

**'ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF — FIRST, NEGATIVELY':
CHARLES DICKENS, ANTHONY TROLLOPE, WILLIAM
MAKEPEACE THACKERAY AND FIRST-PERSON JOURNALISM
IN THE 1860S FAMILY MAGAZINE**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the editorial contributions of W.M. Thackeray, Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope to the *Cornhill Magazine*, *All the Year Round* and *Saint Pauls Magazine*, analyzing their cultivation of a familiar or personal style of journalism in the context of the 1860s family magazine and its rhetoric of intimacy. Focusing on their first-person journalistic series, it argues that these writers/editors used these contributions as a means of establishing a seemingly intimate and personal relationship with their readers, and considers the various techniques that they used to develop that relationship, including their use of first-person narration, autobiography, the anecdote, dream sequences and memory. It contends that those same contributions questioned and critiqued the depiction of reader-writer relations which they simultaneously propagated, highlighting the distinction between this portrayal and the realities of the industrialized and commercialized world of periodical journalism. It places this within the context of the discourse of family that was integral to the identity of these magazines, demonstrating how these series both held up and complicated the idealized image of Victorian domesticity that was promoted by the mainstream periodical culture of the day, maintaining that this was a standard feature of family magazine journalism and theorizing that this was in fact a large part of its popular appeal to the family market. The introductory chapter examines the discourse of family that dominated the mid-range magazines of the 1860s and how this ties in with the series' rhetoric of intimacy. Chapter One looks at Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', examining the manner in which Thackeray establishes a sense of familiarity between his editorial persona and the reader, only to consistently undermine his own efforts, viewing this within the context of Thackeray's realist aesthetic. Chapter Two turns to Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller', and traces the relationship between Dickens's use of the personal, his concept of the 'Uncommercial' in the series and his preoccupation with the forces of commercialism and Utilitarianism, which it reads as ultimately concerned with his own sense of complicity in the commercialization of literature. Chapter Three studies 'An Editor's Tales' within the context of its publication during the last months of Trollope's editorship of *Saint Pauls* and reads the ambivalent relationship of the series to the personal and its unconventional treatment of the family in relation to this, viewing the series as a part of Trollope's reaction to the failure of the experiment he undertook with *Saint Pauls*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Author's Declaration	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' and the <i>Cornhill Magazine</i>	38
CHAPTER 2 Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller' and <i>All the Year Round</i>	99
CHAPTER 3 Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' and <i>Saint Pauls Magazine</i>	166
AFTERWORD	227
BIBLIOGRAPHY	236

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RP	Roundabout Papers
UCT	The Uncommercial Traveller
AET	An Editor's Tales

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of York. The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

INTRODUCTION

‘Allow me to introduce myself—first, negatively’¹: Charles Dickens’s opening line to the first article in his quasi-fictional, semi-autobiographical series, ‘The Uncommercial Traveller’, encapsulates two of the most important elements of that series, namely, the familiarity and intimacy of the narrative voice, and its irony. Designed as a medium through which Dickens could establish a closer relationship with the readers of *All the Year Round*, the weekly magazine he established in 1859, the series’ emphasis on the personal and the familial both as a mode of address and as an ideal for reader-writer relations was balanced by a healthy sense of irony, which while it added to the series’ comedic value and the sense of a camaraderie between the producers and their public, nonetheless challenged its own rhetoric by questioning its own use of the personal and the relationship of magazine journalism to the personal and the familial in general.

