact that they envision different lives – Rosanna is in love with Franklin Blake while Limping Lucy wishes them to be seamstresses together in London – their friendship is founded on their position in society as working-class, disabled women. While this is a more positive interpretation of female friendship than the examples of Lady Audley/Phoebe and Lydia/Mrs Oldershaw detailed above, the effect is limited by the fact that the women gravitate towards each other because of their role as outsiders. However, the relationship is an uneven one and ultimately unsuccessful. Limping Lucy's affection for Rosanna is not reciprocated in its entirety and is subservient to the affection Rosanna evidently has for Franklin Blake which prompts her suicide. Unlike the two pairs examined in this chapter, Limping Lucy is unable to save her friend from harm, implying that an

⁷ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (London: Vintage, 2009), p126

unbalanced relationship based on their shared characteristics as societal outcasts is not sufficient foundation for a successful friendship.⁸

The three representations of female friendship above are based on the similarities between the women. They also reinforce Sharon Marcus's assertion that female friendship can only supply the backdrop to a novel. While the dynamics of Lady Audley's friendship with Phoebe assist in her downfall, it is undoubtedly a subplot whose functions could be transferred elsewhere. Similarly, Lydia's relationship with Mrs Oldershaw assists her schemes but the function could be performed by another character since there is evidently no strong affection between them. The transactional natures of these two relationships make them ancillary to the plot. While Rosanna and Limping Lucy's friendship is not based on transaction, it is based on a similarity which isolates them from society as a whole and, as such, the friendship relies on their similarities to thrive. The major difference in their personalities – that Rosanna is in love with Blake while Limping Lucy dislikes men – is what drives them apart. This friendship could seemingly not survive this fundamental difference. What the two novels examined in this chapter do is reiterate the physical, emotional and social differences between their dual heroines whilst keeping the friendships at the heart of the plots and integral to their outcomes. In doing this, Collins and Yates challenge the centrality of the heterosexual marriage plot. However, it is notable that these structures, whilst departing from the heterosexual scenario, still represent these friendships as comparable to a marriage plot, with the masculinity of one half of both pairs emphasized over the other. This results in the depiction of the relationships in terms that the audience and, more significantly, the authors understand. It's worth noting, though, that these

⁸ *The Woman in White* (1860) and *No Name* (1862), both by Collins, are based on familial relationships between women rather than friendships. This means that any devotion between them is acceptable because it falls under the remit of domestic duty and devotion to the sanctity of home and family.

heterosexual structures are still unsettled by the swapping of roles at various points within the narratives.

Wilkie Collins's representation of Anne Silvester and Blanche Lundie in *Man and Wife* depicts a close friendship which stems not from familial obligation but personal affection and the recollection of the friendship of their mothers. This novel utilises the friendship at its core to untangle the sensational knots of the marriage plot, making the devotion of Anne Silvester to Blanche's interests a focal point throughout. Edmund Yates recalls this productive feminine friendship in his depiction of Anne Studley and Grace Middleham in *The Silent Witness*. Their friendship constitutes the main driving force behind the narrative, with Yates refraining from introducing a real, conventional hero until the final volume. Until this point the two women act for themselves and demonstrate their devotion to each other's interests, meaning that when the hero arrives his relationship with the two heroines is secondary to their own close friendship. Midway through the novel Grace discusses a hypothetical husband with Anne, explaining: 'Whoever he may be, I am certain of one thing, that I shall never love him as I love you, and the first condition of accepting him would be that you and I should not be separated.'⁹ Although the romantic situation inevitably becomes more complex, this ideal of Grace's highlights that she considers her friendship with Anne to be above, or equal to, a potential relationship with a husband. Her assertion that she 'shall never love him' as she loves Anne demonstrates the strength of this affection. This offers a challenge to conventional patriarchal structures as it suggests that bonds between women can override those bonds between husband and wife and that women can appropriate the devotion of a wife for her husband in their homosocial relations.

⁹ Edmund Yates, *The Silent Witness* (Boston: William F. Gill and Company, 1875), p80

Collins directly contrasts the long-lasting friendship of his heroines with a conventional friendship between women, thereby demonstrating the uniqueness of his depiction of Blanche and Anne. He briefly documents an argument between Blanche and one of her acquaintances at a garden party: 'A minute since, the two young ladies had been like twin roses on one stalk. Now, they parted with red cheeks and hostile sentiments and cutting words. How ardent is the warmth of youth! how unspeakably delicate the fragility of female friendship!'¹⁰ Whilst ridiculing the transience of those friendships that are based on similarity and the women being 'like twin roses on one stalk', Collins highlights the exceptional friendship based on difference which operates at the centre of his novel. This brief interlude shows the relationship between Anne Silvester and Blanche Lundie and the sacrificial love which motivates it. This short representation of typical friendships between women is replicated in the pages of periodicals and stands in stark contrast to the friendships depicted in *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness*.

Representation of friendship in the periodical press and contemporary non-fiction

The representation of female friendship between Blanche and her acquaintance in *Man and Wife* is indicative of attitudes within print culture which sometimes sought to exert control over such relationships by belittling them. Negative portrayals of these same-sex relationships were used as evidence that women's relationships with each other were inferior to those between men. This depreciation of female friendships seeks to undermine any influence they may have and to neutralise any subversive challenges to the patriarchal system. The pieces sometimes expressed the opinion that, for instance, the capricious nature of women's friendships with each other demonstrated their intellectual weaknesses.

¹⁰ Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p333

These articles ranged from pieces by men such as 'Women's Friendship' in *The Saturday Review* in 1866 to those which purported to be 'By One of Themselves' such as 'A Word to Women' in *Temple Bar* in 1861. The anonymous author of *The Saturday Review* article speculates that the only thing which brings women together is their sex and comments that:

We suspect that the relations of women to one another, their demonstrative attachments, their mysterious upstairs conversations, are all grounded on the weaker part of their characters, and are likely, so to speak, to strengthen their weaknesses, instead of communicating any better and stronger elements.¹¹

Written from a male perspective, this article deplores the fickleness of female friendships which share nothing besides the gender of those involved. He states that they 'strengthen their weaknesses', implying that groups of women have a negative impact on each other. The author identifies their 'mysterious upstairs conversations' and their 'demonstrative attachments', situating these friendships as something alien to men. He goes on to state that, 'The more a friendship between two women resembles a friendship between two men, the less it needs of outward demonstration and mysterious intercourse, the more wholesome it is likely to be, the more likely to bring out anything that is really good and strong on either side.'¹² By locating male friendships as more 'wholesome' than those between women, the anonymous author suggests there is something inherently unwholesome in the friendships of most women. This can be linked to fears of female impropriety and the idea of the private sphere of the home being violated by allegedly 'unwholesome' forces. This idea of wholesomeness leads, in the sense of the extract above, towards the idea of illicit intercourse and corrupting influences. These relationships exclude men entirely, potentially making them a threat to the patriarchal order. *The Saturday*

¹¹ Anon, 'Women's Friendships', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 28 April 1866, pp497-498, p498 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 22nd March 2013]

¹² Anon, 'Women's Friendships', *The Saturday Review*, p498

Review article defuses this threat by depicting them as weak whilst still describing the risk they can have and thereby seeking to control the representation of them.

In the *Temple Bar* article, the allegedly female author expresses her wish that women would look upon each other as allies instead of enemies:

I grieve to say it, but very, very rarely indeed do we find such friendships existing between women as we do between men, - friendships destitute of any petty jealousy, loyal, devoted, unreserved, thoroughly sincere, friendships that “think no evil,” will hear no evil spoken of the friend, and that stand the test of time, change, and absence. Between man and man, and perhaps yet more fully between man and woman, such alliances are far from uncommon, but between two women they are almost unique.¹³

Again, this article makes a distinction between female and male friendships, listing qualities which are apparently lacking in relationships between women. By highlighting loyalty, devotion and sincerity as attributes visible in male friendships, the author implies that the majority of women are fickle and deceitful in their dealings with their friends. The idea that men possess the quality of thinking ‘no evil’ likewise implies a collective inability on the part of women to think positively and without malice. This article generalises the attitudes not only towards female friendship but towards the volatile nature of women themselves. It suggests that interactions between men are superior to those between women, again defusing the threat of female friendship by pointing out the weaknesses of it.

Marriage is highlighted as a barrier to friendships between women, suggesting that jealousy and uncertainty in the home can contribute to the failure of positive female friendships. An article from *The Saturday Review* in 1870 called ‘The Exclusiveness of Women’ examines friendships alongside marriage:

The profound moral scepticism which has penetrated society from end to end has eaten away feminine trust with the rest: and even pure and virtuous women, incapable for their own parts of anything like immorality, are not ashamed to suspect their sisters of

¹³ Anon, ‘A Word to Women’, *Temple Bar*, April 1861, pp54-61, p61 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 22nd March 2013]

improper feelings and naughty practices, and to think themselves safe in their married homes just in proportion as they are isolated.¹⁴

The 'moral scepticism' which the author mentions is centred on women in this article, perpetuating the idea that they are jealous and almost tyrannical in their protection of their own morality and that of their husbands. It gives the impression that women are frequently mistrustful of each other to the point where true friendships prove impossible. However, by lamenting the 'moral scepticism' eating away at society, this piece implies that the isolation caused by such fractious relationships between women is part of a larger societal problem. Marriage itself is not seen as a sufficient barrier to impropriety and the implication is that women keep themselves 'safe in their married homes' to protect their marriages from destruction. However, the isolation caused by such measures proves, the author suggests, fruitless as these women only 'think themselves safe' from other women. Friendship, in this context, is restricted by women themselves, but it is still nevertheless framed within a patriarchal system – women isolate themselves from each other in order to protect their marriages from interlopers.

These three pieces suggest that friendship between women was discussed in the periodical press within the context of the wider 'woman question'. While the first *Saturday Review* article decries women's 'weaknesses' when brought together, the *Temple Bar* piece articulates these weaknesses more fully. Arguments about the capricious nature of women's friendships fed into the wider rhetoric about woman's education and her role within society. Some commentators such as Millicent Garrett Fawcett discussed their lack of formal education, offering an implicit reason why women are brought together by gender only, as

¹⁴ Anon, 'The Exclusiveness of Women', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 19 February 1870, pp242-243, p242 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 25th March 2013]

the first *Saturday Review* piece above suggests. In 1868 in *Macmillan's Magazine* Fawcett explains that:

The effect of this lack of mental training in women has been to produce such a deterioration in their intellects as, in some measure, to justify the widely-spread opinion that they are innately possessed of less powerful minds than men, that they are incapable of the highest mental culture, that they are born illogical, created more impetuous and rash than men.¹⁵

This lack described by Fawcett suggests that women are deemed inferior to men due to their lack of intelligence, which is then used to justify their continued exclusion from educational pursuits, thus forming an unbreakable circle. Fawcett's suggestion that women are not sufficiently educated to found friendships on intellect or shared pursuits is a generalisation but one borne out of analysis of their shared characteristics and the narrow curriculum which she proceeds to discuss in her article. The two friendships examined in this chapter, which appropriate the structures of a marriage, show the 'impetuous' nature of two of the women in comparison to their more level-headed friends. The feminine traits which Fawcett identifies, then, are used in these two novels as markers to demonstrate the heterosexual structures the friendships embody.

Confidences are something that women are able to exchange of their own accord and can be used by them as a type of currency.¹⁶ Secrets are highlighted as commodities in articles such as this one in an 1867 issue of *Bow Bells*: 'We have seen with regret young women enter into new alliances of friendship with all the warmth and ardour of youth, and repose in some new-found friend of an hour all their secrets of sentiments, and appear

¹⁵ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'The Education of Women of the Middle and Upper Classes', *Macmillan's Magazine*, April 1868, pp511-517, p512 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 22nd March 2013]

¹⁶ Jill Rappoport examines the currency of secrets, particularly in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, in *Giving Women* (2012).

happy in the act.¹⁷ This suggests that the topics available for young women to discuss are limited. If a woman is unable, as expressed in the Fawcett article above, to discuss matters of intellectual curiosity then one of the only topics of conversation available to her is herself. The *Bow Bells* piece explicitly states that these friendships are founded on 'silly confidence', suggesting that secrets and innermost thoughts are the currency of choice for those who have little else to discuss. The two novels analysed in this chapter invert this formula: 'secrets of sentiment' are not easily divulged and, indeed, the women keep their counsel at various places within the novels in order to protect their friends. These are not the friendships of which *Bow Bells* writes so disparagingly but intelligent and mature friendships based on devotion to each other instead of 'silly confidence'.

Beyond the periodical press, books were published which touched upon female friendship and also sought to control their influence. In 1867 a Unitarian clergyman, William Alger, published a book called *The Friendships of Women*, devoting a chapter to female friends. He criticises schoolgirl friendships and the trivial inner dramas which are played out daily within their bounds. However, he also mentions men coming between female friends and how this is managed:

Many a girl, with a sublime self-renunciation, stifling an agony sharper than death, has given up a lover to a friend, in silence and secrecy. Women are capable of any sacrifice, and their grandest deeds are hidden. Could any woman capable of voluntarily withdrawing herself, in order that her friend might marry the man they both loved, be capable of boasting of it, or willingly letting it be known?¹⁸

The idea of sacrifice, then, is identified, albeit with a man at its core. Alger implies that female friendship is beneficial to society because, in its true unselfish form, it works to support a system of marriage. He also suggests, with the description 'sublime self-

¹⁷ Anon, 'Female Friendships', *Bow Bells*, 23 January 1867, p618 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 22nd March 2013]

¹⁸ William Alger, *The Friendships of Women* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879), p266-267

renunciation' that women experience pleasure from such sacrifice, again implying that women's pleasure emanates from upholding the exalted position of marriage within society. This representation is non-threatening and does not damage the ideal of masculine dominance and female subservience. The phrase 'women are capable of any sacrifice' is a declaration which is particularly pertinent to the two texts examined in this chapter as both novels feature women who sacrifice their own interests so that their friend can be happy in marriage. This devotion correlates with Alger's assertion that a woman can withdraw from a relationship for the sake of her friend, but arguably the pivotal relationships within these novels are the ones between the two friends and not the heterosexual marriages which conclude them. This intensifies the 'sublime self-renunciation' which can be attributed to the sacrificial woman.

Sarah Stickney Ellis's conduct books also mention friendships between women, advising from a feminine perspective which, like the periodical articles purportedly written by women, offer an authoritative tone. In *Daughters of England* there is a chapter devoted to 'Friendship and Flirtation' where Ellis first points out that friendship should be sought primarily within the family circle before examining the qualities necessary in maintaining a strong friendship. After pointing out that there is 'a meanness of a lower grade' when the weak forsake each other she goes on to say:

No party, however, can be weak, which has truth for its element, and love for its bond of union. Women are only weak in their vanity, their selfishness, their falsehood to each other. In their integrity, their faithfulness, their devoted affection, they rise to an almost superhuman eminence; because they are strong in the elements of immaterial being, and powerful in a nature which is capable, when regenerated, of being shared with angels.¹⁹

Here, Ellis draws a direct link between women's weaknesses more generally and their treatment of other women. By suggesting that positive attitudes towards their friends lead

¹⁹ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Daughters of England*, p278-279

to 'superhuman eminence', Ellis endows female friendship with remarkable possibilities. The connection with angelic qualities – over a decade before Coventry Patmore's famous poem – which invokes the 'superhuman' situates this vision of friendship as something which elevates women beyond the everyday. It also explicitly links this type of devotion towards one human being by another with the more traditional religious associations of the word. One effect of this connection is to demonstrate the sincerity and severity of the devotion displayed: as akin to religious devotion it is pure and rigorous which intimates that it should be seen as equal to earthly attachments and, indeed, to non-earthly ones. Ellis also discusses equality in friendships as crucial to their success:

Again, there must be an equality in friendship, to render it either lasting or desirable – an equality not only in rank and station, but, as far as may be, in intellectual advantages. However warm may be the attachment of two friends of different rank in society, they must occasionally be involved in dilemmas, from which it is impossible to escape without wounded feeling, either on one side or both. (272)

In highlighting the problems which may arise when women are of different types and backgrounds, Ellis makes it clear that the most successful friendships are those where women share not only status but also values. This suggests that friendship offers women an outlet for their emotions and intellect but only within accepted boundaries.

Ellis's opinion is challenged by an 1857 article in *Chambers's Journal* focused specifically on female friendships. Again, purportedly written by a woman, it begins with familiar criticisms about the mental capabilities of the female sex: 'In truth, a sad proportion of us are too empty-headed to be double-minded, too shallow to be insincere.'²⁰ It continues, 'women's friendships are rarely or never so firm, so just, or so enduring, as those of men – *when you can find them*', suggesting that representations of enduring female

²⁰ Anon, 'A Woman's Thoughts About Women: Female Friendships', *Chambers's Journal*, 29 August 1857, pp129-132, p129 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 22nd March 2013]

friendships are few and far between. What is most interesting about this article is how it contradicts Ellis in its analysis of lasting friendships:

In most friends whose attachment is specially deep and lasting, we can usually trace a difference – of strong or weak, gay or grave, brilliant or solid – answering in some measure to the difference of sex. Otherwise, a close, all-engrossing friendship between two women would seldom last long; or if it did, by their mutual feminine weaknesses acting and reacting upon one another, would most likely narrow the sympathies and deteriorate the character of both.²¹

By pointing out that difference is the key to maintaining friendships, the author acknowledges that the best kind of friendship is one which works along the same lines as a successful marriage, with partners possessing opposing character traits. The idea of ‘strong or weak’ certainly brings to mind the difference in physical strength of men and women, with the author explicitly stating that they answer ‘in some measure to the difference in sex’. She situates friendship as a credible alternative to marriage, or at least identifies it as a system which works most effectively when approached in the same way as is a marriage. Difference in friendships as a positive phenomenon directly links to the two novels which this chapter focuses on. Both *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* feature friendships where the women are quite opposite to each other in looks, temperament and personal history. These differences are used to great effect throughout the novels, creating action as well as stipulating response to it. However, they also raise and explore questions about whether homosocial bonds can successfully replicate and replace the structures of heterosexual ones within the two texts.

Recent research on the literary representation of female friendship in the nineteenth century

²¹ Anon, ‘A Woman’s Thoughts About Women: Female Friendships’, *Chambers’s Journal*, p129

Although female characters and their prevalence within sensation novels have been a common focus of sensation fiction criticism over the past 30 years, the representation of friendships between women remains under-researched. Recent analysis of female friendship in Victorian England includes Sharon Marcus's 2007 work *Between Women*, in which Marcus examines three strands of women's relationships with each other: friendship, female desire and female marriage. In the first section, utilising life writing and readings of popular novels, she examines how friendship was viewed as a positive addition to women's lives: 'Counselled to be passive in relation to men, women were allowed to act with initiative and spontaneity toward female friends, and friendship enabled women to exercise powers of choice and expression that they could not display in relation to parents or prospective husbands.'²² Friendships, according to this analysis, were seen as safe places for women to be themselves in ways that were otherwise unavailable to them and, as Marcus goes on to say, whilst still maintaining their personal respectability. This is not something readily discernible in readings of periodicals but, utilising life writing, Marcus perhaps has sources unencumbered by the patriarchal values of most periodicals. She then examines the role of female friendship in the marriage plot and the plot of female amity which can involve one woman 'giving' another to a man. While examining female friendships within Victorian literature in-depth, Marcus still categorises them as minor and complementary to the main plot instead of acting as the central problem of the novel. However, the two sensation novels under consideration in this chapter arguably utilise female friendship as the locus of narrative suspense, placing the friendship between the dual heroines ahead of the heterosexual marriage plots which also operate within them.

²² Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, p56

Jill Rappoport's 2012 book *Giving Women* responds directly to Sharon Marcus's

interpretation of 'giving' someone in marriage:

Yet marriage was not the only form of kinship or closure that nineteenth-century women derived from gifts. Much more than a means to heterosexual union, these exchanges between women provide alternative structures, not only for women's kinship and community formation but also for literary design. Whether as pairs, small groups, or larger networks, women's alliances frequently have greater narrative force than the heterosexual romance plots in which they sometimes culminate.²³

This idea of 'narrative force' suggests, building on Marcus's work, that women's relationships with each other have a greater impact on novels than simply to aid the marriage plot. Rappoport also examines how women's gifts to each other signify autonomy and power. She explains:

Gifts and giving pervade the nineteenth-century popular imagination, but our studies of the Victorians have not yet assessed their significance, either to the women who are frequently depicted as objects and agents of exchange or to the broader society reflected and shaped by them. Through giving, women engaged in and helped to fashion cultural discourses on female intimacy, property law, religious social action, and scientific discovery.²⁴

Rappoport's book therefore suggests that women obtained a degree of power from giving gifts and giving themselves. This concept has particular resonance when examining *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* due to the dependent heroines giving themselves in marriage in order to protect their benefactors. While Marcus locates friendship as aiding the marriage plot, Rappoport's analysis allows for additional power to be assigned to friendships within novels and highlights the significance of women's actions towards one another.

'Matchless courage and resignation': Female friendship and devotion in the works of Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates

²³ Jill Rappoport, *Giving Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p10

²⁴ Jill Rappoport, *Giving Women*, p3-4

Female friendship in *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* is not reduced to a subplot alongside a central marriage plot which could easily be dispensed with. Rather, the friendships become the narrative force: the reconciliation of the heroines is a more powerful aspect of both novels than the heroines' marital status. Sharon Marcus briefly discusses *Man and Wife* in *Between Women*:

Sensation novels, which characteristically emphasize occult powers and deceptive social ties, make female friendship an equally baroque narrative force. In Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870), for instance, the attachment between two female friends, Blanche and Anne, is all that can disentangle a marriage plot mired in complex wills, obscure legal loopholes, and vindictive relatives.²⁵

Marcus identifies the plot of female amity in *Man and Wife*, going on to say that, 'As so often happens in the plot of female amity, marriage makes female friends kin when Anne is freed of her villainous first husband and marries Blanche's uncle, who learns to love Anne through the loyalty she arouses in his niece...'²⁶ This analysis concentrates on Marcus's field of interest, but she acknowledges that loyalty and the 'attachment' between the friends is a pivotal aspect of the plot. It is interesting to note here that Marcus identifies sensation 'novels' but only discusses one of them in her analysis, perhaps due to the fact that her focus is on nineteenth-century fiction more broadly and not the specific genre of sensation fiction. However, her acknowledgement that Blanche and Anne's friendship is the tool that can 'disentangle' the complexities of the plot offers a fruitful platform for further research on the topic.

The unique friendships which operate at the core of *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* require the dual heroines to be different enough to complement and contrast with one another. In *Victorian Heroines* (1993), Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble discuss how women in sensation novels are 'split':

²⁵ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, p82

²⁶ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, p83

In many sensation novels each of these formal roles is assigned to a different woman, effectively splitting the 'heroine' into separate parts. This could result in a diminution of female significance in the narrative, and a lack of a focus for the (female) reader's identification, but in fact it invariably represents a radical expansion of the possibilities for female identity and behaviour. The technique often disturbs the reader's narrative expectations: providing another source of suspense, as doubt is cast on which woman represents the authorial ideal...²⁷

This analysis applies to Blanche Lundie/Anne Silvester and Grace Middleham/Anne Studley.

The pairs are noticeably different physically, emotionally and in terms of their financial independence. Collins and Yates represent their heroines as complementary to one another: their differences are what make the friendships work and, ultimately, what creates the conflict within them.

The differences on which the success of these friendships depend is emphasised firstly in the physical and emotional descriptions of the four women. They are markedly different – for instance, in both pairings one is fair and one is dark.²⁸ There is a clear distinction drawn between Blanche Lundie and Grace Middleham, fair-haired and angelic heroines, and Anne Silvester and Anne Studley, both dark-haired and supposedly less angelic. Blanche is physically described in exacting terms, with Collins itemising everything from her 'cheese-plate' hat down to her high heels to depict her as a fashionable young woman. Emotionally, she is described: 'Temper, quick. Disposition, variable. In a word, a child of the modern time – with the merits of the age we live in, and the failings of the age we live in – and a substance of sincerity and truth and feeling underlying it all.' (57) Here, Collins deliberately depicts the feminine ideal in Blanche, before going on to directly

²⁷ Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p106

²⁸ Galia Ofek's essay "Sensational Hair: Gender, Genre, and Fetishism in the Sensation Decade" in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* offers an analysis of the significance of sensational portrayals of hair colour and demonstrates how sensation novelists attacked the fair/good and dark/bad codification.

contrast it with Anne Silvester. Similarly, Yates describes Grace Middleham in the following terms:

One of those pretty, fair-haired girls, with soft, regular features, and timid manners and gentle voices, who are perpetually cooing about everything, and who, though almost always in want of support or advice, or assistance, render it almost impossible for one to help, owing to their multiplicity of words, and their paucity of sense. (10)

Grace resembles Blanche in looks and temperament, similarly embodying the feminine ideal of the time, although it is worth noting that both she and Blanche mature emotionally as the novels progress. From the outset, however, these two women are portrayed as beautiful in appearance and typical in temperament, immediately contrasted with their friends. In his representation of Grace Middleham, Yates implicitly recalls Blanche Lurie. This influence in *The Silent Witness* is made more explicit by the representation of Anne Studley, who echoes Collins's depiction of Anne Silvester, both physically and emotionally.

Anne Silvester's physical attractions are at once marked as different to Blanche's, aiding the impression of two people as opposite in appearance and personality as a husband and wife may be:

Judge her by the standard set up in the illustrated gift-books and the print-shop windows – and the sentence must have inevitably followed, 'She has not a single good feature in her face.' There was nothing individually remarkable about Miss Silvester, seen in a state of repose. She was of average height. She was as well made as most women. In hair and complexion, she was neither light nor dark, but provokingly neutral, just between the two. Worse even than this, there were positive defects in her face, which it was impossible to deny. A nervous contraction at one corner of her mouth, drew up the lips out of the symmetrically right line, when they moved. A nervous uncertainty in the eye on the same side, narrowly escaped presenting the deformity of a 'cast'. (59)

The contrast between Anne and Blanche is here made explicit. While Blanche has conventional beauty, Anne is ordinary, possibly even ugly in appearance with irregular features, making her the antithesis of Blanche physically. The 'provokingly neutral' comment about Anne's hair and complexion is not only indicative of her character as a whole but

demonstrates how Anne evades categorisation. Equally, her personality contrasts with Blanche's, as demonstrated by her reaction to Lady Lundie's croquet announcement:

As the name passed her lips, the flush on Miss Silvester's face died away, and a deadly paleness took its place. She made a movement to leave the summer-house – checked herself abruptly – and laid one hand on the back of a rustic seat at her side. A gentleman behind her, looking at the hand, saw it clench itself so suddenly and so fiercely, that the glove on it split. The gentleman made a mental memorandum, and registered Miss Silvester in his private books as 'the devil's own temper'. (61)

This varies in comparison to Blanche's 'quick' temper because it suggests that Anne possesses a degree of self-control and internalised anger that Blanche does not. Blanche is confident and candid while Anne demonstrates throughout the novel that, wherever possible, she internalises her emotions and portrays a calm demeanour to the outside world. Similarly, when examined comparatively to Grace, Anne Studley in *The Silent Witness* is noticeably different:

This is Anne Studley, the tall, strongly-made girl, with dark hair and complexion, and resolute, earnest eyes; distinguished and intellectual looking though, rather than pretty, with a long low forehead, a short curling upper-lip and a round firm chin; her manner is quick and excited, and she illustrates her conversation with abundant gesture. Not that she speaks very much, for nature, and the small experience she has already had of the world, have combined to make her a thinker, and when with her constant companion, Grace Middleham, she is not called upon to put in many words, for Grace is a determined prattler. (10)

Here, then, Anne Studley is also described as 'dark-haired' and 'intellectual', setting her at odds with the fair-haired 'prattler' Grace. The opposition between Grace and Anne Studley is as explicit as that between Blanche and Anne Silvester. By establishing them as contrasting characters, both Yates and Collins create a conventionally feminine character in direct opposition to one with more masculine traits and experiences – they essentially split woman in two, separating out the 'ideal' from the 'knowledgeable'.²⁹ The initial physical and emotional descriptions of the four women concentrate on highlighting their differences

²⁹ The names of 'Blanche' meaning 'fair' and the obvious (and religious) connotations of 'Grace' assist the impression of these two as innocent in comparison to their friends.

from one another, something which is explored and exploited as the novels progress. These differences are important because they construct the women as opposites: their relationships with each other mimic the dependency of marriage and these early physical and emotional signifiers successfully depict the women as polarised.

Attractiveness to men, in these two novels, belongs to the physically flawed friend, suggesting that these women have attributes that atone for their apparent deficiencies in comparison to the conventionally attractive heroines of the novels. In *Man and Wife*, although Anne Silvester has already been described as somewhat ugly, that description is followed up with this analysis of her:

And, yet, with these indisputable drawbacks, here was one of those women – the formidable few – who have the hearts of men and the peace of families at their mercy. She moved – and there was some subtle charm, sir, in the movement, that made you look back, and suspend your conversation with your friend, and watch her silently while she walked. She sat by you, and talked to you – and behold, a sensitive something passed into that little twist at the corner of the mouth, and into that nervous uncertainty in the soft, grey eye, which turned defect into beauty – which enchained your senses – which made your nerves thrill if she touched you by accident, and set heart beating if you looked at the same book with her, and felt her breath on your face. All this, let it be well understood, only happened, if you were a man. (59-60)

Anne's attractiveness to men comes in spite or perhaps because of her drawbacks, but women dislike her for the effect she has on men. Collins establishes Anne in the same category as Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White* – a capable yet unattractive woman who nevertheless captivates the opposite sex. This attractiveness has already caused Anne's 'fall' by the time we encounter her. Jenny Bourne Taylor notes that, 'Anne's innocent vulnerability is the outcome of her attractiveness being at once perverse and beyond her control.'³⁰ Anne's attractiveness is not supported by outstanding looks but an unspecified

³⁰ Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), p216

aspect of her personality, but this is an aspect which Blanche, with all her conventional merits, does not possess.