As Hilary Fraser, Judith Johnston and Stephanie Green write, ‘Showcase editors had a particular effect on the journals they edited, including creating an identity and a community through the magazine’.² This thesis looks at Dickens’s ‘The Uncommercial Traveller’, William Makepeace Thackeray’s ‘Roundabout Papers’ and Anthony Trollope’s ‘An Editor’s Tales’, written for the *Cornhill Magazine* and *Saint Pauls Magazine* respectively, and examines their ambivalent relationship to their own rhetoric within the context of the family magazines within which they were published and the discourse of ‘family’ literature which was prevalent at the time. Semi-autobiographical and written in the first-person, this thesis argues that while these series sought to establish a seemingly

¹ Charles Dickens, ‘His General Line of Business’, *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens’ Journalism: The Uncommercial Traveller and Other Papers, 1859-70*, ed. by Michael Slater and John Drew (London: J.M. Dent, 2000), p. 28. Further references to this work will be made in the text.

² Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 18.

intimate relationship with their readers, at the same time they questioned both that relationship and their means of establishing it, along with several other significant tenets of what constituted respectable family reading at this time. In this, it views these texts as examples of the paradoxical nature of periodical literature, which can be seen as both open and closed, and of the rich and complex nature of Victorian family literature, which can be simultaneously seen as both subversive and hegemonic.

The Victorian Family Magazine in the 1860s

The 1860s saw the rapid expansion of the periodical marketplace, and particularly of the number of magazines published. In part the result of the repeal of the last of the taxes on knowledge and a reduction in the paper duty, this sudden proliferation can also be accounted for by the growing proportion of the literate public that was catered to by neither the popular penny press nor by the high-brow quarterlies and reviews that were the two main options for Victorian readers of the periodical press. Publications such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* and Dickens's *Household Words* were joined in 1859 by *Macmillan's Magazine*, and then in 1860 by the *Cornhill* and a slew of imitators. By 1867 the publisher William Tinsley was complaining that there were 'more magazines in the wretched field than there were blades of grass to support them'.³

Carrying one or two serial novels and a selection of poetry, short stories, travel sketches and light but informative articles, a large number of these new magazines were aimed at the lucrative family market. These magazines not only sought both a male and a female readership, but, as Deborah Wynne has convincingly argued, were 'designed around the

³ William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, 2 vols (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1900), I, p. 323.

concept of the family as a domestic group bound together by shared literary tastes'.⁴ Subjects or forms that catered too overtly to either gender or to children were for the most part excluded from their pages. Extended discussions of politics and economics were usually barred on the basis of being too 'male', and references to sex, violence or crime were watchfully calculated so as to strike a careful balance between propriety and interest. The prospectus to *Temple Bar* thus announced 'as for politics, there will not be any', while Thackeray promised that the *Cornhill* would always be written as though ladies and children were present.⁵

As John Tosh has written, Victorian culture exhibited a 'deep commitment to the *idea* of home'. 'Comfort, privacy and time spent in the home, more sought after by the Victorians than by any previous generation, were regarded not as ends in themselves, but as means to realizing a domestic vision'. In fact, as Tosh claims, for the Victorians, 'domesticity in its fully developed form offers a moral view of the world', at the centre of which stood the raising of children and an idea of 'companionate marriage' based upon 'sharply distinguished roles' rather than equality. The Victorian domestic ideal in the discourse of the day held putting a 'high premium on the quality of relationship between family members' to be a moral issue. Tosh writes, 'at its most elevated, the idealizing of home extended to the belief that domestic virtues would triumph over a heartless world'.⁶

⁴ Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), p. 1.

⁵ Anonymous, 'Prospectus to Temple Bar', *Bookseller*, 34 (27 October 1860), p. 614; Gordon N. Ray, *The Letters and Private Papers of W.M. Thackeray*, 4 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), IV, p. 161.

⁶ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 27-28.

Importantly then, as well as attempting to appeal to a family market, these magazines made the image of the family, and the intimate domestic sphere of companionship that it represented in the culture of the period, integral to their identity as a periodical form. Features such as the 'Belgravian Prose Ballads', in which the narrator, a native of Belgravia, discusses various domestic problems such as honeymoons, courtships, the marrying of daughters, and dining at his neighbours, were used to establish the family-oriented contents of these magazines, as were prospectuses and introductory essays or poems.⁷ Bradbury & Evans' magazine *Once a Week* provides a good example of this in the poem, 'Once a Week', which was included in the first issue. The fifth verse of this poem appeals to the reader as follows:

Come, Lawyer, why not leave your dusty smother,
Is there not wed to thee a bright-eyed wife?
Take holiday with our learned brother,
And lay up health for your autumnal life.