Anne Studley in *The Silent Witness* is also marked out as desirable and competent by two men within the novel, the villain George Heath and her prospective lover Walter Danby. Early in the novel Heath thinks to himself, 'Strong-minded young woman that daughter of Ned Studley's...prompt, clear, and determined, as old Ned himself.' (13) Later, when Anne thwarts his attempt to marry Grace, he is shocked by the extent of her abilities:

This girl, whom he had rated so cheaply, had the best of him then. He was astounded at her audacity, more astounded at the firmness with which she held to the course she had indicated. With rage and mortification at his heart, he acknowledged to himself that the edifice which he had built up with so much trouble, during several months, had crumbled into dust at this woman's touch. (108)

Heath recognises that Anne has potential at the beginning of the novel, but he underestimates her, ultimately leading to his downfall at her hands. This is comparable to Geoffrey Delamayn in *Man and Wife* struggling to comprehend Anne Silvester's motivations and subsequently being forced to sacrifice his plans to marry well due to her interference. While Heath is a murderous villain, Anne also appeals to the more honourable Walter Danby: 'He was not a very wise young man, and was, perhaps, a little conceited. But he was born and bred a gentleman, honourable, upright, and true: and he thought on his homeward drive that he had never seen a girl who had taken his fancy so much as Anne Studley.' (15) The fact that Anne appeals to both the villain and his victim suggests the same universal appeal to the male sex which Anne Silvester possesses in *Man and Wife*. These portrayals pose a threat to conventional social values because they are not based on external beauty; rather, they demonstrate an allure that cannot be learned or taught and is therefore difficult to control. The competency and intelligence Anne Studley demonstrates in *The Silent Witness* is beyond that of an average woman implying, by default, that the

traits are more masculine than feminine. They therefore reiterate that she is a danger to the natural order and situate her as the more masculine partner in her relationship with Grace.

Both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley occupy positions of dependence within the households of their friends which serves to demonstrate that these friendships do not completely mimic the heterosexual system of marriage. This financial dependence complicates the analysis of the women as masculine within the heterosexual structure of the novels by indicating that power in the friendships rests with the financially secure friend. However, both relationships operate economies of exchange: the efforts at protection undertaken by the Annes compensate for their financial dependence but, significantly, both women abandon their positions in order to protect their friends further, proving that they were not motivated by pecuniary gain. This is articulated most clearly in *The Silent Witness* when Anne refuses to be financially dependent on Grace after their friendship has been fractured:

My presence in this house originated in the fact of my being your chosen friend, shielded and sustained by you at a time when such protection and sustenance were absolutely essential to me. For what you did then I must be eternally grateful; but, as I said before, the circumstances under which those relations existed are entirely changed...I am painfully conscious that the old feeling between us is gone, I suppose, for ever; and it is, therefore, impossible for me to remain here a mere recipient of your bounty, hanging on to the memory of something which was once, but is no more. What you did for me I accepted in the spirit in which it was done, and honestly felt no compunction; but I have my pride, too, and I should be unworthy of the feeling with which you once regarded me, if I were to continue as an inmate of this house. (126)

Anne's pride cannot allow her to stay with Grace as an unwanted companion, essentially an employee. The phrase 'mere recipient of your bounty' expresses Anne's distaste at the prospect of accepting what she perceives as pure charity but the phrase 'I should be unworthy of the feeling with which you once regarded me' is perhaps more significant. It demonstrates that Anne's motivating factor in her friendship with Grace was not her

financial rewards but her desire to aid, and demonstrate affection for, her friend. Once their relationship alters there is no reason for her to stay as Grace's beneficiary and Anne relinquishes the pecuniary benefits of friendship with Grace in a chivalrous manner.³¹

Both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley, then, are financially dependent on their friends, but this dependence does not form the basis for their friendships, nor does it appear to play a substantial part in them. As a woman of independent wealth, Grace is a highly desirable prize in the marriage market. Tim Dolin points out that:

On the one hand, ownership sets the heroine outside the conventional operations of the marriage market, making her aware that she is free to choose not to marry. On the other hand, her property is the supreme sign of her eligibility for marriage, and an integral part of her attractiveness. She is therefore already caught up in the market and already conceived of as a valuable property and not an owner of valuable property.³²

Grace is subject to the machinations of those who seek to own this 'valuable property' but her friendship with Anne transcends such financial considerations. She is 'free to choose not to marry' and does express, as has already been noted, her desire to spend her life with Anne which, for a considerable length of time, she does. The relationship, therefore, is a representation of an ideal heterosexual one where Grace is courted by Anne for her personality and not for her wealth. This is proven when Anne Studley leaves the financial security of Grace's household and creates a new identity to shield herself from detection by the friend she has left behind, as too does Anne Silvester. Sharon Marcus notes that:

As an ideal, friendship was defined by altruism, generosity, mutual indebtedness, and a perfect balance of power. In a capitalist society deeply ambivalent about competition, female friendship offered a vision of perfect reciprocity for those who could afford not to worry about daily survival.³³

³¹ Anne Studley's farewell to Grace here is in the form of a letter, echoing Anne Silvester's way of distancing herself from Blanche on learning she is an obstacle to her happiness in chapter twenty nine of *Man and Wife*. These letters also prolong narrative suspense by separating the women from each other, in both cases for quite some time.

³² Tim Dolin, *Mistress of the House: Women of Property in the Victorian Novel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p10

³³ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, p4

This partially applies to the two pairs analysed in this chapter. While Anne Silvester and Anne Studley do have to 'worry about daily survival' this does not infringe on their friendships. The 'balance of power' nominally rests with the more financially secure of the pair, but the very fact of the Annes' departures demonstrates that the balance of power in these relationships is not related to money. In this respect, the novels suggest that friendships between women offer an alternative to heterosexual life within a patriarchal society: these relationships are similar to marriages whereby one woman is more financially secure than the other and so stands in place of the husband in the relationship. However, both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley are fundamentally stronger in nature than Blanche and Grace and are also the more devoted of the two, ostensibly fulfilling the obligations of a wife. Ultimately, then, the boundaries of heterosexual marriage are blurred by the sharing of roles within the confines of these female friendships and this lends itself to a reading of these relationships which distances itself from heterosexual structures somewhat.

Female self-sacrifice has already been examined in this thesis in relation to the sacrifices of a wife for her husband. In *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness*, these marital structures are mimicked as both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley sacrifice themselves for the good of their friends and, within these relationships, it is self-renunciation that progresses the plots. Audrey Jaffe points out that, 'As the centres of Victorian domestic life, women were expected to defer their own desires and work toward the fulfilment of others', and the name given that generalised identification was frequently sympathy.³⁴ Instead of working towards the fulfilment of a husband or other male figure, these women 'defer their own desires' in order to benefit their friends. By doing so, they highlight the strength and validity of these relationships.

³⁴ Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Britain* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2000), p16

In *Man and Wife*, Anne Silvester's devotion to Blanche's interests above her own is shown on several occasions, demonstrating her self-sacrifice. Following the realisation that she may have accidentally married Blanche's intended husband, Anne does not attempt to claim him as her own, something which baffles the villain Geoffrey Delamayn:

He was simply incapable of conceiving that the horror of seeing herself set up as an obstacle to Blanche's marriage, might have been vivid enough to overpower all sense of her own wrongs, and to hurry her away, resolute, in her ignorance of what else to do, never to return again, and never to let living eyes rest on her, in the character of Arnold's wife. (276)

The 'horror' Anne experiences is a direct result of the strength of her attachment to Blanche and it is inconceivable that she should save herself the stigma of an illegitimate child by claiming Arnold as her husband so she sacrifices her own future in order to preserve Blanche's. The fact that this realisation is seen via Geoffrey Delamayn not only shows the complete selflessness of the act but also foreshadows the lengths Anne will later go to in order to protect Blanche. Her ultimate sacrifice comes when, in order to renounce her claim on Arnold, she is forced to claim Geoffrey Delamayn in marriage:

The spectators of the terrible scene turned with one accord towards the sacrificed woman. The look which Geoffrey had cast on her – the words which Geoffrey had spoken to her – were present to all their minds. She stood, waiting by Sir Patrick's side – her soft grey eyes resting sadly and tenderly on Blanche's face. To see that matchless courage and resignation, was to doubt the reality of what had happened. (524)

By labelling her as 'sacrificed' in the eyes of the assembled group, Collins is once again instructing the reader how to respond to Anne's actions. By accepting her marriage to Geoffrey, Anne has performed the ultimate sacrifice required of her by her friend and the 'matchless courage and resignation' she has shown has not been utilised for her own benefit but instead highlights the potency of the friendship which prompts her to act this way. She then literally 'gives' Blanche to Arnold: 'She kissed her – looked at her – kissed her again – and placed her in her husband's arms.' (525) This idea of giving links back to Jill

Rappoport's work *Giving Women*: Anne is almost vested with the patriarchal power of a man as she places Blanche in Arnold's arms.

The dynamic of the friendship in *The Silent Witness* also involves self-sacrifice on the part of Anne Studley which places her as defender of her friend. She threatens to claim murderer George Heath as her husband in order to prevent him from bigamously marrying Grace for her money, explaining to him:

'I have a friend who is my one tie to life; to save her from you I have come hither. You are incredulous, I know, as to the existence of such feelings as love and friendship, but you will be able to estimate the strength and truth of my love for this friend, by the fact that it has induced me to look upon your face again.' (106)

By framing her love for Grace alongside her hatred for Heath, Anne draws upon the reader's knowledge of what Heath has done in order to demonstrate her attachment to Grace. She articulates the 'strength and truth' of her love in much the same way Anne Silvester does in *Man and Wife* and at a similarly crucial moment in the narrative. Labelling Grace as her 'one tie to life' is a phrase reminiscent of a close marital relationship, reiterating that Grace's love has sustained her through her trials. Anne goes on to tell Heath:

'Such a match would, doubtless, be very advantageous for you in every point of view, for Miss Middleham has beauty and great wealth; but much as you may be interested in her, my love for her transcends anything you can ever feel, and in the exercise of that love I have come to tell you that you must renounce her.' (107)

The language used by Anne here is markedly similar to that used by Sarah Stickney Ellis in linking devotion within friendship to the angelic, indicated here by the connotations of the word 'transcends'. This angelic self-renunciation is encapsulated in the sacrificial acts performed by both Anne Studley and Anne Silvester and Anne Studley's declaration that her affection for Grace transcends anything Heath could feel places her love beyond ordinary boundaries. It also defeats the familial bonds which governed her actions earlier in the novel: 'I know not whether my father is alive or dead; but, compared to Grace Middleham,

he is nothing to me. To see that her future is not wrecked is my determination; and, to save her, I will tell all I know.' (108) This is significant because at this point Anne usurps both her father and her legal husband in order to protect Grace. Friendship therefore takes precedence over patriarchy and the self-sacrifice Anne undertakes to 'save' Grace is a conscious choice. Her interference in Grace's relationship with Heath costs Anne their friendship but she does not regret it, writing in her farewell note: 'You will never hear of me again, but I have the satisfaction of carrying with me the assurance that I have proved to the utmost the gratitude I feel for you – my only friend in the past, the sole-memory of good and peace which remains of one who must henceforth be alone in the world.' (129) Anne acknowledges here that she is repaying a debt for Grace's kindness to her. However, the phrase 'sole-memory of good and peace' emphasises the idea that Anne has sacrificed herself to preserve Grace's higher status in the world. To situate Anne's actions in relation to heterosexual structures of marriage, then, she has essentially performed the duty of a wife towards her husband by protecting Grace's interests above her own wellbeing, in a similar manner to those marriages discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

Loyalty which results in self-sacrifice, then, is employed at pivotal points in both *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness*. Likewise, both novels identify the fracture of these friendships as one of the crucial problems to be resolved by the climax, as important in *Man and Wife* as Anne Silvester's liberation from Geoffrey Delamayn. In *Giving Women*, Jill Rappoport comments on sacrifice: 'Some see sacrifice as little more than a socially conditioned response to nineteenth-century conduct books that defined women as "relative creatures" and advised them to forget their own needs in order to better serve their

husbands, fathers, and sons.’³⁵ The representations of Anne and Blanche and Anne and Grace invert this idea: instead of forgetting their own needs for the sake of a man, the Annes forget them for the sake of their friend, a sacrifice that can be achieved without the relegation of women to a position of relativity.

The lack of a patriarchal protector is a common feature in sensation fiction and allows, in the case of *The Silent Witness*, a woman to take on the role, again challenging the patriarchal norms.³⁶ Anne Studley takes on this protector role from the very start of the novel. She is, for example, by Grace’s side when news of her uncle’s death is broken: ‘Grace felt very faint, and would have fallen had not Anne been by her side, encircling her promptly with her strong arm, and whispering words of comfort in her ear.’ (11) She continues to support her as she deals with her immediate grief: ‘Grace hid her weeping face on her friend’s breast, and Anne, knowing it was best that her sorrow should have its vent, did not attempt to console her with words, but merely sustained and patted her pretty head.’ (12) There are indications here that Anne’s strength is almost patriarchal in nature. It sets her apart from Grace as wiser in ‘knowing it was best’ she should weep and patting her ‘pretty head’. Later in the novel, when Anne has summoned Grace to Paris to help her, they revert to their old roles when Grace seems ‘unconsciously to have resumed her old position of petted favourite, and...was reclining on Anne’s breast, with her arm around her friend’s neck’ (73). In Paris, Anne is reminded of the differences between them:

In a moment of supreme despair she had called to her friend to come to her aid, and, now that the appeal had been heard, she knew not what to do. There was something in Grace’s childlike affection for her which was startling to Anne; it seemed like a new revelation. To no one on earth, even the strongest minded and most worldly, would it be possible to hint at the reasons which had induced her to fly from her home and appeal to

³⁵ Jill Rappoport, *Giving Women*, p106

³⁶ Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White* (Collins) is the most famous example within the sensation canon but see also the Vanstone daughters in *No Name* (Collins) and Rachel Verinder of *The Moonstone* (Collins).

her friend for protection; and how much less possible was it for her to make herself intelligible to a gentle, graceful creature, void of all guile? (74)

This paragraph indicates a gap between Anne and Grace on several levels. Firstly, the 'childlike affection' Anne recognises demonstrates the difference between their life experiences. Anne has been emotionally scarred by witnessing a murder and being forced to marry while Grace, albeit an orphan and the niece of a murdered man, has led a much more sheltered existence. There is also the sense that Anne knows there is an intellectual discrepancy between them. Anne is the wiser of the two, the more knowledgeable, and she deliberately withholds information which she fears would shock Grace and would be difficult for her to comprehend. She has become Grace's buffer against the world, shielding her more innocent friend from the real world which she has experienced, a situation not unlike a husband shielding his wife from his difficulties outside of the home.

The devotion involved in both of these friendships is not one-sided: it is as reciprocal as devotion in a marriage would ideally be, although Blanche and Grace are not as emotionally experienced as their friends. In addition to the financial protection they offer the Annes, they are seen to be attached to them in other ways. For instance, Blanche is distraught when Anne abruptly leaves:

Blanche (already overwrought by the excitement of the day) had broken into an hysterical passion of tears, on hearing the news, and had then, on recovering, taken a view of her own of Anne's flight from the house. Anne would never have kept her marriage a secret from Blanche; Anne would never have written such a formal farewell letter as she had written to Blanche – if things were going as smoothly with her as she was trying to make them believe at Windygates. Some dreadful trouble had fallen on Anne – and Blanche was determined (as Lady Lundie was determined) to find out where she had gone, and to follow, and help her. (109)

It is clear that Blanche values her friend, although this paragraph reaffirms her place as the more feminine of the two when she breaks into 'an hysterical passion of tears'. Blanche's determination to help Anne takes a proactive course, too, when she visits the inn where her

friend is staying. She explains to Anne, 'In the meantime, my dear, here I am, wet through in a thunderstorm – which doesn't in the least matter; and determined to satisfy my own mind about you – which matters a great deal, and must, and shall be done before I rest tonight.'

(160) By putting Anne above her own personal comforts, Blanche is demonstrating the extent of her affection, particularly striking as she has previously been described in terms of her frivolity and ideal femininity.

The power to control and interrupt these friendships is generally possessed by Anne Silvester and Anne Studley, reiterating their role of masculine dominance within the relationships. Meanwhile, Blanche and Grace reaffirm their role as the typical feminine or wifely woman of the pair with their unsuccessful attempts to find their friends. For example, Blanche confronts Geoffrey against Sir Patrick's advice and puts him on his guard:

Blanche remained alone in the morning-room. The prospect of getting at the truth, by means of what Geoffrey might say on the next occasion when he consulted Sir Patrick, was a prospect that she herself had closed from that moment. She sat down in despair, by the window. It commanded a view of the little side-terrace which had been Anne's favourite walk at Windygates. With weary eyes and aching heart, the poor child looked at the familiar place; and asked herself, with the bitter repentance that comes too late, if she had destroyed the last chance of finding Anne! (294)

Although Blanche sets out with good intentions, she makes the situation worse through her headstrong and impetuous behaviour. The description of her as a 'poor child' with 'weary eyes and aching heart' contrasts markedly with descriptions of Anne as intelligent and mature in her decision-making. Similarly, Grace Middleham is unable to find Anne Studley when she disappears from Germany, despite the resources she has at her disposal:

Quietly and without letting any one know what she was doing, Grace had made such inquiries after her friend as seemed to her desirable. So far as was consistent with safety, she had taken into her confidence some members of the detective police, and of the members of that ex-official body who devote themselves to the solution of mysteries. On several occasions she had inserted in the *Times* an advertisement commencing with the old catchword "Tocsin," and calling A.S. to communicate with her friend at an address then indicated, but without avail. (133)

Grace's attempts to locate Anne are more sensible than Blanche's – she takes care to be 'consistent with safety', for instance – but she still cannot find Anne because she does not want to be found. Despite the fact that Grace has come to regret her treatment of Anne, she is unable to find her and apologise, leaving the power to reconcile with Anne, similar to the situation in *Man and Wife*. Therefore, the more feminine of the pair is impotent, despite their wealth, to locate the dominant one against their wishes.

The purity of Blanche and Grace in comparison to their friends impacts the way the Annes can confide in and interact with them. This creates a gulf similar to that of a heterosexual marriage, with the man far more aware of degradation than the woman. Jan-Melissa Schramm, in her work *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative*, points out that, 'Liking or loving another in Victorian writing is often dependent upon the recognition, firstly, of their irreplaceable singularity, and secondly, of their goodness.'³⁷ This is integral to both *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness*: Blanche and Grace's 'goodness' is never in dispute, though their judgement and maturity is. On the other hand, both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley are tainted women. Anne Silvester has fallen pregnant out of wedlock while Anne Studley's 'sin' is mainly knowledge and the taint of her unconsummated marriage. Yates grapples with the same questions of a wife's duty to her husband and the loss of her autonomy that Collins identifies later in *Man and Wife* when Anne finds herself at Geoffrey's mercy. However, while Yates identifies the threat, the narrative does not follow through on it in the same way as *Man and Wife*. Yates dilutes Anne's degradation but she is aware that such degradation exists, which serves to separate

³⁷ Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p20

her from her friend. When she decides to stay with Grace but not to reveal the truth about her father's villainy, she thinks:

She could do that, she felt, without the risk of bringing either danger or disgrace upon her friend; with Grace's assistance she could do something to earn her own livelihood; and, though at first the thought crossed her that, contaminated as she was by her associations, she had no right to bring the taint of vice across that pure and spotless life, yet, upon reflection, she felt that her father, though a gambler and villain, had not been, in a primary degree, concerned or taken an active share in either of the two desperate crimes of which she had become cognizant, and that, therefore, the fact of her being his daughter need not prevent her from asking Grace to extend to her the sorely needed help and protection. (74)

The fact that Anne wonders whether Grace would be 'contaminated' by her is further evidence of Grace's inherent 'goodness' and how Anne feels tainted by not only witnessing the murder of Walter Danby and learning about the murder of Grace's uncle, but by the life her father has led. Both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley, therefore, are worldly-wise in ways which are incomprehensible to Blanche and Grace. It is this knowledge of the world that necessitates their voluntary separations from their friends, indicating their recognition that Blanche and Grace's purity should be guarded against contamination by their degradation. The power to dictate these friendships, then, is possessed by the more masculine of the pair and utilised for the preservation of the more feminine.

The distinction between the Annes and Blanche and Grace demonstrates itself most keenly when the latter doubt their fidelity and the attempts to protect Blanche and Grace from knowledge leads to estrangement. What is demonstrated here is the conditional devotion of Blanche and Grace in contrast to the unconditional and self-sacrificing devotion of the Annes. In response to Blanche's remonstrance that she is shutting her out of her confidence about her marriage, Anne Silvester responds, 'You shall know all I *can* tell you – all I *dare* tell you,' (164) which confirms that she feels unable to be truly honest with Blanche. This costs her dear when Blanche discovers the 'truth' later. Similarly, Grace rejects

Anne Studley's defence of her interference in her relationship with Heath because she knows the truth is being withheld from her:

It has been said that Grace's perceptive faculties had greatly increased of late. As she listened to the hesitating manner in which this answer was given – so different from Anne's usual frank, outspoken way – she saw at once the attempt at evasion, but she did not trace it to its proper source. (122)

Anne is forced to withhold information from Grace, knowing that she is too innocent for the truth, and pays for it in the form of their estrangement. In this way, both Anne Silvester and Anne Studley are typical sensation heroines. Reynolds and Humble point out that, 'The intense, richly plotted stories of sensationalism demand equivocal, flawed women to enact them; a fact which moves its female characters outside the narrow confines of the domestic sphere, into a more dangerous, morally fluid public realm.'³⁸ Anne Silvester and Anne Studley are drawn away, and then excluded from, the domestic spheres they were happy within because of their status as flawed sensation heroines. Crucially, these exclusions occur because they are trying to protect their friend from harm: Anne Silvester tries to protect Blanche by absenting herself and not standing in the way of her marriage to Arnold while Anne Studley protects Grace from a bigamous marriage to George Heath. These women are not battling for familial bonds or money or marriage, as are the majority of sensation heroines, but, instead, they are struggling to protect their friends.

Both novels, almost inevitably, eventually reject homosocial bonds in favour of heterosexual ones. Anne Silvester's trials throughout the novel are seen as justification for a fortuitous marriage which George Watt explains in the following terms:

After Geoffrey's timely death Anne is rewarded with marriage to Sir Patrick Lundie. The non-sexual nature of the union points to another of the contradictions which underlie the resolution of the conflict in Collins's fallen-women fiction. Although the marriage could

³⁸ Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines*, p122

well be seen as more ritualistic than actual, it represents the return to a unified society, the true acceptance and integration of a penitent woman.³⁹

Her marriage to Sir Patrick may indeed be a non-sexual union based on his respect for her and Collins's desire to reward Anne for her sacrifices and trials throughout the novel. As Watt points out, it charts her reintegration into society but it also serves to damage the homosocial bond between Anne and Blanche which has been cultivated during the novel. In addition to protecting Blanche in the ways that we have seen, Anne expresses a wish early in the novel that she should have a life with Blanche: 'Her whole future depended on Geoffrey's making an honest woman out of her. Not her future with *him* – that way, there was no hope; that way her life was wasted. Her future with Blanche – she looked forward to nothing now, but her future with Blanche.' (123) This hope is based on what Blanche has told her a few pages earlier: 'You fancy we shall be parted, you goose? As if I could do without you! Of course, when I am married to Arnold, you will come and live with us. That's quite understood between us – isn't it?' (74) Anne's status in the novel, as analysed in this chapter, is dictated by her dependence on Blanche and would place her as a dependant on a newly-married couple at the beginning of their life together. This seems an odd arrangement considering that Anne is not connected by blood to the couple. Anne's marriage to Sir Patrick, therefore, serves the additional purpose of giving her a position in life that takes her away from Blanche, albeit only slightly since she has married her uncle: the friend becomes an aunt by virtue of her marriage.

The conclusion to *The Silent Witness* falls short of providing a conventional happy ending for Anne Studley but supplies one for Grace, drawing another distinction between the pair. In the third volume, Yates introduces a new hero who has, quite separately,

³⁹ George Watt, *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1984), p107

endeared himself to both Grace Middleham and Anne Studley. Clement Burton is a doctor who plays a part in locating Anne and bringing her back to Grace. With only brief explanations for both attachments, it is revealed in the final pages that Anne and Grace are both in love with him. Burton loves Grace but feels inferior to her and so plans to leave England. Anne is forced to make one final sacrifice for her friend:

And, above all, Anne felt herself called upon to make the crowning sacrifice of her life, by stifling for ever the deep attachment she had silently nourished, and solving the difficulty which existed between those two. It could be done, she thought – the misunderstanding could be at once removed – if she only had the courage to efface herself, and to act as interpreter between them. (166)

This is framed as the final sacrifice required of Anne in order to ensure Grace's happiness – her goal throughout the second half of the novel – but, again, it also serves to diminish the ties between the two friends. Clement Burton is an unexplored hero; a character who makes a timely appearance to prevent a resolution of the novel which would cement the homosocial bond between Anne and Grace. It creates what Sharon Marcus calls the female amity plot, which she identifies as common in Victorian fiction: 'In the plot of female amity, women who love the same man refuse to compete for him and thus smooth the way for marriage by affirming the femininity that Victorians equated with altruism and reciprocity.'⁴⁰ This is therefore a conventional ending to a story which has centred on the bonds between two women, but it is notable that Grace is unaware of Anne's feelings for Burton and so is unable to offer him to her friend in the way Anne does. Anne's final sacrifice of bringing Grace and Burton together is framed as a way of repaying Grace's affection towards her:

Here was a way, then, Anne thought, of repaying all the friendship which she had received at Grace's hands; and when she remembered the devotion existent from their schooldays, and, even at that present moment, manifest in each of Grace's words and acts towards her, she felt that, though her own immolation was a part of the scheme, she could yield herself up without a murmur. (166)

⁴⁰ Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, p104

In a sense, this attitude is a logical continuation of Anne's own devotion towards Grace throughout the novel: she was willing to sacrifice herself to save Grace from a bigamous marriage and now she is willing to sacrifice herself in order to secure Grace a happy marriage. However, Anne is afforded no marriage of her own. These are the final lines of the novel:

Mr and Mrs Burton are the active and generous patrons of a prosperous institution for training hospital nurses, at the head of which is Anne Studley, who devotes all her time to the institution. She lives in the house, and personally superintends an imbecile woman with a useless right arm, who sings very sweetly, and is happy in her mindless way, looking to Anne for everything, as a dog looks to its master. (168)

Anne's place is, once more, reduced to dependence, though this time in the guise of an employee. She is afforded no marriage of her own but gets in its place the devotion of the 'imbecile' who was George Heath's true wife.

Unlike Collins, Yates seems reluctant to reward his heroine with a happy marriage of her own, instead leaving her as the model of self-renunciation. This seems disproportionate since Anne Silvester's 'sin' of bearing an illegitimate child was arguably worse. While Anne Silvester participated in her sin, Anne Studley was more sinned against and a victim of circumstance and coercion. Nonetheless, she is rewarded only by employment and generous benefactors and not marriage. There is a possibility, however, that this could be seen as more faithful to the homosocial bonds between Anne and Grace than it first appears. Anne's sacrifice gives Burton to Grace, yes, but it also allows one of the final acts of the novel to be a reminder of Anne's devotion to Grace and it is not diluted by any mention of a perfunctory marriage for Anne.

Man and Wife and *The Silent Witness* demonstrate that friendships between women can become a compelling source of narrative tension in sensation fiction and that such

relationships can mimic the conventions of heterosexual marriage. Lillian Faderman, in her 1985 book *Surpassing the Love of Men* explains:

When men wrote about female attachments in literature, they tended to see the same sentimental pictures that were prevalent in eighteenth-century fiction: Two sweet females uplifting each other morally, but ultimately entirely dependent on men whether that dependence brought them joy or tragedy. What they did not see was how female relationships could sustain a woman intellectually and make her strong enough to engage in the battle for more of the world.⁴¹

The representations in these two novels go beyond the merely 'sentimental'. The Annes are 'morally' corrupted and yet it is their steadfast devotion to their friends which provide the moral centres of the novel – they strive to protect them and, in doing so, are forced to sacrifice themselves. Nor are they 'entirely dependent on men'. While they do finally accept conventional heterosexual ties instead of homosocial ones, throughout the novels, for the most part, the Annes act of their own accord, making decisions and pursuing paths they deem correct and are not dependent on men. As Faderman suggests, Anne Silvester and Anne Studley draw strength from these friendships as the desire to protect their friends from harm requires great mental fortitude. These representations of female homosociability may ultimately end in conventional heterosexuality, but the reader is left with the sense that the heterosexual relationships which form the resolution of the novels were indeed subplots themselves, subordinate to the ties of female friendship which dominate the novels.

⁴¹ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (London: The Woman's Press Limited, 1985), p157

The Devotion of the Disabled Male

Ah, what a life for a man to pass! situated as Lord Caterham was, he must under such circumstances have become either a Quilp or an angel. The natural tendency is to the former: but Providence had been kind in one instance to Lord Caterham, and he, like Mr. Disraeli, went in for the angel.

Land at Last, 1866¹

Representation of the disabled in sensation fiction and recent work in disability studies

A.C. Swinburne commented in an article following Wilkie Collins's death in 1889 that, 'He could not, as a rule, get forward at all without the help of some physical or moral infirmity in some one of the leading agents or patients of the story.'² We have already seen in chapter one how Collins portrayed Mrs Wragge in *No Name* and one of the more famous examples of his predilection for such characters can be found in Anne Catherick in *The Woman in White*. However, like his fellow sensation novelists, Collins also included several physically disabled characters within his novels, thereby extending and complementing the idea of the sensation genre as a diseased form of fiction. This inclusion was by no means a phenomenon limited to the sensation novel. Charles Dickens alone introduced characters with various disabilities including the blind (*Barnaby Rudge*, 1841; *The Cricket on the Hearth*, 1846), the deaf (*Master Humphrey's Clock*, 1841), 'crippled' characters (*A Christmas Carol*, 1843; *Little Dorrit*, 1857) and those with facial disfigurements (*David Copperfield*, 1850). The sensation genre, then, hardly broke new ground in containing disabled characters, but the requirements for sensational events and logic meant that disability could be seen as more than just incidental. In *East Lynne*, for example, Lady Isabel's facial disfigurement is seen as her punishment for abandoning her husband and children to be with another man. This disfigurement lets Lady Isabel be received back into her former marital home as a

¹ Edmund Yates, *Land at Last*, 3 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), i, p88

² A.C. Swinburne, 'Wilkie Collins', *Fortnightly Review*, November 1889, pp589-599, p590 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed 21st January 2013]

governess, essentially allowing her suffering to continue as she watches her ex-husband's new marriage at close-range and witnesses the death of her son from consumption. None of this would have been possible had the train crash not left Lady Isabel unrecognisable but, as well as serving a melodramatic plot function, the train crash also serves as punishment for Isabel's perceived sins. This motif of disability as a form of punishment is one which is repeated in the sensation genre, although like other characters in the genre some refuse to act according to convention and adopt roles for themselves which may be frowned upon outside of the genre's constraints. This role sometimes takes the form of devotion towards or protection of another, as will be seen in the discussion of three novels later in this chapter.