The sixth verse makes a similar appeal to doctors, while the seventh verse appeals to wives.

Young Wife, on yonder shore there blow sea-breezes,
Eager your cheek to kiss, your curls to fan,
Your husband—come, you know whatever pleases
Your charming self delights that handsome man
And you've a child, and mother's faith undoubting
That he's perfection and a thing unique,

⁷ 'Belgravian Prose Ballads' ran as a regular feature in *Belgravia: A London Magazine* from November 1866 until March 1867.

Still, he'd be all the better for an Outing—

There rolls the wave and here is ONCE A WEEK.⁸

The magazine is imagined as a space in which the different members of the family can come together in domestic harmony. Readers are addressed in their roles as wives and husbands, fathers and mothers, and in other instances as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, and likened to idealized images of the perfect wife, husband or child. In a similar vein, contributors commonly presented a domesticated image of themselves to readers. In the first issue of the *Argosy*, the writer of 'The Argosy's Log' refers to himself as 'comfortably sitting over the fire'.⁹ In the first issue of *Good Words* a pastor providing counsel for young men pictures himself 'as a brother' rather than a 'formal teacher'.¹⁰

But this was only one thread in the Victorian family magazine's multi-layered discourse on domesticity, and indeed, only one aspect of such magazines' attempts to woo the Victorian public. The Victorian family magazine was a multifaceted entity, made up of a variety of different texts and voices, within both a single issue and the extended periodical run, which shaped the way each individual text is read. As Mary Poovey has demonstrated, the binary oppositions frequently set up by Victorian culture were inherently unstable, because they depended on the subordination of one term to another. The nature of the periodical as a form accentuated this natural instability.¹¹ As Margaret Beetham has pointed out, it is both a closed and an open form, creating patterns and structures upon which it depends for its identity, and allowing for a level of dialogue and interpretation that means that any identity that it establishes is necessarily

⁸ Shirley Brooks, 'Once a Week', *Once a Week*, I:I, (July 2 1859), p. 1.

⁹ Jason Jones, 'The Argosy's Log', *Argosy*, I:I, (December 1865), p. 93.

¹⁰ Anonymous, 'Christian Counsel and Teaching for Young Men', *Good Words*, I, (December 1860), p. 12.

¹¹ See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

fluid.¹² Fraser, Green and Johnston echo this when they write of both ‘the embeddedness of periodical literature in “the period” and of the dialogism which characterises it’.¹³

As Wynne has shown in her study of the relationship between the sensation novel and the Victorian family magazine, the new rash of ‘respectable’ family magazines that emerged in the 1860s were engaged in a complex dialogue regarding the concerns of the period.¹⁴ The introductory poem to the inaugural issue of the *Argosy* plays upon the magazine’s name, maintaining that ‘Our Argonauts are still / The seer, and the singer, and the sage’, and emphasizing the mythical connotations inherent in the title. But it also draws upon the idea of the argosy as a type of merchant ship, suggesting the commercial underpinning to the magazine’s imaginative mission:

Our thoughts are ships; some ply
A safe and simple trade in common things,
Creeping about the coasts of certainty,
And borne upon the tide that duly brings,
Sleeping and waking, needs, necessities:
This little coasting trade let none despise,
None may dispense with it, and so it should
Teach us the virtues of good neighbourhood,
And fetch and carry daily charities.

Some venture farther forth,
To realms remote, still for no doubtful gain:

¹² Margaret Beetham, ‘Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22:3 (Fall 1989), p. 98.

¹³ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 21.

¹⁴ Wynne, p. 2.