This chapter argues that, while Wilkie Collins excels in producing memorable disabled characters, Edmund Yates more successfully inverts the link between disability and immorality or criminality which appears regularly both inside and outside the sensation canon. This inversion can be read through the lens of queer theory, which highlights the connection between the disabled masculine and the feminine body. Queer readings of the texts situate these characters as other, demonstrating their eccentricities, effeminacy and, most importantly, their physical and moral ambiguity. In *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*, Yates combats this ambiguity by constructing disabled males who are almost angelic in nature, their ambiguities and desires sublimated in a way which does not disrupt the ultimately heteronormative resolutions of the novels. The devotion the three men offer to the women they love threatens to disrupt these resolutions, threatening marriages that lack sexual contact and/or healthy children. This is one of the primary reasons why the men's desires must remain unfulfilled, as Collins and Yates seek to reinforce the normative impressions of masculinity and femininity. To do otherwise would necessitate engaging with

the queer ambiguities raised by Dexter, Caterham and Dugdale and, ultimately, these sensation novels immerse themselves in the heteronormative ideals of the period. Recent criticism in disability studies suggests why these ambiguities are eventually repressed by Collins and Yates.³

Disability studies as a distinctive strand of literary criticism has developed over the last twenty years. *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (1997), edited by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, examined, amongst other things, why disability has been sidelined in the humanities:

The predominance of disability in the biological, social, and cognitive sciences parallels an equally ominous silence within the humanities. Perhaps because disabilities are exclusively narrated as debilitating phenomena in need of medical intervention and correction, the humanities have not privileged disability as a foundational category of social expertise or symbolic investment.⁴

The collection of essays edited by Mitchell and Snyder go some way towards correcting this deficit, examining both historical representations of disability and literary representations. This book is one of the first to provide a framework for discussing disability, particularly in regards to terminology:

In this volume we use the term *disability* to designate cognitive and physical conditions that deviate from normative ideas of mental ability and physiological function...*Disability* provides a definition of a limited physical body that is not simultaneously assumed to be extraneous to definitions of citizenry and humanity.⁵

These language guidelines can be taken in tandem with Jan Gordon's essay, 'The "Talking Cure" (Again): Gossip and the Paralyzed Patriarchy', which offers six specific observations on the relationship between disability narratives and the conventional discursive practices

³ A further positive representation of a disabled male in Collins can be found in the character of Oscar Dubourg in *Poor Miss Finch* (1872). Dubourg differs to the characters examined in this chapter in that he is afforded a happy ending. However, one feature that separates Dubourg from the characters analysed here is that he can – and does – safely reproduce. Therefore he is not a genetic threat as these three are to differing extents.

⁴ David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, 'Introduction', *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* eds. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp1-34, p1

⁵ David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, 'Introduction', *The Body and Physical Difference*, eds. Mitchell and Snyder, p2-3

relating to them. One of these is explicitly relevant to the characters discussed in this chapter: 'Traditional literary criticism often *symbolically converts* a genuine physical or mental disability into a narrative that may enable intellectual or emotional access to the disability while occluding its unique or individuating characteristics.'⁶ In the sensation genre this is extended to the literature itself: the causes and sometimes even the physical symptoms and effects of disabilities examined in this chapter are rarely unequivocal, leading to the characters becoming defined by the concept of disability instead of being laden down with unambiguous details. This encourages them to become archetypes of disabled males at one of two extremes – either the grotesque madman or the paragon of virtue with only a few benign alternatives such as Oscar Dubourg in Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1872).

In 2003 Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum edited a collection called "*Defects*": *Engendering the Modern Body*, a book that focuses primarily on representations of disability in the eighteenth century and discusses how disability became an operative category with the advent of industrialisation. In the introduction, Deutsch and Nussbaum consider masculinity and disability:

There is also a *shared* monstrosity between women and the deformed of both sexes that is not simply or easily adjudicated and that often signals gender fluidity. "Defects of nature" are frequently feminized or imagined as something categorically distinct from manliness and masculinity. For men, on the other hand, deformity is often associated with oversexed effeminacy or impotence. Since the female condition would seem to be aligned with natural defect, men fear that "defect" is an emasculating contradiction to the empowering and mutually constitutive character traits of aesthetic taste and of civic humanism.⁷

The 'gender fluidity' Deutsch and Nussbaum identify is particularly pertinent to the disabled males analysed in this chapter. All of them are, to a greater or lesser extent, feminized

⁶ Jan Gordon, 'The "Talking Cure" (Again): Gossip and the Paralyzed Patriarchy', *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* eds. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, pp202-222, p219

⁷ Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum, 'Introduction' in "*Defects*": *Engendering the Modern Body*, eds. Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp1-28, p12

physically and mentally by the texts. This idea that these men are 'imagined as something categorically distinct from manliness and masculinity' can be translated into the occasionally androgynous figures portrayed by Collins and Yates in *The Law and the Lady* (1875), *Land at Last* (1866) and *A Righted Wrong* (1870). This gender fluidity creates uncertain masculinity which may dictate the way these disabled men are represented by the two authors: instead of engaging with the complexities of disability and, especially, its impact on love and desire, Collins chooses to embellish his character so that he becomes a grotesque caricature while Yates endows his two disabled males with almost unrivalled virtue. There is little effort to analyse them beyond their androgyny, which helps to render them unviable romantic heroes.

The Disability Studies Reader (2006), edited by Lennard J. Davis, is a comprehensive examination of criticism up until that point. Davis's essay entitled 'Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century' discusses the propensity for nineteenth-century fiction to depict the 'middleness of life'. This obviously has a detrimental impact on the representation of disabled people in fiction since they do not conform to the normalcy Davis describes. He explains:

From the typicality of the central character, to the normalising of devices of plot to bring deviant characters back into the norms of society, to the normalising coda of endings, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel promulgates and disbursts notions of normalcy and by extension makes of physical differences ideological differences.⁸

The normalisation of fiction certainly applies to the sensation genre which thrived on destabilising the average home, preferring to show deviance infiltrating the middle-class home instead of offering a heroic protagonist to the reader. The sensation genre is committed to depicting the challenge to ordinariness and the disabled male does not fit into

⁸ Lennard J. Davis, 'Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century' in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp3-16, p15

this category. He cannot be included in what Davis calls the 'normalising coda of endings' because he presents a threat to the natural order, neither completely male nor able to safely reproduce without fear of heredity. The 'ideological differences' Davis recognises come, in the novels under consideration in this chapter, from the impossibility of giving disabled males a fulfilling romantic life. The novels ultimately reinforce the normalcy of able-bodied men in the marriage market while distinguishing disabled males as something different.⁹

In 2004 Martha Stoddard Holmes published *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture*, an analysis of literature and life-writing in the nineteenth-century. One chapter, 'An Object for Compassion, An Enemy to the State: Imagining Disabled Boys and Men', deals specifically with the representation of disabled men and boys in Victorian fiction. Holmes contends that there is a marked difference in the portrayal of the boy and the man, explaining, 'The innocent afflicted child and the begging imposter (as I will tag them) do not encompass the entirety of representations of disabled masculinity in Victorian literature, but...they are both recurrent and resilient.'¹⁰ She also admits that, 'After Tiny Tim, the world of disabled adult males in Victorian literature is peopled by a host of terrifying, leering old men with avarice, deception, and a smoggy sexuality hovering about them...who bilk money from good people; ogle, stalk, and knock down little girls; and terrify young boys.'¹¹ This analysis generally holds true in the traditional sensation canon, although there are a few exceptions such as Lord Lashmar in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1886 novel

⁹ This collection also features an essay by Robert McRuer entitled 'Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence' which draws comparisons between compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness. McRuer explains that labelling alternatives as possible reinforces the ideological perception that the dominant ideology is part of the natural order.

¹⁰ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2012), p95

¹¹ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, p95

One Thing Needful, Peters in her 1861 novel *The Trail of the Serpent* and Sir Patrick Lundie in Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870), who will be discussed later in this chapter. For the most part, though, Holmes demonstrates that while disabled boys such as Tiny Tim were looked on with affection, once they entered adulthood they became targets for suspicion. She attributes this to the fact that men were supposed to operate in the public sphere and disability complicated that: 'The disabled man's difference...is that he either is tied to the domestic sphere or else roams the streets without a regular workplace, and that he does not, in the eyes of the public, "make" (earn) money but begs.'¹² Both of these options remove the disabled man's agency, although it is the former that this chapter will focus on since all three characters studied reside in the domestic sphere.

This chapter will follow Martha Stoddard Holmes in her use of terminology surrounding the disabled. She explains that she only uses Victorian terms such as 'afflicted' or 'defective' when referring to an explicitly Victorian perspective. I would also add 'crippled' and 'deformed' to that list. She goes on to say that she uses, '*impaired* or *disabled*' as relatively neutral ways of describing bodies represented as having difficulty with "fundamental" physical functions and actions, while acknowledging that both terms and the concepts that underpin them are culture- and context-based.'¹³ By following Holmes's example in this, I hope to avoid using regressive vocabulary whilst still analysing the way texts and writers referred to disability in the nineteenth century.

Dexter, Caterham and Dugdale deviate from the normalcy identified by Lennard J. Davis since their disabilities are the focal point of their characterisation. The representations of Caterham and Dugdale complicate Holmes's analysis of disabled adult men depicted in fiction merely as conduits for villainy. Instead, they are compassionate men, devoted more

¹² Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fiction of Affliction*, p94

¹³ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, p13

to the welfare of another above their own and are far more sentimentalised than realistic. However, in spite of this, the two characters nevertheless rebut the argument that male disability in Victorian sensation fiction is equated primarily with malevolence.

The representation of the disabled in the periodical press

The portrayal of disability in the periodical press offers an insight into how the disabled were perceived and how their very existence was debated in a public forum. These articles vary between analysing disability in a scientific context and examining the issue through the lens of sentimentality. In 1840 a contributor to *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* commented on the depiction of disability in the fiction of the day: 'Proverbial wisdom speaks of the ill-nature of cripples, and fiction usually represents them as malignant and misanthropical; altogether overlooking the fact that many cripples are persons of extremely sweet and placid nature.'¹⁴ Indeed, literature including Dickens and sensation fiction itself often reiterated this proverbial wisdom, although rhetoric in the periodical press itself presents a more complex picture. Two brief articles in *Bow Bells* published within eighteen months of each other demonstrate two polar opposite views of disabled people. Firstly, in 1871 an article entitled 'Deformed and Ugly People' states:

Persons who are afflicted by an unfavourable cast of the features, or by deformity of the body when they do not feel within them the impulse of genius, for the most part endeavour to rectify as much as possible their misfortune of nature by fostering habitual good-nature, and cherishing benevolent feelings and kindly expression.¹⁵

Conversely, an article the following year about jealousy labels 'deformed' people as primary perpetrators:

¹⁴ Anon, 'Misanthropy', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 4 April 1840, p81 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 21st January 2013]

¹⁵ Anon, 'Deformed and Ugly People', *Bow Bells: a Magazine of General Literature and Art for Family Reading*, 8 February 1871, p63 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

There are two descriptions of persons who are most likely to feel the effects of this passion: those who are deformed, old, ugly, ill-tempered, or the like; and those of uneasy, cunning, and distrustful tempers. The first kind are so well acquainted with the unamiable part of themselves, that they have not the confidence to think that they are really beloved; and are so distrustful of their own merits that all fondness towards them puts them out of countenance, and looks like a jest upon their persons.¹⁶

These two articles serve to illustrate the lack of any single narrative permeating the periodical press in regard to disability. The disabled body seems to be appropriated to the author's purpose, perhaps to fill space rather than to propagate a definite argument. They are generalised using phrases such as 'for the most part' and 'who are most likely', suggesting a disinclination towards individuation. In both of the above examples, the persons considered are defined by their difference and, in both instances, agency is removed: in the first by the necessity to 'rectify' their misfortune by being extremely good-natured and, in the second, by the inability to maintain healthy relationships. This portrays them as devoid of power: they are on the margins of society with little ability to define themselves as anything but 'disabled'.

Frequently, debate related to the way in which disability was a problem to be solved, as Martha Stoddard Holmes explains: 'Disabled people, while they were not perceived as central to any widespread social or ideological crisis, were decidedly constituted as a social problem in need of a program of management.'¹⁷ Much periodical discourse on disability inevitably focused on the poor and disabled since this was the group most likely to require help from the state and charitable organisations. The welfare state altered dramatically in the Victorian era with the 1834 reforms creating uniformity in welfare administration and

¹⁶ A Matron, 'Something About Jealousy', *Bow Bells: a Magazine of General Literature and Art for Family Reading*, 15 May 1872, p406 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

¹⁷ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, p191

new rules surrounding the workhouse while attempting to deter claimants.¹⁸ Discussions about the physically and mentally disabled in journals would have slotted in to the wider debates on management of the poor because they were already considered a burden on society. There are two distinct attitudes towards this perceived burden which are of interest: the first suggests the burden should be eliminated while the second embodies the sentimentality of the era.

In the first instance, euthanasia was discussed in several notable articles. A piece in *The Saturday Review* in 1873 indicates recent debate and says in a satirical manner that Spartans used to dispose of their 'deformed' children, adding, 'The formality of asking the invalid's consent before the fatal dose was administered might be observed, at least for the present, in condescension to vulgar prejudices, and the presence of the parson and the doctor might be required at the closing ceremony.'¹⁹ The writer then reiterates their objections to euthanasia – primarily on religious and moral grounds, but also recognising how the system could be abused. Although the solution that the article offers is a satirical one, discussion of disability in the periodical press and in fiction frequently depict disability as a burden to others. This is certainly the case in *Land at Last* where the disabled male is portrayed as a burden to a family that would prefer a healthy heir.

Another article related to the subject by Frances Power Cobbe in 1869 looks at the effect science has had over nature:

The laws of nature are so arranged, that when animals are born feeble, or deformed beyond a certain point, they perish at once; and when they become diseased and blind, or maimed and incapable of seeking their food, a period is very shortly put to their sufferings. But we human beings, in whose finer nerves pain is probably felt in its intensest shape...we have secured for ourselves, by our science, the proud privilege of

¹⁸ Information about the reforms of 1834 and others of the Victorian era can be found in Deborah Stone's study of disability aid, *The Disabled State* (Macmillan, 1985)

¹⁹ Anon, 'The Peculiar People', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 22 November 1873, pp661-662, p661 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

prolonging life, when life means helplessness, blindness, distortion, anguish, and imbecility! *We* live on, if it be indeed to live as a slavering idiot, a motionless paralytic, a agonised victim of cancer, still we live, while the happier bird perishes in the nest, and the stricken beast lies down in the forest and expires. Truly it is a splendid achievement, a noble conquest over merciful Nature!²⁰

Cobbe's attitude to the 'survival of the fittest' draws on Charles Darwin's theories, which had been circulating for a decade at this point, with *On the Origin of Species* then in its fifth edition. Her attitude is clearly that science has disturbed the natural order of things and that it is cruel to keep human beings alive who cannot enjoy life. While Cobbe does not advocate euthanasia in this article, she does engage with the possibility that doctors should not do their utmost to ensure life is preserved in such cases. She also has concerns about hereditary diseases and disabilities:

The sickly, the deformed, the intemperate and depraved, the inheritors of the most frightful diseases, - if they have but wealth enough to command the resources of science, have a chance of existence prolonged enough to bequeath their debased type, their imperfect organisation, to sons and daughters of similar misery.²¹

Despite the fact that human evolution was only fleetingly mentioned in *On the Origin of Species* it was later expanded on by Darwin and others, providing a framework for theories of heredity. In the three novels discussed in this chapter, the potential for inherited characteristics, along with the physical improbability of sexual contact, influences the way the characters are represented. Collins and Yates fashion plots which toy with the possibility of sexual relationships, and therefore threaten hereditary transmission, whilst ultimately shying away from making them a reality.

The second discussion of whether the disabled are a burden to society comes within sentimental discourse which seeks to analyse them with sympathy, an apparently opposite

²⁰ Frances Power Cobbe, 'To Know, Or Not To Know?', *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1869, pp776-787, pp782-783 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

²¹ Frances Power Cobbe, 'To Know, Or Not To Know?', *Fraser's Magazine*, p783

attitude that, nevertheless, likewise deprives the disabled body of agency. Benevolence is a key component in Victorian periodical discourse, although at times it is portrayed as being more for the benefit of the giver than the receiver. An article by Matthew Browne in *Good Words* in 1866 entitled 'The Deformed and the Stricken' describes the attitude some able-bodied people hold towards those with physical disabilities:

Somebody ought to put in plain words the deep incessant wakeful sympathy with which the strong remember the infirmities of the weak; in a word, the mighty currents of human love with which they are surrounded. If that love could be made known to them the saddest among them would surely lift up heart and head for a moment, and feel that the breath of God was warm upon their brow.²²

As this example demonstrates, sympathetic responses to disability were frequently more concerned with the response of the able-bodied subject than the identity of the disabled object of their sympathy. Responses of this kind, which aim to represent a worthy band of people who are constantly concerned about the fates of 'the weak', creates a division between the 'strong' and 'weak' that denies sympathetic agency to the disabled subject.

Audrey Jaffe, in her book *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (2000), analyses such sentiment and the groups it involved:

The figures Victorian society defined as objects of sympathy were, of course, its outcasts; situated outside respectable identity, they were essential to its definition...Victorian representations of sympathy capture the tension between an emphasis on sympathy and charity as humanitarian values, on the one hand, and on uneasy identification with sympathy's visible objects, on the other.²³

So, while people viewed charity as an excellent contribution to society, distance exists between the charitable and the subject. Disabled people certainly fit into the outcast category to which Jaffe refers because there is often a substantial difference, which can be physical or mental, between an able-bodied member of Victorian society and someone who

²² Matthew Browne, 'The Deformed and the Stricken', *Good Words*, November 1866, pp737-740, p737 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

²³ Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2000), p18-19

can be labelled as disabled. An 1871 article in *The New Monthly Magazine* points out how those with 'physical defects' are well looked after:

The pity and the charity which are brought out by such defects of nature are witnessed to by the numerous institutions in which the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the crippled are shielded with all the resources of human appliance from all other outward evils than those which nature has entailed on them.²⁴

In this instance, disabled agency is almost certainly endangered by the fact that they are protected by these many 'institutions'. While the author suggests that they are 'shielded' from other 'evils', this separation also implies that they are contained as well.

There is an evident tension between the scientific and the sentimental attitudes within Victorian society during this period. On the one hand, cultural scientists made appeals to sense, posing logical questions about prolonging life through medicinal advancements which may make life intolerable for the persons involved. They also raised questions about the potential for hereditary illnesses to be passed along bloodlines through this prolonging of life. On the other hand, sentimental discourse appealed directly to the emotions, offering a complete contrast to science, as Fred Kaplan explains: 'Sentimentality in the Western tradition takes its force from a keen awareness of the mixed nature of human nature. It is an attempt, among other things, to generate or at least to strengthen the possibility of the triumph of the feelings and the heart over self-serving calculation.'²⁵ Sentimentality thrived on the heart triumphing over the head and this emotional awareness of others can be seen in the periodicals and fiction of the era. The two different approaches clash most acutely during discussions of the poor and disabled where the people involved are perceived as far more of a burden to society than they would be if they were part of wealthier families. By situating themselves in the upper echelons of society, sensation

²⁴ Anon, 'Stray Thoughts and Short Essays XI', *The New Monthly Magazine*, May 1871, pp592-597, pp592-593 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

²⁵ Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (USA: Princeton University Press, 1987), p16

novels avoid this problem to an extent. However, in Lord Caterham's case, the burden he becomes is as an heir to an earldom who cannot marry or bear children, provoking a clash between practicality and sentimentality. In addition, these three novels utilise the distance of sentimental discourse to avoid romantic entanglements for their disabled male characters: the women they love feel sympathy for them but these sympathetic attitudes preclude any meaningful and reciprocal affection.

Disfigurement in pre-sensation fiction

There are many recognisable tropes in the sensation genre which frequently recur. For example, there are many beautiful women hiding sinister secrets and accidental bigamy scandals are common fodder. Another recognisable 'type' became the disfigured or disabled male and his malevolent personality. This built on characters from Dickens's novels and elsewhere to become a fixture in the sensation genre.

Wilkie Collins's early novel *Basil* (1852) serves as an important precursor to the sensation novel Collins would be instrumental in creating. This novel includes a villain, Robert Mannion, who is disfigured in a fight with the titular hero. Before the altercation he is described by Basil as, 'assuredly one of the handsomest men I ever beheld', although he goes on to comment that, 'Never had I before seen any human face which baffled all human inquiry like his. No mask could have been made expressionless enough to resemble it; and yet it looked like a mask.'²⁶ The fight with Basil damages Mannion to such an extent that he loses sight in one eye and is horribly mutilated. He is carefully kept out of view of the reader until his final battle with Basil on a cliff-top: 'I turned, and saw Mannion standing by me. No shade concealed the hideous distortion of his face. His eye was on me, as he pointed

²⁶ Wilkie Collins, *Basil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p90

significantly down to the surf foaming two hundred feet beneath us.' (256) The implication within the novel is that Mannion's physical disfigurement matches his external features with his internal ones. Tim Dolin and Lucy Dougan argue that he is a monster, a by-product of creating what they term an 'honourable' middle class. They go on to say, 'Disconnected, uprooted, déclassé, Mannion is a modern man of a later century and has no place in mid-Victorian Britain. When his face is destroyed, his identity is reduced to a single letter mysteriously monogrammed on the handkerchief found on him.'²⁷ In this context, Mannion's physical impairments can be seen as a direct commentary on his place in the world. When he writes to Basil, threatening to haunt him for the rest of his life, he asks, 'Do you call this a very madness of malignity and revenge? It is the only occupation in life for which your mutilation of me has left me fit; and I accept it, as work worthy of my deformity.' (200) Basil's assault on Mannion has left him hungry for revenge but, essentially, all Basil has done is reveal the man behind the mask and set him loose: the physical disfigurement has revealed the monster underneath.

Another character who suffers from disfigurement is Daniel Quilp, the antagonist in Charles Dickens's 1841 novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Quilp is another character whose external qualities can be said to match those within. He is a dwarf but this is coupled with a fearsome physical description:

His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning; his mouth and chin, bristly with the stubble of a coarse hard beard; and his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile, which, appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connection with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his mouth, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog.²⁸

²⁷ Tim Dolin and Lucy Dougan, "Fatal Newness: *Basil*, Art, and the Origins of Sensation Fiction" in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* eds. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), pp1-33, p19

²⁸ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001), p22

This is the first of many grotesque descriptions reserved for Quilp throughout the novel. He is depicted as only slightly more than an animal – a cunning and vindictive man who torments and terrifies those around him, primarily his wife and mother-in-law. Quilp, although not benefiting from it in any tangible way, attempts to have Kit Nubbles imprisoned for theft simply for getting in his way many days before. After he succeeds, he attacks a ship figurehead brought into his hut for that exact purpose:

‘Is it like Kit – is it his picture, his image, his very self?’ cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance, and covering it with deep dimples. ‘Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog – is it – is it – is it?’ And with every repetition of the question, he battered the great image until the perspiration streamed down his face with the violence of the exercise. (452)

This scene is almost the culmination of Quilp’s violence: his plan is overturned by factors he never accounted for and he soon finds himself in mortal peril as he attempts to escape from his fate. His final battle is with a ship which casts him aside a corpse, perhaps a sign that size – and thus normalcy – can conquer the vindictive man of small stature. The epigraph of this chapter demonstrates that Edmund Yates invokes Quilp in *Land at Last*, showing awareness of the strict conditions of physically different people in the fiction of the mid-Victorian period – they were either unparalleled in their virtue or inherently evil and Yates adheres to that principle in his angelic representations of Lord Caterham and Dugdale. This, of course, in no way represented real life experiences but, as we have seen, discourse tended to reside at one extreme or another while ignoring the ambiguities in between.

This chapter will examine three novels in which disabled characters are depicted in terms of their effeminacy and the extremity of their personalities. However, their most distinguishing feature is their devotion to a woman who cannot or will not love them. Despite their disabilities, these characters obtain agency through their love and act, rightly or wrongly, to serve the woman they are devoted to. In this way, three of the most

ostensibly disenfranchised members of society are given the ability to influence the progression of the novels, each occupying a central position, contrary to the expected peripheral role. These novels, though, ultimately reinforce the natural order of society, as these characters neither marry nor are romantically beloved.

'A delicately handsome man': Disability and effeminacy in the domestic sphere

The Law and the Lady by Collins and *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong* by Yates all include characters who are physically disabled. Although secondary characters, all three are central to the plot, propelling the novel forward through their affection for three women.

Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady* holds the primary secret of the novel: the fact that he pursued Sara Macallan in a manner which led to her suicide. *Land at Last's* Lord Caterham's affection for his cousin Annie Maurice and his brotherly problems effectively link the two strands of the novel, and James Dugdale in *A Righted Wrong* is the confidant and saviour of two generations of the same family. Each is defined by their devoted attachment to a woman, though in Dexter's case this takes an unhealthy form and drives the object of his affection to suicide. All these relationships, however, offer agency to the disabled male as they aid, and act on behalf of, the woman they love. Even so, the relationships remain platonic, a signal, perhaps, that the agency of the disabled male in sensation fiction has its limits. Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mark Mossman point out that, 'All of Collins's disabled characters...are drawn to some extent as figures who are desiring subjects and/or objects of others' desires. This in itself is clearly productive of sensation, but the sensation that it produces is far from simple.'²⁹ This analysis can also be applied to

Yates's work and is equally problematic in *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*. While the

²⁹ Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mark Mossman, 'Disability in Victorian Sensation Fiction' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), pp493-506, p499

unrequited love of a disabled man creates the impression of a tragic figure, the agency obtained by this unrequited love gives them more power than a typical disabled character. However, this is counterbalanced by the death of Lord Caterham in *Land at Last* and the death of Margaret, the object of James Dugdale's affections in *A Righted Wrong*, suggesting that Yates is reluctant to explore the ramifications of these desires.

The unrequited love within the novels stems partly from the feminisation of the three disabled males. This feminisation offers one reason why the men's romantic hopes must remain unfulfilled: they are queered as the other within a heteronormative order. They become characters with a special status who should be controlled in a similar manner to the way in which the sensation novel controls adultery, madness and murder: the texts toy with centralising the disabled male in the romantic affairs of the novel but ultimately reinforce their differences. Their disabilities ironically offer them privilege within the narratives as their special status affords them attention. In her 1994 book *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction*, Miriam Bailin explains that the space can offer privilege: 'Physical debility is itself a form of deviation from group norms, which instead of incurring opprobrium entitles the sufferer to sympathy, tenderness, and even respect. It also calls into being an alternative community within the sickroom confines.'³⁰ In the case of these disabled males, the 'alternative community' of sympathisers precludes a meaningful romantic relationship. The compassion they are offered due to their disability gives them a privileged status in the sickroom but this room is still part of the domestic sphere, rooting them in the feminine space of the home. Agency is simultaneously offered by the connection to a place of privilege within the household, but also removed by the feminising isolation this privilege is linked with. This attachment to the home, coupled with the physical and mental

³⁰ Miriam Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p18

feminisation of the three characters, reduces their masculinity, situating them between the feminine and masculine.

This process of feminisation strips the characters of conventional markers of traditional masculinity. Not only are their bodies ambiguous but their minds exhibit feminine frailties and they are unable to act in masculine ways. For example, their confinement to the home necessitates the use of feminine modes of communication such as letters because direct action is impractical or impossible. Indeed, the truth about Sara Macallan's suicide is revealed in the physical form of her diary, discovered in a dust heap because Dexter's only option, having no access to matches and no servants around to light a fire, was to tear it up and put it in the bin. Dexter's inability to completely cover his tracks stems partly from his disability and thus inadvertently reveals the solution to the mystery. In both *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*, key aspects of the narrative are relayed by the disabled characters via the medium of letters, demonstrating their exclusion from action. This displays their impotence, further separating them from able-bodied men. The accumulation of feminine traits and connotations throughout the novels create a queer gender identity that allows each individual to evade classification as either masculine or feminine.

The first full description of Miserrimus Dexter in *The Law and the Lady* serves to establish him as an androgynous being who defies simple categorisation. The reader encounters him via a trial transcript that protagonist Valeria Woodville is reading. Although he has been mentioned in earlier chapters this is the first time he is described in detail:

Gliding, self-propelled in his chair on wheels, through the opening made for him among the crowd, a strange and startling creature – literally the half of a man – revealed himself to the general view. A coverlid, which had been thrown over his chair, had fallen off during his progress through the throng. The loss of it exposed to the public curiosity the head, the arms, and the trunk of a living human being: absolutely deprived of the lower

limbs. To make this deformity all the more striking and all the more terrible, the victim of it was – as to his face and body – an unusually handsome, and an unusually well-made man. His long silky hair, of a bright and beautiful chestnut colour, fell over shoulders that were the perfection of strength and grace. His face was bright with vivacity and intelligence. His large clear blue eyes, and his long delicate white hands, were like the eyes and hands of a beautiful woman. He would have looked effeminate, but for the manly proportions of his throat and chest; aided in their effect by his flowing beard and long moustache, of a lighter chestnut shade than the colour of his hair.³¹

This description creates several impressions. First of all, Dexter is portrayed as almost superhuman, ‘gliding’ into the courtroom and directly referred to as a ‘creature’.³² As ‘literally the half of a man’, he is classed as incomplete and his presence in the courtroom is akin to an animal being paraded in a zoo. However, the paragraph goes on to describe his masculine attributes – his hair, strong shoulders and intelligent face – and calls him a ‘well-made man’ in respect to the upper part of his body. Collins then highlights a third aspect of Dexter’s character by mentioning that his eyes and hands resemble those ‘of a beautiful woman’. The phrase ‘he would have looked effeminate’ moves to distance the description from that of a woman whilst creating the impression that there are feminine aspects to his appearance. Later descriptions of Dexter will reiterate this effeminacy again, but in the trial transcript Collins moves back to Dexter’s masculine beard and moustache, only hinting at the idea of the feminised half-man, half-creature who will come to dominate the novel. Something else is implied through this description which firmly lodges Dexter between the masculine and feminine: it is unclear whether this ‘trunk of a living human being’ was born with sexual organs. The text is ambiguous about where his body ends, both within the trial transcript and, later, via the eyes of protagonist Valeria:

For one moment we saw a head and body in the air, absolutely deprived of the lower limbs. The moment after, the terrible creature touched the floor as lightly as a monkey,

³¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Law and the Lady* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p163

³² This raises the obvious connotation of Frankenstein’s monster, immortalised in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley fifty seven years earlier. The direct reference to Dexter as ‘half’ man raises questions about what his other half consists of, animalistic characteristics, for example, or mechanical ones.

on his hands. The grotesque horror of the scene culminated in his hopping away, on his hands, at a prodigious speed, until he reached the fireplace in the long room. (194)

This description highlights the animalistic aspects of Dexter's personality but it also repeats the key phrase 'absolutely deprived of the lower limbs' which is the closest Collins gets to pinpointing where Dexter's body ends. The ambiguity around Dexter's sexual organs is another suggestion of his feminisation, but it is important to note that in a trial transcript such ambiguity is understandable. Dexter has been censored in speech, as will be seen later, and quite possibly in appearance too. The narrative distance of a trial transcript implies from the beginning that Dexter is something to be controlled. What we are given via the transcript is an authorised and legitimate analysis of a disabled body which itself appears to skew opinion against Dexter by focusing on his androgynous attributes.

Lord Caterham's first appearance in *Land at Last* demonstrates the inconsistency between his masculinity and his disability, creating the impression that, like Dexter, he straddles the boundary between masculine and feminine. His first appearance in the novel displays similarities to Dexter's:

The door opened, and a servant entered, pushing before him a library-chair fitted on large wheels, in which sat a man of about thirty, of slight spare frame, with long arms and thin womanly hands – a delicately-handsome man, with a small head, soft gray eyes, and an almost feminine mouth; a man whom Nature had intended for an Apollo, whom fortune had marked for her sport, blighting his childhood with some mysterious disease for which the doctors could find neither name nor cure, sapping his marrow and causing his legs to wither into the shrunken and useless members which now hung loosely before him utterly without strength, almost without shape, incapable of bearing his weight, and rendering him maimed, crippled, blasted for life. This was Viscount Caterham, Earl Beauport's eldest son, and heir to his title and estates. (i, 53-54)

This description is comparable to that of Dexter in several ways. Firstly, the chair is seen and highlighted before the man sitting in it which inexorably links Caterham to his chair for the rest of the novel. Yates goes on to focus on Caterham's feminine physical attributes including his 'thin womanly hands', 'soft gray eyes' and 'almost feminine mouth'. These

combine to give the impression of an overall feminine appearance to the reader. 'Delicately-handsome' comes close to suggesting masculinity but is tethered by the prefix and the description of Caterham's withered legs. The only fully masculine line of the description is the last one featuring his family and title. The rest of the description focuses on what Caterham lacks – health, the ability to move – therefore rendering the final line ironic in tone. Taken alongside a suspicion of hereditary causes of his disability, this line with specific reference to his status as 'Earl Beauport's eldest son' throws up the possibility that the father is genetically responsible for that son's disability. The reference to Apollo suggests a model of masculinity of which Caterham falls short: one that embodies physical capability and strength alongside intellectual capacity and artistic creativity. In making this comparison, Yates suggests the physicality Caterham could have possessed without his disability whilst simultaneously highlighting his creative and intellectual attributes to the reader. This implies that there is something more to Caterham beyond the disability that is the focal point of his entrance into the novel. In addition, Caterham's entry into the novel is seen directly, unlike Dexter's clinical introduction via transcript. This has the effect of evoking sympathy for his situation instead of immediately labelling him as an eccentric threat like Dexter.

James Dugdale in *A Righted Wrong* is perhaps the most conventionally masculine of the characters under discussion in this chapter. Indeed, in the opening chapters he is narratively ambiguous and is established as a foe to the heroine, playing into the evil disabled male trope which is ultimately debunked. Dugdale is less physically disabled than Dexter and Caterham and so more able to actively participate in the world. While they are both confined to wheelchairs, Dugdale's disability takes the form of a malformation of the

shoulders and so does not impede his ability to walk, though he too has a delicate constitution, as depicted early in the novel:

When the autumnal day was drawing to its close, and the growing keenness of the air began to make itself felt, quickly too, by his sensitive frame, James Dugdale turned his steps homewards, and, taking the lower road, without again passing through the village, he skirted the clumps of forest-trees, and entered the little demesne by a small gate which led into the pleasance. (i, 79-80)

Physically, it seems that even with his 'sensitive frame' Dugdale is capable of most activities, though his health worsens as the novel progresses and he ages. At the beginning of the novel, however, his health is akin to that of Sir Patrick Lundie in *Man and Wife*: he is still capable of being a helpmate to the heroine, Margaret, but there are frequent mentions of his disability peppered throughout the first volume which remind the reader of his distinctive status. For example, on a night soon after Margaret's return home, Dugdale is restless:

James Dugdale was but too well accustomed to sleepless nights, companioned by the searching, mysterious pain which so often attends upon deformity – pain, as if unseen fingers questioned the distorted limbs and lingered among the disturbed nerves; but it was not that which kept him waking now. (i, 118-9)

Although the pain may not be the cause of his restlessness on this particular night, the allusion to his disability serves to keep the character free from the idea of a romantic entanglement with Margaret. Bringing Dugdale's ill-health to the foreground throughout *A Righted Wrong* sets him at odds with a conventional hero and tempers the expectation that he and Margaret could embark on a relationship.

The physical descriptions of these three men are all coloured by their disabilities. The foregrounding of the wheelchairs in *The Law and the Lady* and *Land at Last* implies that the most important aspect of Dexter and Caterham's characters are their disabilities. In turn, those disabilities are intrinsically linked to their androgyny. The passivity associated with

being unable to stand highlights the impression of their lack of agency, creating an initial picture of both as less than male. In Dugdale's case, the implication of femininity is less acute but his 'sensitive frame' offers connotations of feminine sensitivity which undermine his masculinity. The overall effect of linking these men to femininity is to diminish their potential power within the novel as they are afforded the status of part-man, part-woman. The effeminacy of these characters is also linked to the symptoms of their disabilities. The neuralgia particularly associated with two of these characters strongly links to the feminine, allowing for unspecified nervous pain to be attributed to them, creating another facet to their disabilities which links them with feminine sensitivities. Neuralgia was described in this manner in an 1851 article in *The Athenaeum*:

Although this term was at one time confined to the more intensely painful disorders of the nerves, such as *tic doloureux*, it is now applied so generally as to embrace all affections in which the nerves indicate the slightest exaltation of their sensory function. These disorders are very painful, and frequently resist the best devised systems of cure...So long as the intimate structure and function of the nerves shall be so little known as they are at present we cannot expect to find a remedy for all the derangements of these important organs.³³

The acknowledgement that 'so little' is known about the nerves at this point in history allows artistic licence to be taken by novelists in portraying them. Some articles hypothesise about causes, for example a piece entitled 'Brain Power' in *The London Reader* in 1873 advises 'exceptionally excitable' people to avoid stimulants: 'The nerves are such delicate affairs that they often make us a great deal of trouble with very little cause seemingly. Excessive brain work renders them much more susceptible. This susceptibility must be counteracted by the avoidance of those things which tend to excite.'³⁴ This article, while offering a plausible explanation for neuralgia with the idea of over-stimulation, suggests

³³ Anon, 'Neuralgia: its various Forms, Pathology, and Treatment', *The Athenaeum*, 20 December 1851, p1344 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 26th January 2012]

³⁴ Anon, 'Brain Work', *The London Reader: of Literature, Science, Art and General Information*, 15 February 1873, p378 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th May 2014]

that nerves can be controlled, thereby issuing an implicit rebuff that those who do not control those over-stimulating forces in their lives such as drinking tea or coffee or smoking are contributing to their own problems. The emphasis on sensitive nerves and excitability parallels the analysis of hysteria given in a collection of lectures by F.C. Skey in 1867. Nerves and hysteria were mid-century concerns usually relating to women, hysteria particularly since the term is derived from the Greek for 'uterus' and was believed to be caused by disturbances with that organ. Skey explains:

We know...that it is most prevalent in the young female members of the higher and middle classes, of such as live a life of ease and luxury, those who have limited responsibilities in life, of no compelled occupation, and who have both time and inclination to indulge in the world's pleasures – persons easily excited to mental emotion, of sensitive feeling, often delicate and refined. Such are among the mental attributes of hysteria.³⁵

Skey's suggestion that those 'who have both time and inclination to indulge' in pleasures are susceptible to hysteria could apply to Miserrimus Dexter and Lord Caterham, who both display feminine characteristics and are unavoidably connected to the feminine space of the home. Dexter certainly has 'time' to 'indulge' and is forced to amuse himself in unusual ways, for example, painting disturbing works of art, knitting, imitating great figures of history and terrorising his faithful cousin. He is introduced into *The Law and the Lady*, as we have seen, with a clear focus on feminine connotations and these continue to be associated with him throughout the novel. Hysteria is yet another attribute that feminises Dexter and makes him an inappropriate prospective partner for any woman. Lord Caterham's neuralgia is explicitly mentioned within the text of *Land at Last*: 'The fierce neuralgic headaches from which Lord Caterham suffered had become much more frequent of late, and worse in their effect. After hours of actual torture, unable to raise his head or scarcely to lift his eyes, he

³⁵ F.C. Skey, *Hysteria* (New York: Moorhead, Simpson and Bond, 1868), p60

would fall into a state of prostration, which lasted two or three days.' (ii, 163) This description, rendering him prostrate, reaffirms the idea of Caterham as susceptible to feminine bouts of nervous anxiety, further linking him to the domestic sphere. The use of neuralgia and hysteria in these two novels enhances the impression of androgyny which has already been created by the physical descriptions of the men during their first appearances within the texts.

Dexter's flamboyance in dress and unusual choice of hobbies distinguish him from standard representations of masculinity. On Valeria's second visit to his home she describes his dress: 'His jacket, on this occasion, was of pink quilted silk. The coverlid which hid his deformity matched the jacket in pale sea-green satin; and, to complete these strange vagaries of costume, his wrists were actually adorned with massive bracelets of gold...' (215-216) Dennis Denisoff explains the significance of the ensemble:

As if to compensate for his handicap, Miserrimus has become more proud of his physical attributes and has developed a strong inclination towards fine clothing. In a foreshadowing of twentieth-century strategic camp, he dons his wardrobe as a sexualized challenge to anybody wishing to abuse him for his differences.³⁶

Dexter deliberately combines his masculine beauty with feminine attire in a way that highlights rather than conceals any difference between him and the rest of society. He pursues this further by insisting on knitting while Valeria is speaking:

'Women,' he said, 'wisely compose their minds, and help themselves to think quietly, by doing needlework. Why are men such fools as to deny themselves the same admirable resource – the simple and soothing occupation which keeps the nerves steady and leaves the mind calm and free? As a man, I follow the women's wise example.' (219)

This defence of man following women's example sets Dexter at odds with the masculine ideals of the period. Knitting sets him firmly within the feminine space of the home and,

³⁶ Dennis Denisoff, 'Framed and Hung: Collins and the Economic Beauty of the Manly Artist' in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* ed. Bachman and Cox, pp34-58, p49

since he has no occupation, the 'womanly' pursuits he enjoys are the only work a man in his position is fit for.

His external abnormalities are complemented by the depiction of his mental state, and the hysterical connotations that they invoke reaffirm Dexter as a feminine character. Valeria is warned by two separate people about Dexter's madness before she meets him, with her mother-in-law also revealing the truth about the trial transcript:

'The shorthand writers and reporters put his evidence into presentable language, before they printed it. If you had heard what he really said, as I did, you would have been either very much disgusted with him, or very much amused by him, according to your way of looking at things. He began, fairly enough, with a modest explanation of his absurd Christian name, which at once checked the merriment of the audience. But as he went on, the mad side of him showed itself. He mixed up sense and nonsense in the strangest confusion: he was called to order over and over again; he was even threatened with fine and imprisonment for contempt of Court. In short, he was just like himself – a mixture of the strangest and the most opposite qualities; at one time, perfectly clear and reasonable, as you said just now; at another, breaking out into rhapsodies of the most outrageous kind, like a man in a state of delirium.' (186-7)

Mrs Macallan creates a potent image of a man unable to control himself; one who mixes up 'sense and nonsense' and is unclear in his own mind. He is not depicted as a particularly stable man, lacking the qualities of endurance and stoicism which contributed to the masculine stereotype of the era, further adding to the impression of comparability with Skey's hysterical patient. Dexter's hysteria rises and falls within the novel but Valeria questions after their first meeting whether he is actually mad: 'It seems to me that he openly expresses – I admit in a very reckless and boisterous way – thoughts and feelings which most of us are ashamed of as weaknesses, and which we keep to ourselves accordingly.' (206) Valeria interprets his behaviour as the behaviour of a child acting out parts for himself. She adds, 'Besides, some allowance is surely to be made for the solitary, sedentary life that he leads. I am not learned enough to trace the influence of that life in making him what he is. But I think I can see the result in an over-excited imagination...' (206-

207) Valeria thus reiterates Skey's point: that it is circumstance which dictates the hysterical nature of the man and she acknowledges that the boredom associated with Dexter's status as a disabled man has assisted in this development. Dexter is placed beyond conventional categorisations of gender by the combination of his masculine body and exaggerated femininity. In doing this, Collins creates a grotesque and memorable character, but also provides a plausible reason why Dexter cannot be allowed a happy ending in the ultimately conservative form of the novel.

The primary difference between Dexter and Lord Caterham is that, while Collins depicts Dexter as embracing his feminine hysteria, Yates suggests that Caterham craves the acceptance from his peers that his disability prohibits. Dexter revels in highlighting his difference via his dress, art and attitude while Caterham would like to engage more with others and his isolation is used within the novel to evoke sympathy for him. While Dexter utilises his nerves for effect or to extricate himself from conversations he does not wish to have, Caterham only disengages when a combination of physical and emotional pain assails him. It is noted in the first volume that his mind and body are inexorably linked:

So delicately constituted was his frame, that any mental jar was immediately succeeded by acute bodily suffering; he was hurt, not merely in spirit but in body; the machinery of his being was shaken and put out of gear, and it took comparatively some length of time for all to get into working order again. (i, 177-8)

The link between Caterham's physical limitations and his mental frailties is therefore evident from early in the novel. His 'delicately constituted' frame gives a reason for his lack of participation in the social sphere of his contemporaries, even if he were physically capable of joining it. In addition, when he engages with the world he has radical viewpoints which set him apart from his contemporaries:

Old friends of Lord Beauport's, now gradually dropping into foggedom, and clutching year by year more tightly the conventional prejudices instilled into them in early life, listened

with elevated eyebrows and dropping jaws to Lord Caterham's outspoken opinions, now clothed in brilliant tropes, now crackling with smart antithesis, but always fresh, earnest, liberal, and vigorous; and when they talked him over in club-windows, these old boys would say that "there was something in that deformed fellow of Beauport's, but that he was all wrong; his mind as warped as his body, by George!" (i, 80-81)

Caterham's opinions can be dismissed by his father's friends because his disability allows them to generalise about his mental capacity, though he upsets the values of his world as much as Dexter does, albeit it in a different way. Dexter is described as 'deformed' and Caterham as 'warped' in mind as well as body. While Dexter shuns contemporary life, impersonating historical characters and painting mythical and Biblical works, Caterham's attempts to engage with the contemporary world result in further marginalisation. Stranded in the domestic sphere, Caterham studies life from a sedentary position. In this sense, he is also feminised: he is in the world but, like a woman, he plays no active role in shaping it. His ideas are dismissed, despite his accurate insights:

How many years had that crippled man looked on at life, standing as it were at the gates and peering in at the antics and dalliances, the bowings and scrapings, the mad moppings and idiotic mowings of the puppets performing? And had he not arrived during this period at a perfect knowledge of how the wires were pulled, and what was the result? (i, 87)

Caterham's disability causes his alienation, but it has also afforded him time to observe and critique humanity. This signals a more sympathetic character than Dexter and one more trustworthy to the reader. In this sense, the feminisation of Caterham which keeps him in the domestic sphere creates a reliable character, a direct contrast to Dexter. The alienation from society Caterham experiences as a result of his disability creates a sense of objectivity while Dexter's deliberate disengagement from the world implies an insular, subjective nature.

In *A Righted Wrong* James Dugdale's nervous sensitivity is less pronounced than Dexter's or Caterham's, which correlates with the fact that his physical disability is less

severe than theirs. Dugdale's physical capabilities are stronger, reducing his association with the feminine body and this also results in a corresponding diminution in the mental impairments which affect Dexter and Caterham. The allusions to Dugdale's feminine hysteria are rooted in his identification with Margaret's emotions and, later, her children's. He draws his strength from her happiness and succumbs to weakness when she is unhappy. For example, when there is a clear attraction which will lead to marriage between Margaret and Fitzwilliam Baldwin, Dugdale agonises then submits to the situation:

From this state of feeling to an intense longing to know the truth, to have it all over and done with – to be quite certain that Margaret had put the old life from her, and with it all the ties which existed between her and him; that she was going into a sphere in which he could have no place – was a natural transition for James Dugdale's feverish, sensitive temperament. (i, 280)

Although his temperament is described here as 'feverish' and 'sensitive', he combats this to come to a sensible conclusion. This ability to moderate his thoughts is part of what differentiates him from the wilder temperament of Miserrimus Dexter. The sensitivity highlighted in this paragraph appears more like the acute observation employed by Lord Caterham in *Land at Last*: Dugdale's disability – and his enduring love for Margaret – has given him the ability to understand people, as Caterham's solitary existence did too in *Land at Last*. Dugdale's old friend Hayes Meredith thinks to himself when they meet again after an interval of many years that, 'I should feel as if we were boys together again, only that Dugdale, poor fellow, never was a boy' (ii, 73). This is striking because it suggests that, like Caterham, his disability made him old while young and separated him from his peers. When Meredith announces to Dugdale that he's bringing bad news to Margaret it mentally affects Dugdale deeply: 'His delicate health, his nervous susceptibility, the almost feminine sensitiveness of his temperament, made suspense, anxiety, and apprehension peculiarly trying to him...' (ii, 64-5). The comparison with female sensitivity places Dugdale in the same

category as Dexter and Caterham: it is the clearest link in the first two volumes between Dugdale and femininity and is borne out of his love and concern for Margaret. He is also feminised by his ability to relate to Margaret's grief on learning she has inadvertently committed bigamy: 'Who could really know what she suffered but he – he, dowered with the power of feeling and understanding grief as these two men, so different, and yet in some qualities of their organisation so alike, were not dowered?' (ii, 153). Dugdale's ability to understand Margaret stems from his love for her, but also from the keen observation he has made of her throughout her life, something his position as a disabled man within the domestic sphere has honed. Set apart from the two non-disabled men in this paragraph, Dugdale's association with Margaret links him once more to the feminine.

The feminisation of the three men, incorporating their nervous temperaments and hysterical outbursts, removes some of their masculine power within the novels. The feminine language and descriptions utilised in relation to them reduces their status to that of women and limits their agency. Holmes and Mossman explain:

Bodies in sensation narratives are always the vehicles through which the texts articulate, exploit, and indeed undermine the seemingly stable binaries of able and disabled, sane and mad, normal and abnormal, familiar and strange – making characters and readers alike question on which side anyone falls.³⁷

By equating the disabled male body to the female body, Collins and Yates undermine the traditional opposition of male and female bodies. However, Collins creates a grotesque character that bears little resemblance to a real human being, included in the novel primarily to increase its sensational appeal. Dennis Denisoff explains Collins's attitude towards his characterisations:

For him, it was not simply a choice to include unconventional characters against which to juxtapose an ideal; rather, he relied on the presence of uncommon individuals for his

³⁷ Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mark Mossman, 'Disability in Victorian Sensation Fiction' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Gilbert, p494

financial and popular success. Those dissidents defined his genre...Miserrimus's awesome charisma, physicality, and imagination fulfilled a generic requirement.³⁸

This analysis indicates Collins's preoccupation with creating memorable individuals at the expense of believability and explains why Dexter is such a contradictory character. While he is portrayed as an aberration – a fact simply enhanced by his feminisation – the feminisation of Lord Caterham and James Dugdale succeeds in making them more sympathetic. It situates them as characters in need of assistance while Dexter, despite the lack of lower limbs, is portrayed as aggressive and capable of controlling situations. Caterham and Dugdale are forced, on most occasions, to sit and watch difficulties unfolding around them. The agency they do possess stems from feminine modes of communication such as letters and sympathy with the women they love.³⁹

The narrative style of *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong* differs significantly to *The Law and the Lady*. While perceptions of Dexter are given via the first-person observations of protagonist Valeria, Lord Caterham and James Dugdale are described by an omniscient narrator. This means that we are privy to their thoughts and motivations in a way not ascribed to Dexter. Yates's use of free indirect discourse to express the feelings of Caterham and Dugdale means that they are seen as objects of sympathy throughout the novels and their motivations are consistently depicted as for the benefit of those they love while Dexter's thoughts are never so clearly-defined.

'Rules of drawing, colour, and composition': Art, introspection and interaction

³⁸ Dennis Denisoff, 'Framed and Hung: Collins and the Economic Beauty of the Manly Artist' in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* ed. Bachman and Cox, p52

³⁹ Both men use letters to forward the plot and to aid the women they love. For instance, Caterham writes to engage an art tutor for Annie who she ultimately marries and Dugdale's letters between volumes two and three show his providing for Margaret's daughter in a manner which plays a significant part in subsequent events.

Dexter and Caterham's choice of leisure pursuits allows for further exploration of their interaction with the contemporary world. Both are artists of differing intensities, though their financial security removes them from participation in the public sphere of the marketplace. While Dexter's art works to reassert his difference from traditional society and illustrate his self-obsession, Caterham's provides an opportunity for interaction with the world beyond his limited domestic sphere. In his essay on the economic beauty of the manly artist, Dennis Denisoff discusses Miserrimus Dexter:

Among Collins's negative portrayals of monetary and physical signifiers of masculinity, his most remarkable and most revealing strategy involves a conflation of the two aspects within a single person. From this author's pageant of diverse masculinities, it is the character envisioned by this fusion who is ultimately the most memorable...Miserrimus offers a textbook example of Nordau's degenerate artist.⁴⁰

Nordau's most famous work, *Degeneration*, did not appear until 1892 but it draws on ideas which emerged in the mid to late nineteenth century about the attributes of social deviants which made them different to 'sane' members of society. In *Degeneration* Nordau explains:

Among thoroughly sane individuals the emotions originate almost solely from impressions of the eternal world; among those whose nervous life is more or less diseased, namely, among hysterical, neurasthenic, and degenerate subjects, and every kind of lunatic, they originate much more frequently in internal organic processes. Sane artists will produce works, as a rule, in which perception will predominate; artists unhealthily emotional will produce works in which the play of association of ideas predominates – in other words, imagination working principally on memory-images.⁴¹

Again, there is the mention of the 'hysterical' subject, linking Dexter once more to the feminine as well as the insane. As Denisoff argues, Dexter fulfils the criteria of Nordau's conception of the degenerate artist. On returning to visit Dexter alone, Valeria further examines the art he produces. He has put up a notice to accompany his paintings: 'People who look for mere Nature in works of Art' (the inscription announced) 'are persons to whom

⁴⁰ Dennis Denisoff, 'Framed and Hung: Collins and the Economic Beauty of the Manly Artist' in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* ed. Bachman and Cox, p48

⁴¹ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p476

Mr Dexter does not address himself with the brush. He relies entirely on his imagination.

Nature puts him out.' (213) Here, then, he is encapsulating what Nordau calls the 'diseased' artist who values his internal experiences over external ones. Valeria describes several of the paintings at length:

The next picture illustrated Cruelty, in many compartments. In one, I saw a disembowelled horse savagely spurred on by his rider at a bullfight. In another, an aged philosopher was dissecting a live cat, and gloating over his work. In a third, two Pagans politely congratulated each other on the torture of two saints: one saint was roasting on a gridiron; the other, hung up to a tree by his heels, had just been skinned, and was not quite dead yet. (214)

These violent images could be what Nordau termed 'imagination working principally on memory-images': Dexter has evidently utilised his knowledge of myths and Biblical references to create vivid and grotesque images which take traditional values as a starting point then deliberately invert them for visual effect. The purpose of these paintings is to shock and they succeed in unnerving Valeria: 'For the moment, my nerves were so completely upset, that I started with a cry of alarm...The idea of trusting myself alone with the man who had painted those frightful pictures, actually terrified me; I was obliged to sit down on one of the hall chairs.' (215) Valeria is alarmed by the implications of these paintings and his art feeds into the growing picture of Dexter as a dangerous entity. The art he produces directly links, using Nordau's theory, to the 'diseased' frame of his mind.

Valeria can recognise that his works have no real artistic merit:

Little as I knew critically of Art, I could see that Miserrimus Dexter knew still less of the rules of drawing, colour, and composition. His pictures were, in the strictest meaning of that expressive word – Daubs. The diseased and riotous delight of the painter in representing Horrors, was...the one remarkable quality that I could discover in the series of his works. (213)

By mentioning the 'rules' of art, which Dexter ignores, it is implied by Collins that Dexter will violate other rules within conventional society. In this paragraph, Collins uses Dexter's art to

foreshadow his eventual nervous breakdown as he excels in the 'riotous delight' of creating horrific art.

Lord Caterham is also an amateur artist but, while Dexter focuses on his art and impersonation of historical characters – with even his knitting utilised by him as a method of controlling conversations and eliciting a response – Caterham's hobbies are more varied and demonstrate interaction with the world beyond his own chamber:

It would have been impossible to tell to what manner of man the room belonged from a cursory survey of its contents. Three fourths of the walls were covered with large bookcases filled with a heterogeneous assemblage of books...Scattered about on tables were pieces of lava from Vesuvius, photographs from Pompeii, a collection of weeds and grasses from the Arctic regions (all duly labelled in the most precise handwriting), a horse's shoe specially adapted for ice-travelling, specimens of egg-shell china, a box of gleaming carpenter's tools, boxes of Tunbridge ware, furs of Indian manufacture, caricature statuettes by Danton, a case of shells, and another of geological specimens. Here stood an easel bearing a half-finished picture, in one corner was a sheaf of walking-sticks, against the wall a rack of whips. Before the fire was a carved-oak writing-desk, and on it, beside the ordinary blotting and writing materials, were an aneroid barometer, a small skeleton clock, and a silver handbell. (i, 78-9)

This wide selection of objects shows that Caterham is not as self-obsessed as Dexter. The 'half-finished' picture is only one of a multitude of objects in sight and is not described in detail. What is conveyed in this paragraph is Caterham's ability to look beyond himself, but also the futility of this ability: he owns things he could never have collected in person, such as Vesuvius lava and photographs of Pompeii, and things he could never use such as carpenter's tools, walking sticks and whips. Caterham's art is one of many distractions he surrounds himself with, but they do not mask the truth of his situation, as he explains to Annie Maurice in the first volume: 'You'll forgive me, Annie, won't you? I'm horribly hipped and low. I've not been out for two days; and the mere fact of being a prisoner to the house always fills my veins with bile instead of blood.' (i, 183) By describing his home as a prison, Caterham reasserts his hatred of the life his disability forces him to live. Caterham's

collections give him the illusion of a life outside the home and evoke sympathy for him while Dexter, on the other hand, has fashioned his own personal haven from his imagination: the grotesque artistic works which he creates separate him from society and are designed to invoke a reaction in others. Meanwhile, Caterham is frustrated by his isolated state and his interest in art is part of a wider attempt to escape from his disability. It is notable, also, that while Dexter adorns his home with his own creations, the artwork on Caterham's walls is described as being as varied as his taste in books:

For in the centre were Landseer's "Midsummer-Night's Dream," where that lovely Titania, unfairy-like if you please, but one of the most glorious specimens of pictured womanhood, pillows her fair face under the shadow of that magnificent ass's-head; and Frith's "Coming of Age," and Delaroche's "Execution of Lady Jane Grey," and three or four splendid proof-engravings of untouchable Sir Joshua; and among them, dotted here and there, hunting-sketches by Alken, and coaching bits from Fores. (i, 78-9)

Perhaps the most striking difference between Dexter and Caterham is that the former displays his own work proudly, while Caterham adorns his walls with the works of fairly contemporary artists. Two of the paintings mentioned are historical in nature while Landseer's is fantastical. In addition, all three of the paintings have connotations which can be interpreted as a commentary on Caterham himself. Landseer's painting depicts Nick Bottom with his donkey-head and Titania falling in love with him under the influence of a potion. That this painting occupies a central place in Caterham's room invites comparison between the two and suggests that his disability has created a creature that it is impossible to love without the aid of a spell. Frith's work is a man taking his first steps into the world and being recognised as important, something Caterham will physically never do. Finally, Delaroche's painting depicts a young woman, a paragon of virtue, blindfolded and about to be executed. The lack of control this implies, along with the attributes already discussed which link Caterham directly to the feminine, imply that Caterham is simply waiting for the

axe to fall on his life. This is especially salient when it is remembered that Caterham's brother is waiting in the wings to inherit the position as heir to the earldom once he dies. While these paintings offer connotations relating to Caterham's own experiences, the very act of displaying the work of other artists demonstrates an interaction with the world which Dexter, with his introspection, lacks. In his leisure pursuits and varied book and art collections, Caterham shows himself to be interested in the world beyond his room. Dexter, on the other hand, shows himself to be self-obsessed and dangerously fascinated by grotesque imagery drawn from his imagination.