From east to west, from south to utmost north,
To make man free of earth, his fair domain;
Such commerce one great nation makes of men,
The world their city, each a citizen.¹⁵

The 1860s mid-range family magazine was an intrinsically commercial enterprise, designed to have a multilevel appeal to audiences across a range, although still relatively narrow, of social boundaries, utilizing innovative new techniques to appeal to those audiences.

Fraser, Green and Johnston argue that editors 'had indeed to seduce and to retain a readership, and were always aware, or should have been, that their periodicals were a commodity on the market to be consumed'.¹⁶ As Catherine Waters has shown in relation to Dickens's 1850s weekly magazine, *Household Words*, 'By the middle of the nineteenth century, ordinary men and women were experiencing the pleasures and pains of consumer choice on a scale hitherto unknown'.¹⁷ The periodical in general was very much part of this commodity culture, in the advertisements it carried and as a commodity itself, but the close relationship of the new consumer culture with the 'middle-class' home meant that the family magazine was particularly embroiled in it. Commerce, trade, and the purchasing of goods were not necessarily seen as outwith the picture of the family and the home that these magazines built up. Nonetheless, the discussion of these issues, if the magazines' marketing material and opening numbers are to be believed, would be regulated in the same manner as all other subjects debated in these magazines, and have

¹⁵ Isa Craig, 'On Board the Argosy', *Argosy*, 1:1 (December 1865), p. 37.

¹⁶ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 77.

¹⁷ Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens's Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 3.

as Thackeray put it, 'the decided air of white kid gloves'.¹⁸ As Tosh has argued, 'The world of business was seen as necessary, but morally contaminating. Whatever its rewards in profit, power or reputation, it exacted a heavy price in alienation'. This is where the home came in for 'home provided the refuge from work in all its negativity'. These magazines sought to market themselves as a similar type of refuge, offering 'bodily repose and human rhythms', as well as 'the comforts of love and nurture'.¹⁹

But as Tosh also notes, 'as a code for living, Victorian domesticity was shot through with contradictions'. For example, 'the home was supposed to be inward-looking, focused on the most intimate and compelling of human needs. But for the bourgeoisie the home was also the prime means of affirming social status'.²⁰ This is just one of numerous paradoxical elements in Victorian domestic ideology. It is no wonder then that the Victorian family magazine's discourse of domesticity was equally riddled with complexity. As Andrew Maunder has pointed out, by presenting themselves as the 'focal point of the private family home', magazines like the *Cornhill* presupposed and promised 'a particular social and moral order'. To make this promise, they had to appear respectable so that as one contemporary that Maunder quotes puts it, a copy might 'lie on the table of any man without impeaching his sense, which may contribute to his information, and which he may safely leave in the hands of every member of this family'.²¹

In reality, while a careful balancing act was maintained, darker elements did intrude, and it seems likely that it was this balancing of respectability and interest that was a large part of what made the Victorian family magazine as successful it was and that it was in fact an

¹⁸ Ray, *Letters*, II, p. 163.

¹⁹ Tosh, p. 30.

²⁰ Tosh, p. 47.

²¹ Andrew Maunder, "'Discourses of Distinction": The Reception of the *Cornhill Magazine*, 1859-60', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32:3 (Fall 1999), p. 244.

integral part of its identity as a publication. In other ways too, contradictions resound. Take statements such as Anna Maria Hall's in the 'Preface' to *St James's Magazine* that it would 'promote the Interests of the Home, the Refinements of Life, and the Amusement and Information of all Classes',²² in which a notion of cultural elitism is conjoined with a more democratic and commercial interest in providing entertainment. Read carefully, it is clear from the outset that these magazines were not quite as circumscribed in their interests and perspective as they maintained.