As with the privilege of the sickroom discussed earlier in this chapter, Dexter and Caterham's artistic endeavours offer them a degree of agency that is both sanctioned by and limited within the domestic sphere. Dexter's introspection along with his determination to follow his own 'rules' of art alienates him further from traditional society. He creates and displays a set of grotesque, badly-painted artworks that desecrate his home while drawing attention to the artist as a potentially volatile and unhinged man. Dexter therefore utilises the potential agency of his art to reinforce his disengagement with the wider world. On the other hand, in Caterham's sickroom, the only room of the house that he considers his own, his diverse hobbies demonstrate engagement with aspects of life beyond the domestic sphere in which he resides. In addition, he attempts to make his room pleasant to Annie:

But I want to see you with as many surroundings natural to your age and taste as we can find in this – hospital...You must have a good piano of your own, in your own room or here, or somewhere where you can practice quietly. I'll see about that. And drawing – for you have a great natural talent for that; but you should have some lessons: you must keep it up; you must have a master. (i, 183-184)

This interest in Annie's welfare not only indicates his extrospection in comparison to Dexter, but also establishes the agency he can have in terms of aiding Annie's development. He is her champion in a household where she is treated as little more than a servant by his

mother. Caterham's use of his leisure pursuits in his sickroom directly impacts Annie – her drawing tutor is the hero of the novel and her eventual husband – while Dexter's art does not seem to affect anyone beyond alarming them. Furthermore, the representations of these leisure pursuits are indicative of their personalities: Dexter is self-indulgent in both his art and his romantic pursuit of Sara Macallan while Caterham values Annie's development and happiness above his own.

'A calm and unselfish affection': Devotion to women and conservative resolutions

The feminisation of these men, and their location in the domestic sphere with the privilege the sickroom affords them, offers them opportunities to impact on the lives of the women they love. This affection gives them power to influence the narrative, in spite of their weakened masculinity. Although they are not able to act, for the most part, as masculine agents, they nevertheless utilise their affection and assert control over the plots of their novels. In Miserrimus Dexter's case, this takes the form of a romantic pursuit which ultimately results in the suicide of Sara Macallan. Lord Caterham and James Dugdale's affections are more self-sacrificial: they offer devotion to Annie and Margaret respectively without the serious hope of reciprocation. While Collins's character transgresses boundaries by pursuing Sara, Yates's portrayals of Caterham and Dugdale offer angelic representations of disabled devotion.

Miserrimus Dexter's transgression of the boundary between able-bodied and disabled people is compounded by the fact that his pursuit is of a married woman. Sara has previously rejected his advances, as she explains in her 'confession' to her husband:

You hastily (and most unjustly) accused me of feeling prejudiced against the miserable creature on account of his deformity. No other feeling than compassion for deformed persons has ever entered my mind...I objected to Mr Dexter as your guest, because he

had asked me to be his wife in past days, and because I had reason to fear that he still regarded me (after my marriage) with a guilty and a horrible love. (359-360)

The 'fear' that Sara describes fits into the narrative which has developed Dexter as eccentric and unpredictable. His volatility has created an unsympathetic character, a product of sensationalism, and one who acts in extreme ways. The 'guilty' and 'horrible' love which Sara writes of reiterates the impropriety of such feelings and situates Dexter as both immoral and a betrayer of friendship. It also, in conjunction with his disability, portrays him as perverse. Sara writes: 'He has promised me a life of unalloyed happiness, in a foreign country with my lover.' (360) The use of the word 'lover', coming implicitly from Dexter's lips and not Sara's own, reignites the question about Dexter's sexual functions but, whether he is physically able or not, the idea is portrayed as distasteful and abnormal. Anne Longmuir points out that, 'He is at once half man, half machine, half masculine, half feminine, even half human, half animal. He is a classic instance of a Collins's character whose "moral management" of the self repeatedly fails...'⁴² The hybridity Longmuir highlights creates a creature beyond the scope of moral society. His 'moral management' fails most particularly in his dealings with Sara: his selfish pursuit leads to her death and, ultimately, fractures his own mind. Dexter's character is one who attempts to define himself as something other than disabled. However, his actions condemn him to receive none of the 'compassion for deformed persons' Sara writes of in her confession: by transgressing the boundaries of what it is acceptable for disabled males to desire, Dexter impedes any prospect of sympathy he may have received and helps to drive Sara to suicide, his agency taking on an entirely malignant character.

⁴² Anne Longmuir, 'The Scotch Verdict and Irregular Marriages: How Scottish Law Disrupts the Normative in *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife*' in *Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays* ed. Andrew Mangham (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp166-177, pp175-176

Conversely, both Lord Caterham and James Dugdale are self-sacrificing in their love for Annie and Margaret. Neither of them pursues their suit vigorously and they accept that their identity as disabled men denies them participation in the marriage market. Lord Caterham's self-discovery of his love for Annie is explored within the novel:

It was a brother's love, he told himself at first, and fully believed it; a brother's love for a favourite sister. He thought so until he pictured to himself her departure to some friends or other, until he imagined the house without her, himself without her, and – and she with some one else. And then Lord Caterham confessed to himself that he loved Annie Maurice with all his soul, and simultaneously swore that by no act or word of his should she or any one else ever know it. (ii, 50-51)

The determination that she will not know of his love differentiates Caterham immediately from Dexter who pursues Sara even after her marriage. Eager to keep Annie's friendship, Caterham is also eager to ensure that she has a life outside of the family. He cites his parents' approval of their friendship as a sign that his feelings are not reciprocated:

This immunity from parental worry and supervision was pleasant, doubtless; but did it not prove that to eyes that were not blinded by love-passion there was nothing in Miss Maurice's regard for her cousin more than was compatible with cousinly affection, and with pity for one so circumstanced? So Lord Caterham had it; and who shall say that his extreme sensitiveness had deceived him? (ii, 52)

Here, Yates makes clear that no romantic relationship can ensue simply by implying that she harbours no similar feelings for him. However, the suggestive nature of the last sentence in this paragraph allows for further interpretation by the reader. By excluding an analysis of Annie's feelings at this point, with the narrative style rendering this a deliberate choice, Yates leaves the question unanswered and a discussion about why Annie is not attracted to Caterham is unnecessary. Yates shrinks from depicting an angelic disabled character who is allowed a fulfilling romantic relationship – both here and in *A Righted Wrong* – but both are at least forces for good within the novels whilst Dexter is generally the opposite. The affection Caterham has for Annie allows him to interfere on her behalf and try to enrich her

life, while accepting that it can have no material benefit for him. This selfless devotion, in comparison to Dexter's selfish one, reiterates the fact that Caterham 'went in for the angel' and offers an unequivocally positive representation of a disabled male character in the sensation genre.

James Dugdale is situated, like Caterham, as an angelic character whose influence on the plot aids rather than hinders the woman he loves. While Dexter is focused on his own selfish desires for Sara, Caterham and Dugdale focus on how best to serve other people, Annie and Margaret especially. Dugdale's emotions are as maturely selfless as Caterham's:

Of those who had shared her life...James Dugdale was the only one who had made Margaret Carteret's character a subject of close and loving study – the only one who understood its strength and its weaknesses, its forcible points of contrast, its lurking dangers, its unseen resources. He knew her intellectual qualities, he knew her imaginativeness, and understood the danger which lurked in it for her – a danger which had already taken so delusive and fatal a form. With all the prescience of a calm and unselfish affection, he feared for the girl's future, and grieved as only mature wisdom and disinterested love can grieve over the follies and illusions, the inevitable suffering and disenchantment, of youth and wilfulness. (i, 45-46)

The 'disinterested love' depicted here offers a maturity of devotion which is not evident in *Miserrimus Dexter*. Dugdale's study of Margaret is based on the 'calm and unselfish affection' he holds for her and he does not utilise what he has learned to pursue or possess her. Unlike Annie, however, Margaret does come to understand the extent of Dugdale's true feelings towards her:

In the experience of her own feelings, in the engrossment of her own heart and thoughts in the new and roseate prospects which had opened suddenly before her, after her long wandering in dreary ways, she had learned to comprehend James Dugdale. She knew now how patiently and constantly he had loved and still loved her; she knew now what had given him a prescient knowledge of her former self-sought doom; she knew what had inspired the efforts he had made to avert it from her. Inexpressible kindness and pity for him, painful gratitude towards this man whom she never could have loved, filled Margaret's head; but she kept aloof from him. Explanation between them there could not be – it would be equally bad for both. He who had so striven to avert her misery would be consoled by her perfect happiness; in the time to come, the blessed peaceful time, he should share it. (ii, 24-25)

The language used in this paragraph such as ‘how patiently and constantly he had loved’ and ‘what had inspired’ his efforts gives credence to the purity of his devotion via the reliable voice of the heroine. Again, though, there is no explanation for Margaret’s lack of romantic love explicitly given in the text and the reader is left to assign reasons for it, much as they were left to assume that Annie could never reciprocate Caterham’s love in *Land at Last*, and, once again, the narrative style could easily have cleared up any ambiguity. The most obvious of these reasons is certainly his disability but other factors include their differing ages and his interference in – and knowledge of – her former life. However, the subordination of character to plot in sensation fiction, may be at the root of the fact that Margaret ‘never could have loved’ James Dugdale: her redemptive love story must revolve around Fitzwilliam Baldwin due to his wealth and the plot requirements which stem from it. This generic necessity absolves Yates from having to explore the Margaret/Dugdale dynamic further. Martha Stoddard Holmes points out that, ‘Nineteenth-century literary works often articulate the differences between disabled and abled identities but also invite us to consider transgressing the boundary between them.’⁴³ Yates, in both his portrayals of Annie/Caterham and Margaret/Dugdale, toys with the reader by suggesting the possibility that a disabled man will transgress this boundary, but, ultimately, both pairings are only an adjunct to the main plot. The functions of these two disabled males could occur without the devotional love they offer the heroines. However, Yates chooses to make their feelings romantic rather than friendly, creating two unrequited love scenarios which invite the reader to sympathise with the disabled male who ‘never could have’ been loved by the

⁴³ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, p31

heroines. This implies two tragic heroes content to accept their lot in comparison to Dexter's attempts to forcibly obtain Sara's love.

All three men are loved by others but it is not the romantic love they desire. In *The Law and the Lady* it serves to highlight the cruelty of Dexter while, in *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*, Yates demonstrates that Caterham and Dugdale are not unlovable, only that it is impossible for them to be considered as objects of desire. Dexter's devotee is his psychologically unstable cousin Ariel who performs any task her master sets, threatens anyone who upsets him and allows herself to be literally used like a puppet on a string if he so wishes, as Valeria observes:

At the word of command, Ariel submissively stretched out one arm towards the dish. Just as she touched a cake with the tips of her fingers, her hand was jerked away by a pull at the string, so savagely cruel in the nimble, and devilish violence of it, that I felt inclined to snatch Benjamin's cane out of his hand, and break it over Miserrimus Dexter's back. Ariel suffered the pain this time in Spartan silence. (304)

As this extract shows, Dexter cruelly delights in using Ariel as a diversion in cruel ways. He explains this treatment of her to Valeria: 'The dormant intelligence of my curious cousin is like the dormant sound in a musical instrument. I play upon it – and it answers to my touch. She likes being played upon.' (198) Dexter's sadistic nature and the pleasure he takes in tormenting Ariel adds to the selfish aura surrounding him and helps to portray him as an unsympathetic and occasionally vindictive character. His only power over his cousin comes from the fact of her inferior intelligence, implying that anybody without a psychological illness would not entertain his ideas of control.⁴⁴ Ariel's devotion to him is unassailable and she ends the novel by dying on his grave, unable to live without his commands: 'She had strayed back to the burial-ground; and she had been found towards sunrise, dead of cold

⁴⁴ This type of devotion to Dexter can also be seen in his gardener who rushes to get the doctor when he hears his master is ill: 'The man's devotion to Dexter showed itself as the woman's devotion had shown itself – in the man's rough way.' (323)

and exposure, on Miserrimus Dexter's grave. Faithful to the last, Ariel had followed the Master! Faithful to the last, Ariel had died on the Master's grave!' (378) This idea of faithfulness is tempered by the knowledge of Ariel's learning difficulties, creating an alarming portrait of a woman prepared to die for a man who has treated her cruelly. This portrayal of devotion further illuminates the destruction which surrounds Miserrimus Dexter and provides a parallel to the main plot of Valeria seeking justice for Eustace and the reward of their reconciliation that she gains from it.

The devotion which Annie Maurice offers to Lord Caterham is based on friendship, not romantic love, thereby eliminating him as a romantic prospect within the novel. The affection she has for him places him almost above humanity, reiterating his angelic goodness. This is shown most acutely in free indirect discourse following his death when Annie is grieving: 'All was over now; the last sad ceremonial had taken place; and the place which had known Arthur, in his patient suffering, in his little-appreciated gentleness and goodness, should know him no more for ever.' (iii, 86) The reference to him by his forename here – seldom used within the novel – demonstrates that these are Annie's thoughts and not the narrator's. The words 'patient' and 'little-appreciated' draw sympathy towards Caterham for his treatment by the rest of his family. Annie's ability to see his 'gentleness and goodness' sets her apart from the other characters, but she has not equated him with romantic love, indicating, again, an inability to attribute earthly emotions to him. The strength of her friendly love for Caterham manifests itself in her commitment to remember him: 'The stillness of the great house was oppressive to her; and yet she shrank from the knowledge that that stillness was soon to pass away, that life would resume its accustomed course, and the dead be forgotten. By all but her; to her his memory should be ever precious, and his least wish sacred.' (iii, 95) Although Annie apparently doesn't possess

romantic feelings for Caterham, it is obvious that she is devoted to his memory and her friendly affection for him enhances the impression of his angelic nature which has pervaded the novel.

James Dugdale is loved by Margaret's daughter which leads to him becoming almost a surrogate parent to the orphan following Margaret's death. He has been transformed, through his devotion to Margaret's memory, from a disabled 'angel in the house' figure to the patriarch of the family. In the third volume Dugdale is beloved by all of the family members but one and Gertrude's irritation towards his critic is described in the following terms:

Yes, that was the general opinion of Mr. Dugdale, old Mr. Dugdale, as the household, for some unexplained reason, called him, and few things vexed the spirit of Gertrude Baldwin so nearly beyond bearing as the assurances to that effect which her aunt, Mrs. Carteret, was in the habit of promulgating to an inquisitive and sympathising neighbourhood. For Mrs. Carteret...was not of a very refined nature, and it is just possible that when she commented on Mr. Dugdale's reduced and sometimes almost deathlike appearance, to the effect that any one 'to see him would think he could die off quite easily,' she rather resented his not availing himself of that apparent facility without delay. (iii, 13-14)

Here, the strength of Gertrude's affection for Dugdale is demonstrated by the fact that criticism of him by her aunt was 'beyond bearing'. Gertrude's love for him is reiterated throughout the third volume as she consults with and confides in him. His devotion, both to her and her mother's memory, is integral to the final volume of the novel, as he rescues her from financial ruin:

How devoutly he thanked God then for the life at whose duration he had been sometimes tempted to murmur, the length of days which had enabled him to profit by the impulse which had prompted him to decline to add to the ruin which, in their blindness, they had all accumulated to heap in Gertrude's path! (iii, 274-275)

His ability to save Gertrude at this juncture ensures she can later marry and regain her home. On a deeper level, however, Dugdale's survival allows his devotion for Margaret to

become almost reverential as he becomes the main keeper of her memory. In this sense he acts as her widower even until the night he dies, legitimising his status as surrogate father to Gertrude. This final image of Dugdale as a father-figure to Gertrude not only links him to the central problem of illegitimacy within the novel but reaffirms his bond with Gertrude and, by extension, his bond with Margaret. It therefore makes the unrequited love of Dugdale for Margaret one of the lingering images of *A Righted Wrong*.

The portrayals of disabled men in the three novels examined in this chapter use the central motif of devotion to develop their plots but also to toy with the idea of a disabled man living a contented and fulfilled romantic life. Ultimately, all three shy away from concluding that this is possible. One reason for this may be the danger of heredity, which was not only seen as a physical problem, but also a moral one. An article in the *Westminster Review* in 1856 examines the work of fiction in promoting the difficulties of marriage where a 'hereditary taint' may exist. It touches upon four works of recent fiction including an early Wilkie Collins piece, 'The Moncktons of Wincot Abbey':

These writers all assume that the transmission of the malady is inevitable and hence they insist on the duty of renunciation. No one with the "hereditary taint" is justified in marrying. He must bear his burden; he must not compromise for selfish enjoyments the happiness of descendants. Were the problem really so simple as these writers make it, their moral conclusions would be indisputable. But artists are not bound to be physiologists, and are assuredly bad law-givers in such cases.⁴⁵

The author highlights that fiction dictates a disabled person must 'bear his burden' without indulging 'selfish enjoyments'. This simplistic analysis negates the necessity for real interrogation of hereditary transmission and its ramifications within the fiction of the period. This trend continues in the sensation genre, preventing romantic relationships of all three characters examined in this chapter, for no ostensible reason beyond their disabilities.

⁴⁵ Anon, 'Art. V. – Hereditary Influence, Animal and Human', *Westminster Review*, July 1856, pp135-162, p135 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 20th July 2012]

This suggests that the 'hereditary taint' principle was almost unassailable amongst males in sensation fiction.

One notable exception to this apparent rule is Sir Patrick Lundie in Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870).⁴⁶ He is afforded the position of the heroines' helpmate and adviser and is rewarded with marriage at the end of the novel, despite his club foot. Martha Stoddard Holmes offers an addendum to her statement that disabled men in Victorian fiction are generally villainous characters by saying, 'There are a few benign alternatives that no one but a Victorianist is likely to remember, like...Collins's Sir Patrick Lundie.'⁴⁷ Lundie is physically described in these terms: 'Personally, he was little and wiry and slim – with a bright white head, and sparkling black eyes, and a wry twist of humour curling sharply at the corners of his lips. At his lower extremities, he exhibited the deformity which is popularly known as 'a club-foot'.'⁴⁸ Lundie, although a 'benign' disabled male, is not entirely central to the novel and the appearances he does make focus on his humour and morality rather than his disability. Despite the fact that he walks with a cane, it is easy to overlook Lundie's disability as Collins rarely makes it the focus of the narrative while Dexter and Caterham are inexorably linked to their wheelchairs, making their disabilities part of the visual landscape of the novels. They are defined by the way their disabilities make them look while Sir Patrick Lundie is not defined primarily by his club foot. Lundie can also be differentiated by his allocation of a happy ending when he marries the long-suffering heroine of *Man and Wife*, Anne Silvester, despite being many years her senior. However, this happy ending may not be the triumph it appears to be for the representation of disabled men. George Watt labels it a 'non-sexual' union, which is probably accurate given the paternal nature of the

⁴⁶ Another is Oscar Dubourg in Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1872) mentioned on p133.

⁴⁷ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, p95

⁴⁸ Wilkie Collins, *Man and Wife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p58

relationship that has developed between the pair. The marriage is one that rescues Anne and not Lundie, as Watt explains: 'Although the marriage could well be seen as more ritualistic than actual, it represents the return to a unified society, the true acceptance and integration of a penitent woman.'⁴⁹ This frames the marriage as Anne's redemption, giving her the status of a respectable woman whilst falling short of giving her the reward of children. Lundie could potentially have children, although his club foot could be passed on, but this is negated by the non-sexual nature of his marriage to Anne. There is no risk in this marriage, no challenge to the accepted norms examined by the anonymous author of the *Westminster Review* piece above, that dictate fiction should not show disabled men married with the intention of having children. As an elderly man, Lundie's potential for procreation is slimmer than the three younger men discussed in this chapter. The hereditary risk they pose is therefore stronger.

Heredity may provide one explanation why Lord Caterham and James Dugdale do not have the opportunity to become romantically involved with the objects of their affection. However, an additional reason is that their status in their respective plots as helpmates to the heroine would be omitted and this function is vital to the machinations of both novels. However, in *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*, Edmund Yates creates disabled characters who deviate from the expected sensational trope of evil and, in comparison to Miserrimus Dexter, these two characters are progressive portrayals of disabled men. Although all three are feminised, Caterham and Dugdale utilise the agency offered to them by this feminisation and their location in the domestic sphere to positively influence the lives of the women they love. The devotion they show to the heroines creates narrative sympathy for them and, by representing them in this way, Yates challenges the expectations

⁴⁹ George Watt, *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1984), p107

of the sensation genre which sees the disabled male as villainous and, like Dexter, uncontrollable. Yates himself establishes the dichotomy of good and evil disabled characters when he states in *Land at Last* that a disabled man could 'become either a Quilp or an angel'. In *Lord Caterham* and *James Dugdale* he depicts the angel unambiguously, creating two quietly revolutionary characters who defy expectation to become forces for good in their respective novels.

Servant and Employee Devotion

‘I did it for Mr. Dallas; but I don’t think as I should have done it if he hadn’t been bad to her, and if I hadn’t seen her a-dyin’ day after day, as courageous as can be, but still a-dyin’, and he a-neglectin’ of her first and deceivin’ of her after.’

Black Sheep, 1867¹

Servants and employees in the sensation novel

In 1858 *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* published an exclusive story by Wilkie Collins. ‘A Marriage Tragedy’ tells the story of a widow who marries a villain and is later accused, along with her servant, William, of murdering him. The story is told from William’s point of view and details his efforts, before the accusation, to assist a lawyer’s clerk to find the errant husband who they believe has bigamously married. As well as being a forerunner of the narrative style and detection procedure Collins would employ so effectively in *The Woman in White* (1860), the story is also notable for the devotion displayed by William towards his mistress. This loyalty is articulated by her when she confides in him:

‘I feel such entire confidence in your fidelity and attachment that I am about, with the full concurrence of this gentleman, who is my nearest relative and my legal adviser, to place a very serious secret in your keeping, and to employ your services on a matter which is as important to me as a matter of life and death.’²

This sentiment forms the basis for the story and when William is arrested later his primary concern is for his employer: ‘Oh, my poor mistress!...This will be the death of her, sir.’³ At the end of the story William still lives with his mistress while his children are the ‘great happiness and interest and amusement of her life’. The loyalty shown by William during her unfortunate marriage and trial result in a lifelong bond between the pair which evidently transcends the generally contractual relationship of servant and employer.

¹ Edmund Yates, *Black Sheep*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867), iii, p274-275

² Wilkie Collins, ‘A Marriage Tragedy’ in *Sensation Stories* ed. Peter Haining (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2004), pp149-205, p160

³ Wilkie Collins, ‘A Marriage Tragedy’ in *Sensation Stories* ed. Peter Haining, p185

The representation of mistress and servant in 'A Marriage Tragedy' is of a relationship based on choice and genuine affection. As such, it expresses nostalgia for an earlier model of master-servant relations. The dynamic between servants and employers in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was a changing one. Pamela Horn points out that:

The evolution of domestic service from a system based upon status to one based almost entirely on contract had been going on slowly since Tudor times. In nineteenth-century England that process was certainly not complete and the relation of servant to employer was still that of subordinate towards superior.⁴

This evolving system, which became gradually more contractual, is evident in contemporary periodical sources. Many of these bemoaned this perceived lack of loyalty and the conundrum it created when an employer invested in training a servant only to have them leave their position for another employer. Kathryn Gleadle notes that, 'Rather than developing enduring ties of loyalty towards their employers, the majority of servants moved frequently from one household to another to find the best situation.'⁵ As Brian W. McCuskey explains in his essay on what he terms the 'kitchen police', 'Relations between masters and servants had reached a crisis largely because the conditions of labour had shifted and brought two different notions of service into conflict: a pre-industrial paternalism versus a newly emerging economism.'⁶ This development to a more transactional relationship emphasises the alteration in the dynamic between classes. The reality of service was a changing one which was moving from a feudal paternalism to one based more upon demand and supply.

⁴ Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p109

⁵ Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p105

⁶ Brian W. McCuskey, 'The Kitchen Police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-Class Transgression', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (September 2000), pp359-375, p371 in *Cambridge Journals* (Online) [Accessed: 4th October 2013]

Rather than reflecting this change, the fiction of the period generally persisted in representing a version of the household in which servants were unseen. Merryn Williams points out that, 'Novelists could hardly help mentioning servants, as no middle-class family was without them, but they are usually there only to open doors and bring tea.'⁷ In much fiction, then, servants were seen as an unavoidable part of the home but one without prominence or purpose within the plot. In relation to the representation of the working-classes in general, Mary Eagleton and David Pierce explain that, 'Fiction may also hark back to elements that belong to earlier forms of social organisation and give them a centrality quite out of keeping with their objective significance.'⁸ By removing 'objective significance' from their works novelists are able to preserve a nostalgic model which does not complicate the landscape of their novels by requiring any focus on the working-class members of a household. This nostalgic model is also highlighted by Bruce Robbins when he discusses servant representation in *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (1993): 'The literary servant does not represent actual servants, or at most does so only tangentially. On the whole, novelists were no more interested than playwrights in conveying anything historically precise about domestic service.'⁹ Fiction represented the servant class in ways which ignored the reality of contemporary life, preferring to situate their servants in a paternalistic order and utilising them primarily for the purposes of plot with little scrutiny of their lives or individuality.

The sensation genre complicates this paternalistic representation of the servant/master relationship offered by much mid-century fiction. Predominantly set in the middle-class home, sensation fiction thrives on the infiltration of danger into the sacred

⁷ Merryn Williams, *Women in the English Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1985), p12

⁸ Mary Eagleton and David Pierce, *Attitudes to Class in the English Novel* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1979), p16

⁹ Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), p11-12

space of the home. Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble explain that, 'The fears tapped by the sensation genre are those of the outsider within – the governess, the upper servant, even the trusted wife, who is not what she seems – and the danger of the insider becoming an outsider...'¹⁰ The dangerous servant therefore becomes a common feature of the sensation novel; the treacherous 'outsider within' forms the basis for many plots. This is demonstrated most clearly in some of the most popular works of the genre; for example, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) by Mary Elizabeth Braddon shows the title character progress from governess in one family to the wife of Sir Michael Audley, a coveted position she is willing to protect by murder if necessary. Two further examples of governesses infiltrating the family are given in *East Lynne* (1861) by Ellen Wood and *Armadale* (1866) by Wilkie Collins. In *East Lynne*, the former wife of Archibald Carlyle returns disfigured and disguised to act as Madam Vine, governess to her own children. That both *Lady Audley's Secret* and *East Lynne*, considered founding novels of the sensation genre, contain governesses who are not what they appear is indicative of the trend which many sensation novels mimicked. In *Armadale*, the devious Miss Gwilt, after duplicitously serving as a maid to Allan Armadale's mother years previously, applies for a vacancy at the Milroy residence which she plans to exploit to persuade Allan Armadale into marriage. She writes to her mentor, Mrs Oldershaw:

Suppose I say – 'Pray don't ask me how I propose inflaming Mr Armadale and extinguishing Miss Milroy; the question is so shockingly abrupt I really can't answer. Ask me instead, if it is the modest ambition of my life to become Miss Milroy's governess?' Yes, if you please, Mrs Oldershaw – and if you will assist me by becoming my reference.¹¹

Here, Miss Gwilt demonstrates how easily the role of a governess can develop into something more sinister, as well as reiterating the danger of fluid class boundaries already

¹⁰ Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p102

¹¹ Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p166

highlighted in *Lady Audley's Secret*. This passage also shows the difficulty employers had in obtaining truthful references, a problem which, as M. Jeanne Peterson points out, was drawn from life: 'Experience with the falsification of letters of reference among servants obtained through newspapers had brought public advertising under suspicion.'¹² This problem of trustworthiness once again allows for servants to become purveyors of danger within the household. Sensation fiction was ideally placed to exploit these fears and utilised the dangerous servant or governess trope on numerous occasions.

Nevertheless, a distinct inversion of this trope is recognisable in several texts by Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates. While many sensation novels depict a dangerous servant wielding power in the household, the four novels under discussion in this chapter represent servants intimate to the household, who hold power over the family yet utilise it for the benefit of their employers. Unlike Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt, these characters are not dangers to the family but the avowed protectors of it. Patrick Brantlinger says of the sensation novel: 'Positioned within the privacy of the household and able to learn its secrets, servants could either be loyal to their employers or the reverse.'¹³ This idea of loyalty 'or the reverse' can be seen as a reference to the battle between the feudal model and the transactional. However, instead of exploiting the fear of the spy within the household, *Black Sheep* (1867), *A Righted Wrong* (1870) and *The Impending Sword* (1874) by Edmund Yates and *No Name* (1862) by Wilkie Collins invoke elements of the earlier feudal model to create employees who impact the novels for the good of their employers and demonstrate loyalty which has significant consequences within the four novels this chapter will examine. In several cases, these novels engage with transgressive relationships which

¹² M. Jeanne Peterson, 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society' in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* ed. Martha Vicinus (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1980), pp3-19, p7

¹³ Patrick Brantlinger, 'Class and Race in Sensation Fiction' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), pp430-441, p432

link back to the queer dynamics explored in other chapters of this thesis. In *Black Sheep*, a housekeeper becomes a surrogate parent to her employer's son in a way which mimics the relationship of a husband and wife. Similarly, the relationship between a wet-nurse and her employer in *The Impending Sword* transgresses the boundaries of servant/mistress relations and in *A Righted Wrong*, loyalty to her former employer persuades a maid to leave her own family in order to raise her dead mistress's children. The intensity of these relationships is similar to the female friendships depicted in chapter two with the servants sacrificing something to remain loyal to their mistresses but still deriving power from their position as a surrogate parent to their employer's children.

The periodical press and discussions of servant mobility

The contemporary periodical press contributed to the debate about contractual relationships between employers and their domestic staff, with articles written both in favour of and against the more modern model of service. In terms of household servants such as housekeepers, footmen and maids, the discussions centred on the expectations of employers and employees and sought to interrogate the idealised history of service. Discussions of other types of service, such as wet-nursing and the role of the governess in households, were also common in the periodical press. These frequent references foreground the importance of servants within nineteenth-century households whilst also providing contemporary insight into why the dynamic was shifting.

In 1860, *The Saturday Review* published a representative article commenting on the alteration in the relationship between masters and servants. It begins with the assertion that household employees are intertwined with domestic life:

Ever since housekeeping began, servants have probably engrossed a large share of the conversation of housekeepers. The wrongs they inflict are of daily occurrence, the excitement they keep up is perpetual, and every generation believes that its servants are much worse than those of its predecessors. Every one is agreed that at this particular time we are especially badly off. Servants are hard to find, and bad when found. Some kinds of servants are becoming apparently extinct, and unfortunately they are the kinds most wanted.¹⁴

The article observes that complaints have always been rife but the specific complaint of some servant types 'becoming apparently extinct' echoes many contemporary accounts of the changing model of servitude in the nineteenth-century. The use of scientific vocabulary in this piece is striking, implying a link between the contemporary problems with servants and the Darwinian theories circulating at the same time; it suggests that the servant class has evolved from the paternalistic model into something more akin to demand and supply. This evolution, coupled with a growing job market, has created a hierarchy of roles, as another article in *Temple Bar* the following year suggests when it identifies the source of the tension between master and servant:

All who have studied the broad question of servitude in this country, know well that the servants of the peerage and of the old families among the commoners are better off in every sense than any servants in the land. They stay longer in their situations, and have a stronger personal attachment to the households in which they serve. A family without a history has no traditions of honour to keep up among its domestics; and the upper sections of the middle classes aim sometimes at an aristocratic style which they really cannot afford, and this compels them to be mean to their menials.¹⁵

The advancement of the growing middle-classes is one that certainly impacted the servant/master relationship, with the necessity and desire for servants becoming a staple of middle-class life and creating more vacancies than ever before.¹⁶ F.M.L. Thompson explains that, 'Servant-keeping was widespread, even if no more than a single inexperienced and

¹⁴ Anon, 'Servants', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 18 February 1860, pp205-206, p205 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

¹⁵ Anon, 'The Management of Servants', *Temple Bar*, March 1861, pp545-557, p548 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

¹⁶ In *Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House Servant* Jeremy Musson estimates that in 1851 there were 905,000 women and 134,000 men working as servants.

inexpensive young teenage girl was kept, and overworked.¹⁷ This 'widespread' nature of servant-keeping offered the opportunity for servants to choose their positions, a fact which became more pertinent as the century wore on. This attitude is reiterated in an 1868

Saturday Review article:

They live in an age of locomotion, of cheap common clothes, and of a great amount of diffused wealth. They know this, and act on their knowledge. They can easily get away, they can always make some sort of show, and the number of people who must have them is so great that they can always get employment. The notion of doing faithful, persistent service is as foreign to them as the notion of going to early morning matins is to a bagman. They lead a shiftless, discontented, restless life, until at last their day is over, and they fade off into abject poverty and misery.¹⁸

This piece demonstrates the growing need for servants in mid-Victorian Britain whilst acknowledging the ability of servants to essentially choose their positions and thereby put their masters at their command. It also highlights the 'age of locomotion' and the part modernity had to play in the transformation of servant life, particularly relevant since sensation fiction itself was identified as the epitome of the modern. Elizabeth Steere points out:

The mobility of female servants and their potential for upending the established class hierarchy held a particular threat for the mistress of the house. *Punch* even coined the term 'Servantgalism' to describe the tendency of female servants who pretensions above their station or attempt to emulate their mistresses.¹⁹

This demonstrates that the problems caused by the enhanced mobility of servants had become so commonplace as to be included in satire. In this climate of innovation, the notion of the 'faithful, persistent' servant begins to disintegrate while modernity and domesticity collide in the form of servants in the sensation novel.

¹⁷ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p175

¹⁸ Anon, 'Family Dependents', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 11 January 1868, pp36-37 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

¹⁹ Elizabeth Steere, *The Female Servant and Sensation Fiction: Kitchen Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p33

The problems posed by a more mobile servant class are addressed in periodical articles which suggest ways that masters can be more amenable to their servants in this changing climate. A short piece in *Sharpe's London Magazine* suggests that respect is important:

Self-respect and a feeling of independence in the servant should never be trenched upon by the master; and that servant will, as a rule, be the most faithful who is the least disposed to cringe or submit to a master who treats his servants as if they were of a different order of beings, forgetful that physically, mentally, and morally, as a class, they stand upon an equality; and the social difference in their position, so far from being a reason for assumption, should be with every generous mind the strongest argument for forbearance and even kindness.²⁰

The shift this piece describes, from servant respecting master to master respecting servant, appears to exist in contradistinction to the accepted class divisions of Victorian Britain with defined positions for all in the social hierarchy. However, it is worth noting that class was increasingly fluid during the nineteenth century with financial calamities befalling well-off families and members of the working-class moving up the social scale: the tone of the *Sharpe's* article implies that any master can fall prey to this and any servant may rise in their place.

The perceived ideal qualities of servants and their model relationships with their employers are often examined in the periodical press. This example from *Chambers's Journal* in 1857 refers to the relationship between a mistress and her female servants:

A faithful servant – next best blessing, and next rarest, after a faithful friend! – who among us has not had, or wanted, such a one? Some inestimable follower of the family, who has known all the family changes sorrows, and joys, is always at hand to look after the petty necessities and indescribably small nothings which, in the aggregate, make up the sum of one's daily comfort; whom one can trust in sight and out of sight – call upon for help in season and out of season; rely on in absence, or sickness, or trouble, to 'keep the house going,' safe and right; and at all times, and under all circumstances, depend

²⁰ Anon, 'Treatment of Servants', *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, July 1858, p38 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

upon for that conscientious fidelity of service which money can never purchase, nor repay.²¹

This idealistic analysis rests on the inherent discrepancy of the servant/master relationship, demanding subservience and complete dedication to an employer 'under all circumstances'. This piece works on the level of propaganda, extolling the virtues of the idealised servant in a climate which, as we have seen, is predicated on the progression of master/servant relationships from the feudal to the more modern transactional model.

By contrast, and on a more practical level, Frances Power Cobbe's 1868 article entitled 'Household Service' in *Fraser's Magazine* dispenses with outdated models of service entirely and endeavours to bring the institution of servitude into the modern era. She reaffirms the fact that the number of servants has dramatically increased, utilising census figures from 1861, and discusses the perceived difficulties of the new transactional relationship:

Masters and (especially) mistresses, are slow to accept the theory of contract, and are for ever falling back upon claims to which it lends no sanction. Servants, on the other hand, having thoroughly renounced belief in the divine right of masters and mistresses, forget that a freely made contract bears with it also a stringent and sacred moral obligation.²²

Cobbe's observation that the glut in the marketplace bred a type of servant who did not adhere to their contractual obligations is more important for her than any desire to cling on to a failed illusion of the traditional retainer. She makes it plain that this contractual arrangement should be equal on both sides: 'No obedience beyond the contract can be required of him; nor, on the other hand (and this is very needful to mark), has the servant any claims against the master beyond *his* stipulated contract of food and wages.' Cobbe's

²¹ Anon, 'A Woman's Thoughts About Women: Female Servants', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and the Arts*, 1 August 1857, pp68-71, p68 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

²² Frances Power Cobbe, 'Household Service', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, January 1868, pp121-134, p132 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 30th September 2013]

belief is that a transactional relationship can quash bad feeling on the part of both servants and masters, but only if the feudal expectations are dismissed by both sides. Cobbe's attitude stands in stark contrast to the *Chambers's Journal* article of the previous decade, which lamented the alterations in servitude. Cobbe's engagement with the modern focuses on the transactional rather than the sentimental but, as we have seen, these evolving views were rarely represented in mid-century fiction.

The American setting of Yates's *The Impending Sword* is significant as the American model of master/servant was already contractual, correlating with Cobbe's preferred model of household relations. To an extent this provides a contrast with other novels examined in this chapter; however, Yates creates an English-born character in Bess Jenkins, thereby suggesting her devotion to her mistress, Helen Griswold, has a British appearance, comparable to the British examples explored later in the chapter. This is important as it was noted by Frances Trollope in her 1832 book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* that service across the Atlantic is quite different to the British system:

The greatest difficulty in organising a family establishment in Ohio, is getting servants, or, as it is there called, "getting help," for it is more than petty treason to the Republic to call a free citizen a *servant*. The whole class of young women, whose bread depends upon their labour, are taught to believe that the most abject poverty is preferable to domestic service.²³

Foremost here is the distinction between the Americanised 'help' and the British idea of the 'servant'. In recognising this, Trollope highlights the American view of service as a contract involving 'free' citizens. Her observation is inflected with a British understanding of servants as 'faithful retainers', a view that was gradually changing throughout the nineteenth century as the American model of demand and supply took over instead. A prominent advocate for education, Catherine Beecher, published *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1842,

²³ Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1901), p74

explaining first how things are done in England and other countries from which American immigrants have travelled:

In such countries, all ranks and classes are fixed in a given position, and each person is educated for a particular sphere and style of living. And the dwellings, conveniences, and customs of life, remain very nearly the same, from generation to generation. This secures the preparations of all classes for their particular station, and makes the lower orders more dependent, and more subservient to employers.²⁴

The 'given position' Beecher identifies governs how a person is educated and then employed. That Beecher recognises that this socialisation makes the working-class 'more subservient to employers' is a criticism of how the system perpetuates itself and the status quo is maintained. She then explains how America differs:

But how different is the state of things in this Country. Every thing is moving and changing. Persons in poverty, are rising to opulence, and persons of wealth, are sinking to poverty...Meantime, even in the more stationary portions of the community, there is a mingling of all grades of wealth, intellect, and education. There are no distinct classes, as in aristocratic lands, whose bounds are protected by distinct and impassable lines, but all are thrown into promiscuous masses.²⁵

This intermingling of classes depicted by Beecher provides a direct contrast to the ordered world of aristocratic countries she has previously described. Positions in America are more fluid with fewer 'impassable lines' and, as such, the distinction between master and employee has the potential to be reversed with a person's status more likely to rise and fall. However, in the case of his characters Helen and Bess Yates reduces the impact of this setting and the more contractual relationship it might have signified by creating a character 'born in Hampshire and reared in London'²⁶ until the age of fifteen.²⁷ In effect, this supplies an employer with American sensibilities of social fluidity and contractual obligations

²⁴ Catherine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy: For the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (Boston: Thomas H Webb and Co, 1843), p39

²⁵ Catherine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, p40

²⁶ Edmund Yates, *The Impending Sword*, 3 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874), i, 98

²⁷ The postscript to *The Impending Sword* states that the novel was based on a true story learned by Yates on his trip to America, making the setting unavoidably American.

alongside a devoted servant of the feudal British type, combining the best aspects of both systems with a fair employer and a loyal employee.

The Victorian governess is an image familiar to readers of Victorian fiction and was just as recognisable in the contemporary press as a figure worthy of pity. In *Once a Week* in 1862, Harriet Martineau attempts to debunk the popular view: 'I am not disposed to repeat here the well-known descriptions and appeals, of which the world's heart is weary, derived from the life and lot of the governess, and used as tragic material for fiction, or opportunity for declamation against society.'²⁸ Martineau's tone, and the businesslike manner of her article, suggests that these popular portrayals of governess misery grate on the general public. M. Jeanne Peterson comments that:

In terms of numbers alone, this attention to the governess seems somewhat excessive. There were about 25,000 governesses in England in 1851, but there were over 750,000 female domestic servants, not to mention women employed in industry. And when one moves from simple statistics to the conditions of employment of women in this period, the suffering of the governess seems pale and singularly undramatic when compared with that of women in factories and mines.²⁹

This interest in governesses probably stems from the middle-class gentility of the women involved, coupled with the fear that middle-class families are only one financial catastrophe away from such a situation themselves. However, the gentility of the governess has itself made them excellent subjects to act as the focus of campaigns – as ladies of good breeding they were literate, educated and sensible, something which the lower orders of society were not always considered to be.

Governesses occupy a peculiar space between the servants and the family, almost embodying the ideal of an employee/employer relationship as defined earlier by Frances

²⁸ Harriet Martineau, 'The Governess', *Once a Week*, 1 September 1860, pp267-272, p269 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

²⁹ M. Jeanne Peterson, 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society' in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* ed. Martha Vicinus, p4

Power Cobbe. This relationship was more transactional than feudal, based, as it was, on the need for a service with a defined contractual completion date, usually when the education of the children was concluded. There was no expectation of further service by either party. The governess's class, gentility and mobility may have prompted other servants to aspire to her mode of living but it could be a more precarious one which could lead to impoverishment in old age. An article on the Governesses' Benevolent Institution in 1862 explained that, 'Fifteen thousand ladies are constantly devoting to it all the best energies of their best years, and thinking themselves fortunate if they can make any provision for their later ones!'³⁰ Highlighting that these are 'ladies' cements the distinction between governesses and female servants in a way which emphasises the genteel credentials of a 'lady' in trouble. While this extract demonstrates that a governess had far from a perfect life, the role operated on a complex level between employer and servant, as John R. Gillis explains when discussing 'specialist' employees such as governesses and lady's maids:

Although better paid, they were subject to stringent discipline because their work was so much more personal and visible to their employers. The protection of being distinctly "below stairs" was not available to them. They were more a part of the middle- or upper-classes world, yet unable to transform that experience into any real material asset.³¹

As part of neither world entirely, these specialist employees lack the protection of a servant cohort whilst also being on an unequal footing with the employer paying their wages. This unsteady and isolated position is circumvented in Collins's *No Name* as Miss Garth stays with the family by mutual consent, but also has the means to support herself and, indeed, she does support both herself and Norah Vanstone after the death of her employers.

³⁰ Anon, 'Governesses', *The St. James Magazine*, July 1862, pp501-507, p504 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

³¹ John R. Gillis, 'Servants, Sexual Relations and the Risk of Illegitimacy in London, 1801-1900' in *Sex and Class in Women's History* eds. Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan and Judith R. Walkowitz (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul PLC, 1985), pp114-145, pp124-125

The wet-nurse is another employee who occupies an unusual space between the servants and the family. She is responsible for the physical vitality of the child in its early days and operates below the level of the governess who is charged with the moral upbringing of the child. Like the governess, she is placed in a position of trust and her physical connection with the child requires good health and hygiene. Edmund Yates introduces a wet-nurse in *The Impending Sword* who serves as a physical carer to the child whilst providing the mother with emotional support. F.M.L. Thompson explains that:

The practice of putting babies out to a wet nurse may have decayed as a custom among the upper classes by the late eighteenth century, and have continued only in particular individual circumstances where a mother's milk was inadequate and she chanced to disapprove of resort to bottle feeding.³²

While the practice may have become relatively uncommon, it was still discussed in the periodical press in the 1860s. Two separate articles, one in *The London Review* and one in *The London Reader*, reiterate the ill-effects of wet nursing on all involved. In 1860 *The London Review* criticises mothers who choose to hire a wet-nurse: 'But as a substitution, because of a mother's own idleness, or unnatural dislike to the restraints of her position, no words can too severely scathe those who buy, or those who sell, that precious gift which God gave to mothers as one of the most blessed heritages of humanity.'³³ This suggestion that mothers who could nurse and do not are somehow delinquent couples with the point given by *The London Reader* in 1865 that women who choose to nurse in this way are also delinquent:

The ill effects of wet-nursing are not only experienced by the helpless being subjected to the process, but are commonly reflected upon another being, and too often upon more than one other. The wet-nurse herself is habitually the mother of an infant which is

³² F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p118

³³ Anon, 'Infant Feeding', *The London Review and Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Society*, 22 September 1860, pp279-280, p280 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 5th November 2013]

usually put out to be brought up by hand on a portion of her wages, and confided to the care of a hired nurse of a low order.³⁴

The relationship between Bess and Helen in *The Impending Sword* circumvents these general criticisms of wet-nursing. Bess has been advised by the doctor to consider a wet-nursing position because her son died so suddenly while Helen has also been medically advised to stop nursing: 'This order of Dr. Benedict, that I am to give up nursing baby, is troubling me. I feel that he is right; I am not equal to it, and I should harm the child and myself; and yet I hate the very idea of putting a strange woman in my own place – a strange woman, just picked up by an advertisement!' (i, 72) In this situation, then, neither woman is to blame for the necessity of wet-nursing and they are free to bond over their misfortunes, bonds which create a peculiar relationship between the pair and integrate Bess into the family unit.

This chapter will go on to analyse a selection of servants and employees from Edmund Yates's *The Impending Sword*, *Black Sheep* and *A Righted Wrong* and Collins's *No Name*. These are separated into three distinct groups. Firstly, it analyses the four servants who become surrogate family members to their employers and complement this trust with unquestioningly loyalty of their own, despite their differing roles within the families. Secondly, this chapter examines the character of Mrs Lecount in *No Name*, who provides a stark contrast to the loyal servants of part one as Collins represents the pitfalls of feudal loyalty when only one party understands the obligations. The third section of this chapter examines two characters from *No Name* and *Black Sheep* who conflate the feudal and contractual relationships between employees and employers. Of the seven characters examined, five are employed in landed and well-respected households, whilst five work

³⁴ Anon, 'Ill Effects of Wet-Nursing', *The London Reader of Literature, Science, Art and General Information*, 11 February 1865, p428 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 5th November 2013]

long-term for their employers, several moving up in the household during their employment. This generally creates a feeling of loyalty between servant and master, one reciprocated by fondness. Elizabeth Steere points out that, 'Indeed, servants, while initially seeming socially powerless, are actually in a position to influence and even control their employers' lives.'³⁵ Steere, here, is referring to the criminal servant but it can be inverted to reflect the power the loyal servants in this chapter hold. However, in the case of Mrs Lecount in *No Name*, devotion does indeed breed a sense of entitlement that her should loyalty be repaid. These characters are pivotal in propelling the plots of their respective novels and exposing the personality of the employers they serve, for good or ill. Their devotion takes on significance, filling a demonstrable gap in the lives of their employers as surrogate partner, mother or friend.

'Likeness in unlikeness': The sympathetic servant

In four novels by Yates and Collins, boundaries are blurred between the family and their employees as four characters that embody the ideals of the feudal relationship between master and employee come to operate as surrogate family members in their households. The close relationships cultivated, particularly between the employee and the children of the household, create opportunities for the servant to be seen more as an extension of the family than a mere servant employed on contractual terms, a situation which helps to construct an image of these women as eccentric anomalies in the domestic sphere. These bonds appear to be rooted in the feudal model but offer the employees agency within the household that may have been unavailable to them under a purely contractual system. Bess Jenkins, Mrs Brookes, Rose Moore and Miss Garth all transgress traditional boundaries

³⁵ Elizabeth Steere, *The Female Servant and Sensation Fiction*, p114

between employers and employees but these transgressions are, for the most part, welcomed. These characters exist contrary to the contractual model of servitude which was becoming the norm in the nineteenth-century, instead performing duties outside their scope which make them integral to the family unit. While these employees certainly seem to fit the conservative, feudal model of servitude, the agency these characters gain by their devotion to the families they serve gives them more power than might originally be perceived. All four come to act as surrogate family members, destabilising the class structures which dictate separation while, perversely, maintaining the status quo due to the fact that these four women are vital for the perpetuation of the family lines they serve.

In Edmund Yates's 1874 novel *The Impending Sword*, the relationship between Helen Griswold and her wet-nurse is founded on a mutual understanding of motherhood; albeit, for Bess Jenkins, lost motherhood. These experiences of motherhood allow their relationship to develop, from the beginning, as one based on mutual experience rather than their status as mistress and servant. The peculiar household position of the wet-nurse and the American setting of this novel, discussed earlier, aid this process of dismantling barriers. Initial sympathy towards Bess on Helen's part is documented in the journal intended for her husband to read: 'They had misfortunes, and were obliged to part for a while, like ourselves. I suppose it was that likeness in unlikeness which attracted me towards the good woman from the first.' (ii, 91) Helen's reference to their 'likeness in unlikeness' demonstrates that their relationship is built on their similar experiences as women: Helen is drawn to Bess because they are both separated from their husbands temporarily as well as sympathising with her sorrow over a lost child. This relationship, then, immediately has an emotional value attached to it which places it beyond the contractual duties between a mistress and her wet-nurse.

Although a wet-nurse could be seen to threaten the role of the mother, Yates avoids this by the fact that Bess appears to adopt Helen and Mary as a package.³⁶ The friendship which develops does so partly because of Bess's dead child and she is in need of someone to mother when she enters the Griswold household. Helen explains in her journal: 'We are quite friends – we were from the beginning – and she takes almost as much care of me as of little Mary...' (ii, 92) In stepping past the boundary of wet-nurse to acknowledged friend of the mistress of the house, Bess discovers an outlet for her motherly designs which stretch beyond the job she has been employed for. This, again, takes into account the emotional needs of the employee in a way far removed from Cobbe's ideal contractual arrangement. Although the setting may be American, the relationship between wet-nurse and mistress in this household is rooted more in the British feudal system. More than this, it transcends even that type of loyalty to become, as Helen herself terms it, a friendship.

Companionship established by their shared femininity and motherhood creates a deeper understanding between the two women which manifests itself keenly on Bess's part following the death of Helen's husband:

Helen Griswold had the faculty of winning the love of all those in her employment, and there was not a servant in the house who would not willingly have shared Mrs. Jenkins's watch, but she had a notion that as she was the only wife and mother among them, she could draw nearer to the bereaved wife and mother who still lay there in merciful unconsciousness; so the hours wore away and Mrs. Jenkins watched her patient. (iii, 63)

Bess's devotion to her mistress in her grief is a reaction based on empathy. Helen has inspired 'love' in her servants but Bess considers their bond to be closer than the love of an employee for their mistress. As a result, she bears the burden of the night-time vigil alone. This scene differentiates Bess's relationship to Helen from those of the other staff while Helen correctly interprets Bess's position as closer to her than the rest of her employees.

³⁶ *The London Reader* article mentions the moral and physical effects of wet-nursing on the natural mother alongside highlighting that the 'tie of love' between mother and child could be damaged.

She permits Bess to take her daughter out without knowing her destination and, when faced with the possibility that Bess has deceived her, responds, 'I am perfectly certain...that you have knowingly done me no harm; I am perfectly certain, from the attention and devotion which you have shown to me since you have been in this house, that if you could have stood between me and harm's way, you would have done so.' (iii, 154-155) Here, the words 'attention and devotion' invoke the feudal ideal of loyalty that Helen believes is a guarantee of Bess's fidelity. The trust which initially came from sympathy and empathy between the pair has been cemented by actual lived experiences, as Bess sat by Helen's bedside to comfort her in her grief. Here, Bess has obtained the agency of a friend instead of a servant. While the relationship was initially based on shared femininity and motherhood, it is now based on shared experiences of loss. This transcends the typical relationship of servant to mistress, a distinction which is now largely redundant due to their mutual trust and understanding.

For both women, the key to this understanding is their ability to see beyond the markers by which they are each generally judged. For instance, Helen's early view of Bess, as documented in her journal, notes class differences in passing: 'I find I learn a good deal from her about the realities of life as they exist for women who have not been taken the care of that you have taken of me.' (ii, 92) Helen seems to perceive this relationship as an opportunity for education rather than a reason to keep a lower-class woman at arm's length. Helen's judgement is consistently devalued by the men in her life who see her femininity as a hindrance to logic. Before he leaves, her husband gently ridicules her anxiety about his trip, calling her 'child' several times and saying, 'You are speaking hurriedly and like a woman, Helen, and do not, I am sure, mean half you say...' (i, 32) The implication is

that she is speaking without thought and calculation and therefore her argument is invalid because she is acting 'like a woman'. Helen responds to this accusation a few pages later:

'Only understand one thing, Alston; this protest of mine against your leaving me is not the mere pettish fancy of a woman who hates to be alone, or who is possessed by an absurd jealousy as to what may be her husband's proceedings during his absence – you and I understand each other too well for any nonsense of that sort; but I hate you going away on this voyage, Alston.' (i, 35)

Although Helen says they 'understand each other too well', the fact that she needs to explain she is not motivated by 'pettish fancy' suggests that Griswold does not understand her completely. Thornton Carey, her old flame, does Helen a similar injustice when he inwardly contemplates Bess's new position in the household:

Who was she, this mysterious woman, who had of late assumed so important a position in the household, from whom, as Helen herself allowed, she had received so much affectionate assistance, and in whom she seemed so thoroughly to confide?...It was as likely as not that Helen, in her trusting girlish way, had taken the woman without any proper references, simply because her face or manner pleased her, and had suffered herself to be beguiled by an assumed sympathy and a smooth tongue. (iii, 148)

This serves to highlight not only how unusual Carey perceives the friendship between Bess and Helen to be but also how little he rates Helen's ability to choose and decide for herself. What he calls 'girlish' is actually a measure of the value Helen places on the relationships of the people she is close to. This is reminiscent of the attitudes in the periodical press analysed in chapter two about the naivety of women in relation to their friendships. Carey does Helen a disservice by reducing her to someone able to be 'beguiled by an assumed sympathy' whilst simultaneously casting Bess in his mind as the lower-class villain. This parodies the generic conventions of both the duplicitous servant and the helpless heroine in need of a man to guide her. Carey's presumption stems from his inability to see past the mistress/servant boundaries which the friendship between Helen and Bess has, by this point, eclipsed. Conversely, Bess explains to her sister that, 'She is a perfect lady, is Mrs.

Griswold, and represents everybody's confidence.' (ii, 174) Bess considers Helen's trusting nature to be a virtue and not 'girlish' grounds for reproof, further demonstrating the class differences between them have been erased in favour of their shared feminine devotion to their friendship.

Bess remains in the Griswold household when her legitimate role as wet-nurse has come to an end. This puts her relationship with Helen completely beyond that of a servant to her mistress. Theirs is not a contractual relationship which terminates when service has been completed:

She had suffered so much from the shock of the calamity which had befallen her that she had been forced to wean the infant, and thus her formal nominal occupation in Helen's household had come to an end. But mistress and servant were bound together by a new tie, that of a common widowhood, and that tie would never be broken in this world. (iii, 205-206)

This paragraph confirms that Bess's place in the household is closer to friend than servant. Their 'common widowhood' is a status acquired by their gender and shared misfortunes. It implies that this status surpasses class boundaries, connecting Bess and Helen in a way that makes their background differences obsolete. It also demonstrates once more that Bess's devotion to Helen is not one-sided – it is obviously Helen's decision as the employer for Bess to remain in the household. Significant, also, is the fact that following a trip to England, Bess decides to return to New York: 'She had no friends in England that her friends in America knew of, and she felt in her inmost heart that the relations between herself and her sister would not be satisfactory to compensate for an entire separation from Helen and her child.' (iii, 264) Here, Bess chooses her adopted family over her legitimate one, possibly because her sister does not accept her social background as readily as Helen. Her sister has already reacted negatively to a surprise visit from Bess and her job as a servant. Ultimately, Bess chooses acceptance and a home which provides that: 'With Helen Griswold she would have

peace, respectability, and a strong interest in her surroundings; while to Helen, her presence must always be beneficial, to an extent which would far out-measure the pain of their respective and common associations.' (iii, 264-265) Bess's choice is based on where she might be most useful but also where she will find her own 'peace'. In this sense, both Bess and Helen have decided to ignore conventional class boundaries which dictate that Bess's role in Helen's life is over. There is no specific reference to the post that Bess takes up on her return to the Griswold household, but Thornton Carey does organise her a state room for the return journey, 'for Mrs. Jenkins is travelling 'like a lady,' and is not in the least likely to disgrace the character, as she is reticent and unassuming always' (iii, 271). Here, Bess seems permanently to cross the class barrier she has been on the cusp of throughout her friendship with Helen. The novel ends with the impression that Bess is a privileged person in the household as she takes it upon herself to encourage Carey to pursue Helen, cementing her transition from mere servant to friend and confidant.

While Bess Jenkins became a mother to the Griswold household, nurses in two other Yates works can be seen as taking the place of a parent. While a wet-nurse would only be with the family for a short period, a satirical examination of servants in *Once a Week* in 1871 writes of the family nurse:

There is, however, one servant I must not leave out – because, although she receives wages, she is the tyrant of the whole establishment. She is the old nurse. Everybody is afraid of her except the children, whom she evidently considers her own, and not their mother's. Her dignity is awful; and I should just like to see you offer her hashed mutton for dinner. She is faithful and devoted to her mistress and the children, as long as she has her own way.³⁷

This depiction of a family nurse references the problems associated with that type of servant and her longevity in the household which has a kernel of truth in spite of its satirical

³⁷ Anon, 'Social Grievances', *Once a Week*, 11 February 1871, pp151-155, p155 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 29th September 2013]

tone. There is a possibility that she has assumed the mantle of mother to the children and, subsequently, has a fractious relationship with the true parents, her employers. Two Yates texts in the sensation genre subvert this by depicting the unselfish devotion of a family nurse, both to the mother and the children of the family, as a force for good within the household. Instead of the 'tyrant' referred to in the *Once a Week* piece, these two servants are emblems of familial devotion whose presence within their respective households maintains the 'old order' of the feudal model. These servants are given the power to disrupt their households by rejecting the role of surrogate parent but, instead, they ensure the family lines continue, inverting the expectation that a servant is dependent on the family for their survival. In these two cases, the family relies on the servant as a surrogate parent in order to survive and the former nurses gain privileged roles within their households as a consequence.

The role of Rose Moore as nurse and housekeeper in *A Righted Wrong* demonstrates a motherly affection for her employer and charges which transcends class boundaries. Like Bess and Helen, the relationship between Rose and Margaret Carteret is forged under unusual circumstances. The intimacy of the journey from Australia to England means their relationship quickly surmounts the usual separation of classes: 'Rose Moore moved about in the little space allotted to the two, and which she regarded as a den rather than a state-room' (i, 7) The setting, along with Margaret's unhappy situation, creates an environment where a friendship between the two is more likely to flourish than in a contractual relationship in a typical space. Unencumbered by a traditionally divided household, Rose and Margaret become friends. This manifests itself within the text when Rose makes a personal sacrifice on behalf of Margaret when they get to England: 'The girl, having become attached to her, was willing to defer her departure to Ireland for a few days, until she,

Margaret, had made some definite arrangement about her own future.’ (i, 90-91) Margaret raises the option of going to Ireland with Rose to perhaps become a governess, demonstrating that the perceived class divide between the two has been demolished, with Margaret contemplating descending to Rose’s social level. The relationship between the two is therefore more equal than otherwise. Margaret attributes this in part to Rose’s lack of Englishness, as she explains to James Dugdale: ‘We have arrived, I see; and there is Rose Moore looking out for me, like an impulsive Irish girl as she is, instead of preserving the decorous indifference of the truly British domestic.’ (i, 97) Here, Margaret implies that Rose’s difference from a ‘truly British’ servant is part of her appeal. This reference to Irish devotion to their mistresses is something replicated in *The Impending Sword* when Helen writes of Bess, ‘She has formed a really strong affection for me – it is like the kind of thing one hears about the Irish people in old times. I fancy she would not shrink from any sacrifice for me.’ (ii, 94) In both cases, the reference to Ireland seeks to place the relationship of servant to mistress beyond the accepted norm for contemporary servitude.³⁸ Ultimately, Margaret stays at her father’s home and Rose continues her journey to Ireland alone. However, that the possibility of becoming a governess or a lady’s companion was raised by Margaret highlights the fact that she understands her identity in relation to Rose’s. The knowledge that Rose’s attachment to her is different to that of English servants may be the catalyst for her decision that, should anything happen to her, she would like Rose summoned from Ireland: Margaret wishes to install a mother figure for her children she trusts who is not hampered by English ideas of class propriety and distance.

³⁸ An 1842 article in *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* uses anecdotes to extol the ‘unselfish attachment, ready industry, willingness to labour, and fidelity’ of Irish servants in comparison to ‘idle, dirty, careless, and dishonest English servants’. (Anon, ‘Irish Servants’, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, 26 March 1842, pp79-80 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 5th January 2015]).

Rose's immediate return following Margaret's death demonstrates the strength of her loyalty towards her former mistress. It is notable, also, that, like Bess Jenkins, she is willing to choose the family of her employer over her actual family: her husband follows her over to England to take up a role on the household estate. A letter explains that he is, 'well-placed in Ireland, willing to come here for his wife's sake, to enable her to remain with the children' (ii, 284). The promise Rose made to Margaret prior to their parting takes precedence over the personal ties she has since established, placing the bond between former mistress and servant as equal to, or surpassing, the bond between wife and husband. This is significant because it dissolves the ties of servitude: in both *The Impending Sword* and *A Righted Wrong* there is a choice by the servant to accommodate their lives to their mistress's needs without the necessity for a formal contract.

Rose's position in the household following Margaret's death is one of significant importance, belying her class status. Margaret effectively designates Rose as mother to her daughters by her summons: 'Rose Moore had reached the Deane in time to kneel beside her unclosed coffin and whisper, on her cold lips, the promise on which she had instinctively relied, – the promise that her children should be henceforth Rose's sacred charge and care.' (iii, 177) This places Rose in a position of power within a household where she should only be a typical servant. The girls' aunt, one of their legal guardians, is a vain selfish flirt whose devotion is not to the household or the girls and there is friction between them: 'But Mrs. Carteret would never have ventured to include Mrs. Doran among the 'servants' otherwise than in her most private cognitions. Rose was a privileged person there, by a more sacred if not a stronger right than that of Mrs. Carteret herself.' (iii, 17-18) This 'sacred' right is the right of Margaret to decide who should raise her children and she placed her trust in a servant rather than her sister-in-law, diminishing Mrs Carteret's authority in her own

household. Margaret has chosen loyalty from her servant above familial loyalty, indicating that the ties of friendship cultivated during their intimate journey from Australia supplant the bonds of family. Nor is Rose subservient to her charges, despite her inferior class status, having been furnished with agency by Margaret. When she confronts the younger girl about her attitude towards her sister, she is criticised: 'Eleanor Baldwin had travelled no small distance on the thorny road of evil, when she rewarded Rose's suggestion with a haughty request, which fired Rose's Irish blood, but with a flame quenched in healing waters of love and pity, – that she would in future remember, and keep, *her place*.' (iii, 179) Rose's answer to this is important: 'It's because I never forget my place, the place your mother put me in, Miss Nelly, that I warn you,' said her faithful friend.' Although Eleanor's last resort is to criticise Rose's interference as unbecoming of a servant, Rose's response demonstrates that she cannot be reduced to the ranks of a typical servant because of the value Margaret bestowed on her. Rose takes her authority not from the nominal head of the household – Mrs Carteret – or even from one of her charges, but from their dead mother. This serves as a powerful indicator that she is designated as Margaret's preferred replacement for the girls, disregarding the class demarcations that should allow Mrs Carteret control over her nieces.

Mrs Brookes in Yates's 1868 novel *Black Sheep* serves as an additional parent to the protagonist George Dallas, adopting masculine attributes in contrast to her employer which situates her as a replacement for the father Dallas lost when he was younger. This creates the impression of two halves of a parental unit, despite the class differences and their shared gender. Mrs Brookes, first nurse then housekeeper, is a link to the past, preserving the 'first family' of Mrs Carruthers and George Dallas secretly in a house where his name is never mentioned. She is fulfilling the feudal archetype of loyalty, albeit it not towards her

current household but towards the one her mistress used to belong to. She and Mrs Carruthers are co-conspirators as they contrive to keep their meetings and contact with George secret from the head of the household. Their shared experiences before Mrs Carruthers married into money have created a bond between them which goes beyond merely mistress and servant and Mrs Carruthers, while nominally having the power in this relationship, is fundamentally weaker than her housekeeper. This is emphasised in several scenes where Mrs Brookes adopts masculine attributes, mimicking the role of a husband supporting his wife through troubles with their child. While explaining that George is implicated in murder, Mrs Brookes repeats the affectionate phrase 'my dear' numerous times during the scene as she attempts to steady Mrs Carruthers:

"My dear," began Mrs. Brookes – and now she held the slender fingers tightly in her withered palm – "I fear there is something very wrong with George...My dear," said Mrs. Brookes – and now she laid one arm gently round her mistress's shoulder as she leaned against the pillows – "the wearer of that coat is suspected of having murdered a man, whose body was found by the river-side in London the other day." (ii, 5-6)

The gentle revelation, coupled with the physical movements to comfort Mrs Carruthers, have connotations of husbandly warmth towards his wife, particularly since this scene takes place in the bed chamber. Mrs Brookes reads Mrs Carruthers relative weakness correctly and takes charge over her mistress in a significant reversal of the mistress/servant relationship. She orders: 'Well then, first lie down, and I will close the curtains and leave you. When I have had time to get to my room, ring for Dixon. Tell her you are ill. When she lets the light in she will see that for herself, and desire her to send me to you.' (ii, 8) Mrs Brookes's ability to plan and think logically about how to divert attention away from their meetings differentiates her from her mistress who is struggling with the news she has received. In this sense, then, Mrs Brookes adopts masculine traits and acts like Dallas's

missing father. While the power in this scenario is in the hands of the servant, her loyalty towards her mistress and 'their' son prevents her from using it for ill.

Ultimately, the fracture which develops between Mrs Carruthers and Mrs Brookes is a direct result of their feminine/masculine differences. Mrs Carruthers's fragile mind breaks down as she struggles with her son's potential guilt while Mrs Brookes is forced to contend with the illness of her beloved mistress and the suspicions about Dallas alone. However, it is significant that she is thankful for Mrs Carruthers's memory loss:

She had her own reasons for thinking it better that it should be so. For many days after convalescence had been declared, she had watched and waited, sick with apprehension for some sign of recollection on the part of the patient, but none came, and the old woman, grieved with exceeding bitterness over the wreck of all she so dearly loved, thanked God in her heart that even thus relief had come. (ii, 61)

Here, Mrs Brookes maintains her masculine strength, eager to spare her mistress the horror of thoughts her feminine mind cannot cope with. The consequence is that it is Mrs Brookes, a servant, deciding how best to protect her mistress's mental health. Mr Carruthers knows nothing of the situation at this point – he is not in his wife's confidence while her housekeeper is. Mrs Brookes fulfils her loyalty towards the 'first family' of Mrs Carruthers and George but sacrifices part of her relationship with her mistress because of this loyalty and strength. When away from home to recuperate following her illness and memory loss, Mrs Carruthers refuses to have Mrs Brookes join them: 'O no, no,' she said, 'I cannot see her yet – I am not able – I don't know – there's something, there's something.' (iii, 112) The division between them is inflected with masculine and feminine connotations: Mrs Brookes's knowledge and ability to bear it in silence is reminiscent of the stereotype of a husband maintaining a distinction between things his wife is privy to and things she is not. What finally separates Mrs Carruthers and Mrs Brookes is not the class distinction which purports to divide them but the respective feminine and masculine roles they have adopted

which overrides the shared femininity which binds Helen and Bess together in *The Impending Sword*.

Both Rose Moore and Mrs Brookes rise in their respective households in a manner that fails to reflect the social reality for servants working in the mid-nineteenth century. John R. Gillis explains that, 'Promotion within a household was rare and when women advanced to higher ranks, usually in their early twenties, they often went from a small household, employing one or perhaps two girls, to one of the larger establishments...'³⁹ This advancement implies a reward for familial loyalty which usurps cultural convention. That both Rose Moore and Mrs Brookes achieve promotion serves to highlight the peculiar status of these women within the hierarchies of their respective households. Their role as auxiliary parents to their charges provides the ultimate representation of feudal servant loyalty. In both cases, Yates demonstrates that these servants are loyal to the 'first' family and, as in the case of Bess Jenkins, there is something involved beyond the allotted relationship of mistresses and servant: Bess and Helen Griswold share anxieties about motherhood and, later, widowhood; Rose and Margaret's connection was formed in the close confines of a ship with Margaret at her lowest ebb; Mrs Brookes and Mrs Carruthers experienced together the difficulties of life before Mrs Carruthers remarried. These additional bonds can serve as an explanation for the strength of feudal loyalty demonstrated by these servants in an age where feudal loyalty is no longer the norm.

The three women analysed so far in this chapter all act as auxiliary parents to their charges from early childhood. Miss Garth of Wilkie Collins's *No Name* is considerably different: her responsibility for Norah and Magdalen Vanstone until their parents' deaths was as an ex-governess still present in the household; that is, she had no real responsibility

³⁹ John R. Gillis, 'Servants, Sexual Relations and the Risk of Illegitimacy in London, 1801-1900' in *Sex and Class in Women's History* eds. Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan and Judith R. Walkowitz, p120

for them. Miss Garth's continued presence in the Vanstone home at the beginning of the novel is by mutual consent and based on choice instead of the formality of a contract:

But Miss Garth had lived too long and too intimately under Mr. Vanstone's roof to be parted with, for any purely formal considerations; and the first hint at going away which she had thought it her duty to drop, was dismissed with such affectionate warmth of protest, that she never repeated it again, except in jest. The entire management of the household was, from that time forth, left in her hands; and to those duties she was free to add what companionable assistance she could render to Norah's reading, and what friendly superintendence she could still exercise over Magdalen's music.⁴⁰

This integration into the family has placed Miss Garth in a role similar to Mrs Brookes and Rose Moore, as a housekeeper with close links to the heart of the family. The contract of employment has effectively been dispensed with because both sides possess loyalty towards the other which is not connected with contractual obligations. The family unit in this instance is not fragmented or unhappy until the death of Mr and Mrs Vanstone and, up to this point, Miss Garth forms an integral part of this unit.

Miss Garth's strengths are her practicality and determination which she utilises for the benefit of the Vanstone family. Like Mrs Brookes, she attempts to suppress her own grief in order to assist her former charges. This creates the impression of a capable woman with masculine powers of control. Indeed, this is explicitly foreshadowed during her first appearance in the novel:

No observant eyes could have surveyed Miss Garth without seeing at once that she was a north-countrywoman. Her hard-featured face; her masculine readiness and decision of movement; her obstinate honesty of look and manner, all proclaimed her border birth and border training. Though little more than forty years of age, her hair was quite grey; and she wore over it the plain cap of an old woman. (9-10)

All of the attributes here – the cap and grey hair, the 'hard-featured face' – conspire to present the reader with an image of Miss Garth as an old, sensible woman, despite the allowance that she is only in her early forties and, with this physical description, Collins

⁴⁰ Wilkie Collins, *No Name* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p24

conveys that she is a competent and staid woman. Although she struggles briefly following the death of Mr and Mrs Vanstone, Miss Garth's composure and determination returns to protect the futures of Norah and Magdalen. Like Mrs Brookes, her concern is for the family, despite the fact that the daughters are adults. She accepts, without hesitation, the responsibility of locating employment for them and housing them in the meantime. She explains to the family lawyer:

'When they leave this house they leave it with me. My home is their home; and my bread is their bread. Their parents honoured me, trusted me, and loved me. For twelve happy years they never let me remember that I was their governess, they only let me know myself as their companion and their friend. My memory of them is the memory of unvarying gentleness and generosity; and my life shall pay the debt of my gratitude to their orphan children.' (162)

From this response, it is evident that her resolve to aid the girls is a direct result of the favourable treatment she has received as part of the Vanstone household. The use of 'honoured', 'trusted' and 'loved' emphasises that she felt herself to be part of the family and not merely a paid employee whilst simultaneously representing Mr and Mrs Vanstone as excellent employers. This is not purely a contractual relationship because the contract lapsed long ago – the relationship has developed, like those of Bess Jenkins and Rose Moore with their mistresses, into something more akin to friendship or family. Miss Garth's fulfilment of her responsibility to Norah and Magdalen stems from her belief that she has been amalgamated into the Vanstone family.

The extent of Miss Garth's immersion into the household is represented by her grief as well as her actions towards the girls. Her reaction when she learns of the girls' illegitimacy is at first a sense of betrayal: 'Twelve years,' she said, in low hopeless tones – 'twelve quiet happy years I lived with this family. Mrs. Vanstone was my friend; my dear, valued friend – my sister, I might almost say. I can't believe it. Bear with me a little, sir, I can't believe it yet.'

(123) Her initial grief over their deception stems from this belief that she and Mrs Vanstone are like sisters, some distance from the governess role she was employed to undertake twelve years previously. Her struggle to understand the situation is at odds with the clear-headed attitude she has previously demonstrated, highlighting her strength of feeling at this juncture. After she comprehends the situation more clearly, she says, 'My heart aches for the children of my love – more than ever my children now.' (133) The reference to 'my love' inflects Miss Garth's affection towards the girls with familial loyalty, which reciprocates the loyalty they have shown towards her. M. Jeanne Peterson explains, 'The aristocratic practice of continuing to support domestic servants who had outlived their usefulness after long service was not often extended to aged governesses in middle-class families. Long service was much less the rule and paternalism was expensive.'⁴¹ This departure from reality in the portrayal of Miss Garth, as seen with the promotions of the other three women, reaffirms her importance within the family circle. This is expressed by Norah when she writes to her lawyer:

I entirely agree with you, that Miss Garth is more shaken by all she has gone through for our sakes, than she is herself willing to admit; and that it is my duty, for the future, to spare her all the anxiety that I can, on the subject of my sister and myself. This is very little to do for our dearest friend, for our second mother. Such as it is, I will do it with all my heart. (170)

Miss Garth becoming a 'second mother' to the orphaned girls, much like Rose Moore in *A Righted Wrong*, situates her permanently beyond the contractual. She is cited, both by herself and Norah, as an auxiliary parent. In the context of *No Name's* wider questions about identity and societal norms, Miss Garth's transition into a substitute parent is unsurprising: like most characters within the novel she goes on a journey involving the sudden alteration of her prospects. Miss Garth's resolution to assist the girls reflects the

⁴¹ M. Jeanne Peterson, 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society' in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* ed. Martha Vicinus, p9

extent to which she has been subsumed into the family unit and it demonstrates how distanced this situation is from the transactional system more prevalent at the time.

Bess Jenkins, Rose Moore, Mrs Brookes and Miss Garth all surpass their allotted roles, becoming additional or replacement parents in ways which place them beyond the boundaries of contracts. In the four sensation novels, the devotion shown by these characters, and their use of the agency they have obtained to act on behalf of their employers, stands in marked contrast to the manipulation and misdemeanours which populate the rest of the narratives and sensation fiction more generally. By presenting these women as virtuous, Yates and Collins partially restore the integrity of the home, maligned in the sensation novel as the source of innocuous evil. That they choose family servants to assist in this restoration implies that the sanctity of the feudal home is preferable to the modern, looser environment where no loyalty develops between employer and servant. In *No Name*, Wilkie Collins also demonstrates what can happen when employer/employee expectations differ. Mrs Lecount has devoted her life to the other wing of the Vanstone family only for that loyalty to be ignored in a manner which contrasts sharply with Miss Garth's favourable treatment in the household of Mr and Mrs Vanstone.

'The meanest of living men': the breakdown of feudal loyalty

No Name also provides an example of a breakdown in feudal loyalty which leads to the servant abandoning those feudal bonds and pursuing a self-centred course of action. Mrs Lecount's relationship with Noel Vanstone identifies the problem of differing expectations between a servant and their master, when one is rooted in the feudal model while the other, from selfishness or other considerations, understands their role according to the more modern contractual model. When the obligation as she sees it is not fulfilled, Mrs

Lecount resorts to manipulation and subterfuge to gain what she believes is rightfully hers for the longevity and devotion of her service. It is the fact that her loyalty is not rewarded which compels Mrs Lecount to become the danger within the home and family, rather than the staunch defender of it as Bess, Rose, Mrs Brookes and Miss Garth were.

While Miss Garth's relationship with the Vanstone family is driven by mutual respect and loyalty, Mrs Lecount's link with Noel Vanstone is founded on the fact that his father neglected to leave a will.⁴² This immediately colours the relationship as one based on necessity instead of choice. Additionally, Noel Vanstone's behaviour towards his housekeeper occasionally betrays his egotistical attitudes towards her role in his household. In speaking to 'Miss Garth', actually Magdalen Vanstone in disguise, he explains, 'Mrs Lecount is like the curiosities, Miss Garth – she is one of my father's bargains. You are one of my father's bargains, are you not, Lecount?' (283) Here, Mrs Lecount is put on par with a Peruvian candlestick he has just been discussing: although the item is rare, it is still merely an object and possession. Reducing his housekeeper to the level of a candlestick serves to highlight the difference between Miss Garth's position and Mrs Lecount's: one is treated as a valued member of the family while the other is treated as property. This objectification of a servant seemingly situates Noel Vanstone within the feudal model of servitude. However, it is not counteracted with the goodwill towards staff detailed in the representations of the four women in the previous section of this chapter. Pamela Horn explains that the journey to a more contractual relationship was not complete in the nineteenth century but adds:

Yet within this framework, day-to-day contacts depended very much on the character of the individuals concerned. Some mistresses were kind and considerate to their employees; others were harsh. But for many it was the nature of each of the personalities involved which determined the nature of the relationship.⁴³

⁴² Michael Vanstone's death intestate was due to his horror of confronting death, not due to any deliberate decision to deny his former housekeeper a legacy, as Collins makes clear.

⁴³ Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p109

Noel Vanstone's condescension towards his housekeeper and his objectification of her determines that their relationship is based on necessity rather than choice. Here, the feudal model has broken down because the paternalism of the employer has failed. Noel Vanstone insists on keeping Mrs Lecount despite being fully aware of the expectation that she would retire with a handsome legacy following the death of his father. This 'bargain' he refers to is not his father's so much as his own and his relationship with Mrs Lecount demonstrates what happens when feudal servitude is not backed up by feudal morality.

Mrs Lecount's manipulation of Noel Vanstone means that she operates quite differently to the characters analysed in the previous section. While they use their agency to protect their employers, Mrs Lecount utilises underhand methods to lead Noel Vanstone's thoughts and actions. It is soon perceived that one of her primary goals is to obtain the legacy which she believes she deserves. In essence, she is protecting his interests only to the extent that they correlate with hers and, while she has learned to manage Noel Vanstone, she does not respect him. Bruce Robbins points out that:

Consolation, like flattery, both ministers to the master's needs and simultaneously allows the servant, at a moment of relative strength, to get some of her own back. For one thing, it is impossible for the sympathising servant to put herself in her mistress' shoes without evoking the eventuality of walking away in them.⁴⁴

Mrs Lecount employs consolation, flattery and other forms of emotional manipulation in order to bend Noel Vanstone to her will, displaying her complete disdain for him and his alleged superiority as her employer. The way she treats him following his shock when she reveals the impersonation of Miss Garth demonstrates this: 'With her face as hard as ever – with less tenderness of look and manner than most women would have shown if they had been rescuing a half-drowned fly from a milk-jug – she silently and patiently fanned him for

⁴⁴ Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below*, p68

five minutes or more.' (297) This is mechanical, lacking even a friendly interest in his well-being, let alone the devoted affection depicted in the servants already examined in this chapter. She treats him as an overheated machine instead of a human being. While Mrs Lecount has gained an intimate knowledge of her employer, she uses this unsympathetically to manipulate him while mechanically keeping him alive. Her mercenary motives are never far from the surface.

Mrs Lecount's claims on Noel Vanstone are recognised by others, if not by the man himself, indicating that the problem is his selfishness which pollutes his relationship with his housekeeper and not the feudal system of loyalty as a whole. The devoted persona she has cultivated has successfully duped Noel Vanstone's cousin, who writes to him after his marriage to 'Miss Bygrave', again Magdalen in disguise:

But, my dear fellow, Mrs. Lecount is not an ordinary servant. You are under obligations to her fidelity and attachment, in your father's time, as well as in your own; and if you *can* quiet the anxieties which seem to be driving this unfortunate woman mad, I really think you ought to come here and do so. (517)

This model is undoubtedly paternalistic and feudal but his cousin places blame on Noel Vanstone for neglecting to fulfil his obligations. The tone of the letter condemns Vanstone for what his cousin obviously perceives as ungentlemanly behaviour. This suggests that treating a distinguished servant in this manner reflects badly on the character of the person doing it. The marriage of her former employer, meanwhile, has rendered Mrs Lecount jobless and without the promised legacy. Her fury is articulated in a letter to her brother's friend:

In the second place, he knows that my faithful services, rendered through a period of twenty years, to his father and to himself, forbid him, in common decency, to cast me out helpless on the world, without a provision for the end of my life. He is the meanest of living men, and his wife is the vilest of living women. As long as he can avoid fulfilling his obligations to me, he will; and his wife's encouragement may be trusted to fortify him in his ingratitude. (524)

Here, the veil slips and the feudal bond which relies on the tacit goodwill of both parties is shattered. Mrs Lecount equates her loyalty with an unwritten contract which is in contrast to the women examined in the last section who offer loyalty without expecting anything in return. These 'faithful services' which Mrs Lecount describes do not appear 'faithful' when it's recognised that she desired something in return. The phrase 'common decency' expresses the crux of her argument: that Noel Vanstone has transgressed an unwritten contract which, in her view, justifies her venom. Her devotion to him depended on his ability to provide for her in her old age; a stance which is only successful when both sides adhere to this 'common decency'.

Mrs Lecount's success at the end of the novel stems from her perseverance and mercenary motives. There is little fear for her employer in her mind when she returns to Noel Vanstone and persuades him to rewrite his will to disinherit his new wife. She implies her real purpose is to 'save' him when questioned on how he can change his will immediately: 'All the help you need, sir, is waiting for you here,' she said. 'I considered this matter carefully, before I came to you; and I provided myself with the confidential assistance of a friend, to guide me through those difficulties which I could not penetrate for myself.' (557) While rescuing Noel Vanstone from the clutches of his wife could be done immediately, Mrs Lecount is careful to ensure her own future first. This, coupled with the fact that she has solicited 'confidential assistance', confirms that her duty is to her own financial appeasement. She then takes advantage of his desperation for her help to manipulate him into giving her the exact amount of money his father planned to, attempting to leave and dismissing his lower offers as contemptible until he acquiesces to her designs. Once again, she is employing her vast knowledge of his weaknesses for her own

personal gain, further fracturing the feudal bond. She only begins to think of him personally once she has acquired her place in his will: 'Mrs. Lecount had not pitied him yet. She began to pity him, now. Her point was gained; her interest in his will was secured; he had put his future life, of his own accord, under her fostering care – the fire was comfortable; the circumstances were favourable to the growth of Christian feeling.' (581) Only once she has control of him again, and her own future is assured, is there any 'growth of Christian feeling'. She has manipulated him into rewarding her, which is the opposite of the benevolent bond feudal loyalty offers on the part of both servant and master. The loyalty of the earlier examples in this chapter is missing: Mrs Lecount is available only as an ally to Noel Vanstone when it is within her interests to become one. She is the product of a feudal system of servant/employer relationships which has broken down.

Ultimately, Collins allows Mrs Lecount to prosper from her self-motivated devotion to Noel Vanstone. In contrast to her employer, she is intelligent and resourceful while he is weak, miserly and obstinate. By allowing Mrs Lecount to end the novel five thousand pounds richer, Collins implies that the actions of Michael and Noel Vanstone in not securing her legacy were lamentable. Mrs Lecount evidently respected Michael while disliking his weak son but, nevertheless, their combined behaviour created the necessity for her manipulation. Seen in direct contrast to Miss Garth, Collins gives one example of effective feudal relations and one example of ineffective feudal relations, laying the blame directly with Michael and Noel Vanstone for their lack of, as Mrs Lecount herself puts it, 'common decency'.

'Untaught but not untender': devotion to anti-heroines

The final section of this chapter focuses on the devotion by one Collins character and one Yates character to what are essentially villainous characters. These relationships are a hybrid of the feudal and contractual, with both characters altering their status at points within the novels but both serve, and display devotion towards, anti-heroines. Louisa in Collins's *No Name* and Jim Swain in Yates's *Black Sheep* play important roles in their respective plots and are rewarded for loyalty which goes beyond the terms of their employment.

Louisa's first position in *No Name* is a contractual one as a lady's maid to Magdalen Vanstone. When Magdalen attempts to terminate the contract because she is now penniless, she is trying to be a responsible modern employer, not expecting any loyalty from her servant beyond that which the payment of her wages demands. However, the revelation that Louisa forged her reference and is an unwed mother alters the dynamic between mistress and servant. In this sense, they are both similar; they are both 'guilty' in the eyes of the world. The affinity this creates surpasses the conventional contractual bond Magdalen has been trying to terminate as a responsible employer.

In its place is created a new contract which relies on subterfuge and deception. This corrupts the modern idea of a contractual relationship between mistress and servant by making it the basis for illegality:

'You owe me no thanks,' said Magdalen. 'I tell you again, we are only helping each other. I have very little money, but it is enough for your purpose, and I give it you freely. I have led a wretched life; I have made others wretched about me. I can't even make *you* happy, except by tempting you to a new deceit.' (614)

This acknowledges that Magdalen's suggestion is based on tempting Louisa to a fresh 'deceit' and is, in that sense, immoral. At the same time, the contract is formed because of their similarities and the confidence which now exists between them. Both women have the

power to destroy the other but will not take it because of their newfound loyalty towards each other, alongside what they both hope to gain. Louisa lays her own story before Magdalen before knowing they can make a compact: 'The girl's nature was weak, but not depraved. She was honestly attached to her mistress and she spoke with a courage which Magdalen had not expected from her.' (604) This honest attachment, as Collins labels it, is more akin to a feudal model of servitude than a contractual one. Equally, Magdalen tells her when she knows the truth, 'I am only fit to feel for you; and I do feel for you with all my heart. In your place I should have gone into service with a false character too.' (606) Again, the similarities of nature and situation encourage the reader to think of a feudal mistress/servant friendship between the pair. In essence, their compact to help each other also corrupts the feudal bond as well as the contractual: they are utilising the bond of something generally used for positive ends – seen earlier in this chapter with Bess Jenkins, Rose Moore, Mrs Brookes and Miss Garth – to aid their respective deceptions. This hybrid between contract and loyalty appears to taint both possible modes of servitude with its potential to be misused for illegal or immoral purposes.

Jim Swain in Yates's *Black Sheep* travels in the opposite direction to Louisa: his first connection with Harriet Routh is based on loyalty while, eventually, he is employed regularly by her and her husband. This is significant because he becomes devoted to Harriet despite having no real connection with her and knowing little of her life and personality. This devotion fuels the finale of the book, with the downfall of a murderer engineered by the boy's attachment. Jim would be a mere plot device, a witness on the evening of the murder, if his devotion for Harriet Routh was not so pronounced and reiterated by the narrative. This feudal-like idealisation creates a relationship with Harriet which Jim mistakes for a strong bond and which, he believes, gives him an insight into her mind. In misconstruing the truth

of Harriet's involvement in the murder, Jim elevates her to a virtuous status which she does not deserve. This undeserved loyalty appears unconditional and blinkered: Jim does not perceive the possibility that this woman, his social superior, could be guilty, demonstrating something of a relapse towards the distinctions of feudal ties between classes.

As a street-boy, Jim is markedly different from all the other characters analysed in this chapter who can be decisively labelled as 'servants'. The significance of Jim, however, is that he acts like a servant in his attitude towards Harriet. To a waiter trying to eject him from a restaurant, for instance, he is belligerent: 'Never mind my tailor, old cock! P'raps you'd like my card, but I've 'appened to come out without one. But you can have my name and address – they're wery haristocratic, not such as you're used to.' (i, 131) This is representative of his attitude towards most people: he presents the air of believing himself above them, in spite of his low status. To Harriet, though, he is respectful from the beginning. This respect is founded effectively on her noticing him:

The boy had quite an attraction for Mrs. Routh, who would smile at him when she passed him in the street, nod pleasantly to him occasionally from her window, when his business or pleasure led him to lounge past the house before she had left her bedroom of a morning, and who frequently sent him of errands, for the doing of which she rewarded him with a liberality which appeared to him astounding munificence. Mr. James Swain was of a temperament to feel kindness, neglected street-boy though he was, and he had been wonderfully impressed by the womanly compassion which had spoken to him in Harriet's gentle tones on the morning of their first meeting, and had looked out of all the trouble and foreboding in her blue eyes. (ii, 107)

The kindness with which Harriet treats Jim is an extension of the congenial behaviour she has developed to play the part of Routh's wife around his business associates. However, the impact this has on Jim is evidently substantial. Her rewards of 'astounding munificence' are more generous than he is used to, creating a tangible reason why Harriet initially takes root in his imagination as a superior woman. Equally, this 'womanly compassion' indicates that she has taken an interest in him, while to most people he is objectified; indeed, in his first

scene he is referred to as 'this' by another character. In recognising that she has 'trouble and foreboding' in her eyes, he is almost acknowledging a similarity between them. Like Bess Jenkins and Helen Griswold, an affinity is created, although it is much more present in Jim's mind than in Harriet's and so more one-sided. This feudal-like relationship which begins with a few odd jobs, develops because of an apparent mutual respect between the pair. In this sense, it harks back to a model dependent on polite behaviour and benevolence: Jim is respectful towards Harriet, as a servant ought to be, and she is generous in her rewards for his work. Although they are operating outside of a defined servant/mistress relationship, then, it bears the hallmarks of one.

A more contractual relationship between Jim and the Rouths is formed independently by both wife and husband. This has of the effect of placing him in between the couple, emphasising his preference for the wife and suspicion of the husband. Harriet's regard for Jim is high enough to take care of his interests while she is abroad: 'Harriet had remembered the street-boy when she was leaving home, and had charged her servants to employ him. She had not the slightest suspicion of the extensive use which Routh was in the habit of making of his services.' (iii, 140) Here, the feudal respect has shifted into a type of informal contract: Harriet takes some responsibility for Jim when she need not and remembers to consider his well-being in her absence. For Stewart Routh, he becomes a spy: 'Only second in importance to his keeping George Dallas in view was his not losing sight of the boy; and all this time it never occurred to Routh, as among the remote possibilities of things, that Mr. Jim Swain was quite as determined to keep an eye on him.' (iii, 15) The more formal contract, then, is formed between Jim and Stewart Routh, who employs him to follow Dallas, but the more honest contract, founded on benevolence and not cunning,

comes from Harriet's enjoinder. Both of these informal contracts place Jim closer to the centre of the home than he has been previously:

His familiarity with Routh's servants, his being in a manner free of the house – free, but under the due amount of inspection and suspicion justified by his low estate – enlightened him as to Harriet's domestic position, and made him wonder exceedingly, in his half-simple, half-knowing way, how “the like of her could be spoony on sich a cove as him,” which was Mr. James Swain's fashion of expressing his sense of the moral disparity between the husband and wife. (iii, 143)

This paragraph makes it clear that if Jim has any allegiance towards the Rouths, it is most firmly towards Harriet and not Stewart. While Stewart may believe he is Jim's master, paying him to spy on George Dallas, Jim perceives Harriet as the moral centre of the household and gravitates towards her. So, although Routh would expect to command respect from his employee due to their contract, Jim's attachment to the Rouths is dependent on the feudal-like loyalty he has developed towards Harriet.

Jim's affection for Harriet elevates him beyond the level of a mere street-boy in terms of his insight into others and his overt attempts at situating himself as her protector and friend. As well as almost being incorporated into the household, his interactions with or about her betrays self-consciousness about how he appears in her eyes, for example hastily jumping up to bow to her when they meet by chance. This two-way respect diminishes the social gap between them, putting Jim almost on Harriet's level. Towards the end of the novel, he delivers a note from Routh to Harriet:

When Jim Swain arrived at his destination, and the door was opened to him, Harriet was in the hall...Jim pulled his cap off hastily, taken by surprise at seeing her, and while he handed her the note, looked at her with a full renewal of all the compassion for her which had formerly filled his untaught but not untender heart. He guessed rightly that he had brought her something that would pain her. She looked afraid of the note during the moment she held it unopened in her hand; but she did not think only of herself, she did not forget to be kind to him. (iii, 182-183)

Alongside Jim's respect is the 'compassion' he feels for her again: it elevates him above the capacity of a street-boy, as if his perceived affinity with Harriet has lifted him out of his class, especially when she remembers to offer him food in spite of her own worries. This creates an equality in Jim's mind which is highlighted later when one of Harriet's servants asks him if he believes Harriet would have waited in for him had she known he wanted to see her: "Yes, I do; wot's more, I'm sure she would," said Jim, and walked moodily way, leaving Mr. Harris in a fine attitude of surprise upon the threshold. When that functionary finally left off looking after the boy, and shut the door, he did so to the accompaniment of a prolonged whistle.' (iii, 251) Jim's belief that Harriet considers him worthy of her time thus alienates him from other members of his class while simultaneously demonstrating how strong his affection for Harriet has grown.

Ultimately, Jim is the catalyst for solving the murder at the centre of the novel and the key to Stewart Routh's downfall. That his contract with Routh has not prevented him from informing on his employer is unsurprising in the modern climate of little or no loyalty. However, Jim implicates his employer because of his loyalty to two other people: Harriet Routh and George Dallas, who he prefers to Stewart Routh. He admits that he wanted to come forward at the time of murder for Harriet's sake: 'If it hadn't been as I was afraid of getting into it, I should ha' spoke before when I see Mrs. Routh, as is a good lady, a-frettin' herself to death, and him a-deceivin' of her.' (iii, 270) This persistent belief in Harriet's innocence colours his attitude to the case as he has concocted an image of her in his head as a benevolent victim of her husband's misdeeds. He continues, 'I did it for Mr. Dallas; but I don't think as I should have done it if he hadn't been bad to her, and if I hadn't seen her a-dyin' day after day, as courageous as can be, but still a-dyin', and he a-neglectin' of her first and deceivin' of her after.' (iii, 274-275) By confessing that his primary motivation is

avenging Harriet's distress, Jim reiterates the affection for her which has dogged him throughout the novel. His reference to Harriet as 'courageous' is apt, but for reasons which Jim cannot understand, even with his love for penny romances. He asks the lawyer to write to Harriet on his behalf, instructing him to say, 'You weren't in it, dear ma'am, I'm sure, and so I have told the gentlemen and Mr. Tatlow, which has me in charge at present; but you know it, and that Mr. Dallas did not do it, and Mr. Routh did.' (iii, 276) In absolving Harriet of being 'in it', he implicitly compliments her for her own devotion to a husband who was not worth her love, which can be seen as an ironic commentary on Jim's own devotion towards Harriet. This fulfils his projection of Harriet as an ideal woman. However, being instrumental in Routh's downfall also means being complicit in Harriet's. Her weakness in the novel was her kindness to the street-boy:

She heard and saw the boy whose story contained the destruction of hope and life, showed her the utter futility of all the plans they had concocted, of all the precautions they had taken; showed her that while they had fenced themselves from the danger without, the unsuspected ruin was close beside them, always near, wholly unmoved. It had come, it had happened; all was over, it did not matter how. (iii, 289-290)

This 'danger within' is the direct result of Harriet's compassion for Jim and links back to the sensational trope of the servant posing a threat to the household, though this household is an immoral one worthy of destruction. Harriet ignored his low status to be kind to the respectful boy underneath, but did not understand that his intellect and ability to love was also superior to that of a mere street-boy. His affinity for her had elevated him beyond normal considerations of class and equality, leading him to believe he could, and should, rescue her.

Jim Swain's final position in *Black Sheep* is similar to that of Louisa in *No Name*. Both have profited by their devotion to their mistress's circumstances, albeit, in Jim's case, by indirect means. In revealing Routh's misdeeds as a way of avenging Harriet, he also cleared

George Dallas's name and is rewarded by going into service as Dallas's assistant, learning to write and generally improve himself. This street-boy, whose affection for Harriet Routh elevated him in status in his own mind, has succeeded in removing himself from the casual labour market in practice.

The three different types of servant analysed in this chapter all have one thing in common: they reflect feudal loyalty (in Mrs Lecount's case, the breakdown of it) as something integral to the success of the Victorian family. Elizabeth Steere comments that, 'Just as their readership extended across class lines, sensation novels often contain plots that rely on blurring the boundaries of class and the division between servants and masters.'⁴⁵ This is certainly the case within the four novels analysed in this chapter. Bess, Rose, Mrs Brookes and Miss Garth demonstrate how a servant can assimilate themselves into the family unit and benefit it in times of need. Mrs Lecount's character arc shows the difficulties experienced by the transition from feudal loyalty to a transactional system whilst implying the blame lies with the master for refusing to operate within the rules of feudalism. Louisa and Jim are representative of a younger class of employee who, it would be expected, have emerged into a working world based far more on transaction than feudalistic values of loyalty. Indeed, their affection is towards specific people rather than the overarching idea of the family. However, the fact that Collins and Yates still depict these characters as motivated by their loyalty is significant: it demonstrates that the paternalistic model of servant loyalty is still an acceptable trope for mid-century sensation fiction, even when it deviates from the contemporary landscape of servant/master relations. While many texts within the sensation genre focus on the disloyalty of servants, the four texts analysed

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Steere, *The Female Servant and Sensation Fiction*, p4

in this chapter counteract this by depicting feudal bonds which benefit the Victorian family instead of placing it in danger.

Conclusion

Writing of a really high order is as rare as ever; but there seems to be positively no limit to that kind of plausible imitation which will pass muster on a cursory inspection...Mr. Yates is a gentleman devoted to the manufacture of this questionable material. If we should take up his book and read a page or two here or there, we might fancy that we were looking at the inferior portions of a good author; there is, of course, nothing that resembles genius, but there is a considerable quantity of plausible imitation of that kind of matter which fills up the gaps between fine passages even in the best authors. If Mr. Yates cannot mimic Homer awake, he can for a brief space look not altogether unlike Homer asleep.

The Saturday Review, 1871¹

The contemporary cultural snobbery which accompanied the popularity of the sensation novel has undoubtedly impacted the critical neglect of Edmund Yates. Recent work such as *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011), edited by Pamela K. Gilbert, reflects the critical enthusiasm for recovering forgotten authors with its chapters on Yates, Amelia Edwards and Dora Russell amongst others, and Anne-Marie Beller and Tara MacDonald comment, specifically in relation to female writers, that, 'Indeed, significant scholarly work has been undertaken over the last few decades which has recovered a number of hitherto neglected authors of the mid and late nineteenth century.'² Recovering such writers has become easier due to sites such as Internet Archive and Project Gutenberg which host thousands of obscure books with expired copyright. This offers a valuable resource to researchers wishing to study out-of-print 'lost' authors and, indeed, many of Yates's novels are available at Internet Archive.

One aim of this thesis is to help rehabilitate Yates's reputation as a novelist and examine some of his work in detail. Frequently, he is considered primarily as a journalist and

¹ Anon, 'Dr. Wainwright's Patient', *The Saturday Review*, 4 February 1871, pp154-155, p154 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

² Anne-Marie Beller and Tara MacDonald, 'Introduction' to 'Special Issue: Beyond Braddon: Re-Assessing Female Sensationalists', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2013), pp143-152 in Taylor and Francis (Online) [Accessed: 30th December 2014]

editor or, occasionally, in relation to other members of the nineteenth-century literary establishment such as Charles Dickens or William Thackeray. While P.D. Edwards's 1997 book *Dickens's Young Men* gives a good biographical account of Yates's life and analyses his journalistic endeavours fairly comprehensively, the chapter which covers his novels only looks in any length at the two earliest texts (*Broken to Harness* (1864) and *Running the Gauntlet* (1865)). Even then, detailed analysis of character is limited primarily to the bohemianism which is at the forefront of Edwards's study of both Yates and George Augustus Sala. In addition, while Edwards's 1980 bibliography is an invaluable resource for those studying Yates, it serves to highlight the number of novels in Yates's oeuvre, most of which have received little or no critical attention since their initial publication. Andrew Radford's chapter on Yates in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* works to reintroduce him as a sensation author, but, as an introductory piece, it inevitably lacks detailed textual analysis. Furthermore, Radford, like Edwards, focuses on the bohemianism which differentiates Yates from his fellow sensation authors. These efforts to distinguish Yates from his sensationalist contemporaries serve to demonstrate that his work offers something original to researchers of the genre. However, in seeking to differentiate Yates from his contemporaries, critics have overlooked his contribution to the sensation canon and his manipulation of generic constraints. This thesis establishes that Yates's work can be analysed alongside that of other sensation novelists, widening the scope of Yates studies beyond journalism and bohemianism.

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates the potential for another branch of Collins study involving textual comparisons of his work with Yates's. In her 2007 introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, Jenny Bourne Taylor explains:

During the past twenty-five years, there has been a veritable explosion of interest – not only in monographs and articles devoted both to his work and to sensation fiction, but also in general studies of Victorian literature and culture, where Collins is regarded as a serious writer as much as a popular novelist – as he always hoped he would be.³

During a keynote lecture at the Victorian Popular Fiction Association study day ‘Wilkie Collins: New Directions and Readings’ in November 2013, William Baker analysed the criticism published on Collins in books, articles and dissertations from 1962 to 2013, pointing out that 75% of it has been published in the last twenty years, confirming Jenny Bourne Taylor’s assertion that the field of Collins studies has dramatically expanded since the 1990s.⁴ Baker’s work also highlights the fact that the canonical texts of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* have received much more individual attention than other works, reiterating that there is still plenty of scope for research. This thesis, whilst showing the potential for comparison between Collins and Yates, also demonstrates through its analysis of Yates’s more formulaic works *A Righted Wrong* (1870), *The Impending Sword* (1874) and *The Silent Witness* (1875) that even novels which follow a hackneyed sensational plot can contain elements of innovation and critical interest. This highlights further opportunities for research into both Collins and Yates.

The relationships examined in this thesis are not linked to the bohemian themes in much of Yates early work. Although the character of George Dallas in *Black Sheep* is a journalist, Geoffrey Ludlow in *Land at Last* is an artist and there are theatrical characters in *The Impending Sword*, these bohemian elements of the plot are separate to the devotion strands identified in this thesis. By focusing on aspects of Yates’s work which are separate to his bohemianism, this thesis repositions him within the sensation canon as an author who can be examined comparatively with his contemporary Wilkie Collins. It also demonstrates

³ Jenny Bourne Taylor, ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins* ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp1-6, p2

⁴ Baker’s analysis was subsequently published in volume 12 of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal (2013).

that there is plenty of scope for further research into his later novels which, due to their formulaic natures, have largely been ignored.

Chapters two and four explore the similarities of Yates and Collins's portrayals of female friendship and the relationships between employers and servants whilst contrasting these approaches with other texts in the sensation genre, the wider canon and the periodical press. Conversely, chapters one and three analyse the differences in Yates and Collins's depictions of wives and the disabled male. Readings of Yates as innovative in his treatment of common sensational situations and characters stand as testament against the view of him as a synthetic writer focused almost solely on 'turning out regulation three-volume novels by steam'⁵ for profit as *The Athenaeum* complained of in 1872. It suggests that, alongside the bohemian elements of his novels, there is more to be examined within Yates's work. Concluding his essay on Yates in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, Andrew Radford comments that, 'We should pay closer attention to his slyly sardonic and parodic fictional strategies which complicate the reader's responses to the sensational motifs in his work.'⁶ This thesis demonstrates that Yates's 'fictional strategies' include a more nuanced approach to characterisation than has previously been allowed.

Like many sensation novelists, both Yates and Collins were criticised by contemporary reviewers for their approaches to characterisation. A review of Yates's 1869 novel *Wrecked in Port* in *The Saturday Review* identifies unrealistic characters made to fit into a plot framework:

Its personages play their parts creditably, and with tolerable consistency. But then it is so evident that they are playing parts all the time; heroine, hero, and subordinates, all of them are jarring continually with your instinctive feeling of what they ought to be and

⁵ Anon, 'Novels of the Week', *The Athenaeum*, 21 December 1872, p807 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

⁶ Andrew Radford, 'Edmund Hodgson Yates' in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* ed. Pamela K. Gilbert (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), pp319-331, p329

ought to do, while in matters of detail Mr. Yates revels in an absolute luxury of improbabilities.⁷

Similarly, a review in the same periodical nine years earlier criticises Collins's construction of character as subordinate to plot in *The Woman in White*:

With him accordingly, character, passion, and pathos are mere accessory colouring which he employs to set off the central situation in his narrative. All the architecture of his plot tapers to one point, and is to be interpreted by one idea. Men and women he draws, not for the sake of illustrating human nature and life's varied phases, or exercising his own powers of creation, but simply and solely with reference to the part it is necessary they should play in tangling or disentangling his argument.⁸

Though this type of criticism has been thoroughly interrogated by Collins scholars, due to the lack of criticism on Yates his characterisation methods remain largely unexamined, though T.H.S. Escott in his 1894 retrospective explains, 'The general method of his fictions was to select a strongly defined feminine character from some grade of life he knew well, and to group round her incidents and personages, as the evolution of his characters or the unfolding of his plot required.'⁹ It is certainly true that the overarching plots of the five Yates novels examined in this thesis occasionally constrain the characters involved in them. One notable example of this can be found in *A Righted Wrong* (1870) and the unexplored romantic potential of Margaret Hungerford's relationship with James Dugdale. Since the plot turns on accidental bigamy and subsequent inheritance problems, Margaret must marry Fitzwilliam Meriton Baldwin in order to facilitate these difficulties. While this means that James Dugdale's love for Margaret must go unrequited, it does, perversely, crystallise his devotion towards her in both life and death, and makes it a focal point of the final volume of the novel. This is a pattern which is repeated in the Yates novels analysed in this

⁷ Anon, 'Wrecked in Port', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 4 September 1869, pp330-331, p330 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

⁸ Anon, 'The Woman in White', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 25 August 1860, pp249-250, p249 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 19th November 2014]

⁹ T.H.S. Escott, 'Edmund Yates: An Appreciation and a Retrospect', *The New Review*, July 1894, pp87-97, p95 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 25th May 2014]

thesis: while characters are primarily subordinate to the machinations of plot, their reactions to the difficulties thrown up by the sensational stories serve to highlight the characters' devotion and, therefore, Yates's subtle characterisation which emphasises their loyalty regardless of the contrived nature of the plots.

Yates was commended by contemporary reviewers for his representation of three of the characters analysed in this thesis, while other characters in his novels are criticised as bland or unrealistic. Of *Black Sheep's* devoted wife Harriet Routh, *The Saturday Review* writes:

Hence, though we feel the whole atmosphere in which the incidents of the story are placed to be thoroughly artificial and unreal, still the thoroughgoingness of the heroine is such that we do not feel that she is artificial or unreal at all. Given the circumstances, we can understand the nature of the woman driving her to act as she does. The other people in the book are all drawn with pains, but they are tame by comparison with the arch plotter.¹⁰

Similarly, despite criticising the plot and general characterisation in *A Righted Wrong*, the reviewer in *The Athenaeum* comments:

Some of the characters demand more favourable notice. James Dugdale, the crippled tutor, who has burned in boyhood with an unrequited passion, and lives to bestow the wealth of his affection on the orphan children of his early love, is a noble, though a homely figure; and Rose Moore, the faithful maid-servant, possesses the acuteness as well as the warmth of Irish character.¹¹

These two pieces demonstrate that, while the sensational flavour of the novels is questionable, the reviewers identify the devoted characters as sympathetic creations, worthier of attention than the typical criminals and actors of contrived plotlines.

Another aim of this thesis, then, is to examine Yates and Collins's representation of devotion as a driving force in nine novels. By exploiting devotion in this manner, the two

¹⁰ Anon, 'Black Sheep', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 10 August 1867, pp190-191, p191 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

¹¹ Anon, 'Novels of the Week', *The Athenaeum*, 15 October 1870, pp491-493, p492 in *British Periodicals* (Online) [Accessed: 2nd January 2014]

novelists demonstrate that the very act of devotion can offer power to subjugated characters, highlighting its potential as an avenue for critical attention. In the introduction, I argued that the concept of devotion is intertwined with the plots of the novels and, in turn, queerness can be associated with this intense loyalty. Chapter one contrasts Collins's portrayals of wifely devotion in *The Woman in White* and *No Name* with Yates's depiction of Harriet in *Black Sheep* arguing that, while all three complicate the dichotomy of angel and demon which permeates the sensation novel, Yates's representation of Harriet's agency differentiates her from Collins's characters, creating the impression of an autonomous woman who actively chooses to devote herself to her husband's schemes. Chapter two argues that both Collins and Yates challenge the assumption that female friendship cannot be the basis for narrative suspense. Their depictions of friendships in *Man and Wife* and *The Silent Witness* mimic heterosexual relationships, thereby posing a threat to society, despite the fact that the women ultimately retreat to conventional roles. The resourcefulness and agency obtained by these female friends is comparable to the agency Harriet Routh acquires from her role as a devoted wife in *Black Sheep*. Chapter three compares Collins's representation of the eccentric disabled male in *The Law and the Lady* with Yates's alternative depictions in *Land at Last* and *A Righted Wrong*. The queerness of these characters is highlighted through their effeminacy, with their agency limited by their domestic surroundings in a similar manner to the constraints placed upon women striving to protect each other in chapter two. Once again, while Yates falls short of challenging the fictional fear of the disabled male marrying and procreating, he successfully contests the sensational trope of the evil disabled man with his representations of these two devoted characters. Finally, chapter four analyses the agency that Collins and Yates endow on employees in four novels, harking back to a more feudal relationship between the classes

whilst simultaneously offering the power to control or destroy families to the servants. Like wives, in the sensation genre servants are often seen as the danger within, meaning that Collins and Yates's depictions represent a departure from the generic norm. I believe that, taken as a whole, these chapters demonstrate that devotion was both a common and a vital theme in the novels of Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates. These attachments highlight the autonomy and power which exist in relationships where normally power would either be minimal or held by the other party. By doing this, they demonstrate that devotion can provide the basis of narrative interest and suspense in sensation fiction and is worthy of critical attention focused on the representations and repercussions of it.

While this thesis offers an in-depth analysis of several of Edmund Yates's novels, it cannot, due to its scope and size, examine Yates's wider oeuvre. There are many possibilities for further research on both Yates's earlier domestic fiction and his sensational novels of the late 1860s and early 1870s. In addition, while this thesis compares and contrasts Yates with Wilkie Collins, there is fruitful potential for his work to be compared alongside Charles Dickens, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and other mid-century novelists with whom he had close working relationships as well as William Thackeray, whose work he greatly admired before the Garrick Affair, and his Post Office colleague and enemy Anthony Trollope. Yates's work as a journalist and editor also offers alternative ways of reading his novels which may be explored in detail.

This thesis highlights Edmund Yates's involvement in the literary establishment of the nineteenth-century with particular focus on his fictional works. In doing this, it asserts that Yates should be re-evaluated as an author worthy of notice by modern scholars. Additionally, it examines in detail the theme of devotion which permeates Yates's work and adds credence to the argument that he is more than a synthetic writer entirely reliant on

sensational tropes and only interested in pecuniary gain. It establishes that the characterisation within his novels is not as heavily formulaic as has previously been contended and that his portrayal of devotion as a basis for narrative sympathy and suspense displays his innovation even while his novels regurgitate typical sensation themes. This thesis aims to demonstrate that detailed analysis of Yates's novels can challenge the critical neglect of him and assert that he is an author worthy of attention.

Appendix One: Contested Authorship

The arguments both in favour of and against the allegations of Frances Cashel Hoey's collaboration on several of Yates's sensation novels generally rely on hearsay with no substantiating evidence either way. The novels alleged to be co-authored by Hoey are *Land at Last* (1866), *The Forlorn Hope* (1867), *Black Sheep* (1867) and *The Rock Ahead* (1868). The novel purported to be entirely Hoey's work is *A Righted Wrong* (1870). This appendix details the information available and the following sources which documents it:

1. *Masters of English Journalism* (1911) by T.H.S. Escott (MEJ)
2. *Anthony Trollope* (1913) by T.H.S. Escott (AT)
3. *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* (1900) by William Tinsley (RR)
4. 'Edmund Yates, 1831-1894: A Bibliography' (1980), Victorian Fiction Research Guides, compiled by P.D. Edwards (Yates VFRG)
5. 'Frances Cashel Hoey' (1982), Victorian Fiction Research Guides, compiled by P.D. Edwards (Hoey VFRG)
6. 'The Edmund Yates Papers in the University of Queensland: A Catalogue' (1993), compiled by Peter Edwards and Andrew Dowling (EYP)
7. '*Dickens's Young Men*': *George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (1997) by P.D. Edwards (DYM)

This appendix will briefly collate the information given in these sources and indicate their references to original sources.

1. Rumours of the alleged collaboration began circling around the time of the publication of the novels. (Yates VFRG)
2. The rumours became notorious following their publication as fact in William Tinsley's 1900 book *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*. Tinsley claims that Hoey felt ill-

used by Yates and that was why the secret came to light. Tinsley says that he did not insist on seeing the original manuscripts of Yates's novels when he first started to publish them as he was an established author and the manuscripts were sent straight to the printers who were allegedly apprised of the deception. Tinsley claims that he had published several Yates novels before he became aware of the collaboration and that he considered it too late to draw attention to it. Tinsley contradicts himself slightly, alleging on p139 that 'four or five novels' were published before he learned of the collaboration then on p141 that it was 'five or six'. (RR)

3. Tinsley's assertion that Hoey felt ill-used by Yates does not sit comfortably with the fact that she frequently wrote for *The World* under Yates's ownership. (Yates VFRG)
4. Tinsley speculates that Yates told Dickens he employed an amanuensis to explain the different handwriting on the manuscript of *Black Sheep* which was serialised in *All the Year Round*. Thus he absolves Dickens from any part in the conspiracy. He also highlights that Yates encouraged him [Tinsley] to purchase the book rights for *Black Sheep* from Chapman and Hall. Yates allegedly received over £1200 in total in relation to *Black Sheep* and Tinsley claims that Hoey declared she only received a 'small portion' of that. (RR)
5. Tinsley gives more detail on *A Righted Wrong*, explaining that after he had advanced Yates £150 that 'Yates could hardly have finished it' (141) and claiming that he paid Hoey a 'good sum' to complete it then published it under Yates's name. He notes that *A Righted Wrong* sold twice as many copies as the novel of Hoey's he published almost simultaneously and that Yates frequently commanded £400 from him for his novels while Hoey's were 'not worth half that sum'. (RR)

6. Tinsley's personal animosity towards Yates is revealed when he explains he was hurt by Yates's paltry offering when he was in financial difficulty, which did not seem to take into consideration the work Tinsley had given him in the past. (RR)
7. T.H.S Escott drew attention to the rumours in two books calling them 'pure fable' (p261) and declaring that he had heard a 'detailed denial' from both Yates and Hoey. (MEJ)
8. Escott subsequently detailed Anthony Trollope's part in perpetuating the gossip due to his antipathy towards Yates. He also expands on his explanation of Yates's writing methods mentioned in *MEJ*, stating that he 'liked to discuss in detail the progress of his work among those with whom he habitually lived' (*AT*, p149) and highlighting that Hoey worked with him on Dickens' magazines and 'was a constant visitor at his house' (p150). He expands on their relationship saying that Yates confided in her to a 'special degree' and invited 'her criticism, suggestions for improvement not only in single episodes, but in the structure of the book' and that Hoey 'often submitted in writing the notions for which she had been conversationally asked'.
9. P.D. Edwards identifies 'marked similarities of plot, theme and language between the five novels and some of those which Hoey published under her own name about the same time' (Yates VFRG, p29). He also concedes that *A Righted Wrong* resembles *A House of Cards*, published by Hoey two years earlier. Edwards speculates that Yates was influenced by Hoey and that, given that *A House of Cards* was serialised under Yates's editorship at *Tinsley's Magazine* it could have been itself influenced by Yates.
10. Edwards specifically repudiates Tinsley's claim that Hoey could have written two-thirds of *Black Sheep* given her lack of interest and familiarity with bohemianism.

Due to this Edwards also believes that, if Hoey wrote any of *Land at Last* and *The Rock Ahead* it must only have been a minor part due to the evident Yatesian expressions and representations. He concedes that these are less marked in *The Forlorn Hope*, indicating that Hoey may have been involved in that novel but there is, again, no proof. (Yates VFRG)

11. Edwards concedes that *A Righted Wrong* dispenses more with Yatesian trademarks, though there are elements that are undeniably from Yates's pen. He suggests that without Tinsley explicitly drawing attention to the fact Hoey claimed to have written the novel any similarities would likely pass unnoticed. There is no dedication on the title page of the novel while all other Yates novels were dedicated to specific people. In addition, *A Righted Wrong* was the only novel of his not to be reprinted. (Yates VFRG)
12. There is nothing in the collection of papers held by the University of Queensland which sheds light on the authorship question. (EYP)

Appendix Two: Summaries of Edmund Yates's Novels

Land at Last (1866)

Land at Last tells the story of artist Geoffrey Ludlow who marries a woman he finds impoverished on the streets. Margaret has been abandoned by her lover and bigamously marries Ludlow before bearing him a son. Meanwhile, Ludlow has been reunited with an old friend Annie Maurice who lives with her cousins, Earl Beauport and his family. The eldest son, Lord Caterham, has been trying to locate a woman his dissolute brother wronged and, ultimately, it is revealed that Margaret was that woman. Margaret attempts to reunite with her true husband but is rejected again and dies. Ludlow eventually marries Annie and they raise a family.

Black Sheep (1867)

Black Sheep tells the story of George Dallas, a hapless and dissolute journalist who falls into the schemes of Stewart and Harriet Routh. Routh commits a murder to obtain money for a venture and frames Dallas for the crime. Ultimately, the Routh marriage fractures and Dallas's innocence is proven by the evidence of a young street-boy. Dallas marries the niece of his stepfather at the end of the novel while Routh and Harriet die.

A Righted Wrong (1870)

A Righted Wrong is a tale of accidental bigamy and illegitimacy that impacts two generations of a family. Margaret Hungerford returns to England a widow following an unhappy marriage and is wooed by Fitzwilliam Meriton Baldwin. They marry and have two daughters but later discover that the first one was illegitimate. Later, following the death of

her parents, that child is disinherited by her sister. She regains her inheritance via a fortunate marriage.

The Impending Sword (1874)

Set primarily in America, *The Impending Sword* details the elaborate murder of businessman Alston Griswold by his friend and the attempts to unravel the mystery of the murder undertaken on behalf of Mrs Helen Griswold by her old friend Thornton Carey. The novel ends with the prospect of a happy union between Helen and Carey.

The Silent Witness (1875)

The Silent Witness documents the histories of Grace Middleham and Anne Studley following the murder of Grace's uncle in a bank robbery. Anne Studley also witnesses a second murder by George Heath and is forced to marry the man to protect her father. This man later attempts to marry Grace but Anne threatens to reveal their prior marriage if he ensnares her friend, leading to a fracture with Grace. Ultimately, Heath kills himself and Grace and Anne are reconciled.

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