As with Wynne's study of the relationship between sensational novels and the family magazine, by studying the relationship between the editorial series of Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope, and the magazines in which they appeared, we can unearth the engagement of these magazines with issues their prospectuses professed to either be above or to ignore as being outwith the remit of 'the family'. These issues are as diverse as the essays that house them. Alcoholism, homelessness, poverty, homosocial bonding, male sexuality, child prostitution, mental illness, and the more troubling aspects of empire, consumerism and many more such topics are touched upon within the pages of these magazines designed to amuse and instruct all the family. Collectively they present an interesting counterpoint to the magazines' 'respectable' self-image.

However, the idea of the family represented more than simply a safe haven from the harsher aspects of the outside world. It presented a positive image of community and companionship. A key element of the Victorian family magazine, and a large part of its appeal, was the 'hermeneutic of intimacy' it provided. Tom Mole delineates this concept in his work on the Romantic period. Mole argues that celebrity culture grew up in the Romantic era as a means of palliating 'the feeling of alienation between cultural

²² Anna Maria Hall, 'Preface', *St James's Magazine*, 1:1 (April 1861), p. 4.

producers and consumers by constructing a sense of intimacy'. Mole describes Romantic writers such as Byron as depicting reading as 'entering a kind of relationship with the author and that that relationship resembled an intimate connection between individuals'.²³ The 1860s family magazine also depicts its readers as entering into a kind of relationship with the producers of the miscellany — picturing the readers as part of a selective social circle, a close friend or a family member. They are made to feel as if they have a share in the warmth, harmony and community that the magazine projects in its images of family life. Thackeray makes this clear in the first number of the *Cornhill* when he refers to his contributors as 'friends', the audience as 'the company' and the magazine as 'our social table'.²⁴ He demonstrates it further in his first Roundabout essay when he again adopts the image of the table: 'Our Cornhill Magazine owners strive to provide thee with facts as well as fiction; and though it does not become them to brag of their Ordinary, they invite thee to a table where thou shalt sit in good company'.²⁵

The direct address was one of several popular techniques for making the reader feel as though he or she were a part of the community that the magazine depicted in its pages. A conversational or a familiar writing style was also commonly adopted, one that often overrode the distance and authority implied in the editorial 'we'. Even articles that tackled more serious and weighty subjects assumed this cosy tone. Take, for example, 'A Note on "Essays and Reviews"' from *St James's Magazine*, an article which was centred upon the discussion of biblical criticism and religious thought. The writer introduces a quote from the work under review in the following manner: 'Yes, one of the Essayists is right when he says — though I fear not exactly meaning what we mean — '. The use of

²³ Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 16, 23.

²⁴ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

²⁵ W.M. Thackeray, 'On a Lazy Idle Boy', *Roundabout Papers and Other Works*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing Classic Texts (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 4-5. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

dashes to create an aside, as well as the positioning of the word 'yes' to answer an unspoken question, creates the idea of a dialogue between reader and writer, while the introduction of a personal note with 'I fear' suggests a familiarity between the two as the writer lapses into the first-person singular in a moment that is half confessional and half knowing wink. This confessional element is built on later in the article when the writer locates the importance of the subject in regards to his own life: 'I know but only too well the difficulties that surround the realization of the wish [...] Again and again have I grasped the Sacred Volume, and fancied that it was enshrined in my heart'.²⁶

Another example is W. Winwood Reade's treatment of African cholera hospitals in *Belgravia*:

I have often thought of this, as I have paced up and down these dismal wards, which once were brilliant salons. What an emblem of human life! That mansion, with its flirtations, its ambitions, its glories, its intrigues, to have mouldered into this sepulchre of tears and agony and death!²⁷

Again we see the use of the first-person singular and the revelation of the author's private thoughts, this time combined with the use of exclamation marks to mimic speech patterns, creating a vivid, personal account of the hospital. Similarly, an article on the intricacies of circumstantial evidence in the English legal system in *Temple Bar* is peppered with phrases such as 'I hardly need remark', 'I ask you', 'I venture' and 'I should infinitely prefer' as well as a glut of rhetorical questions and responses to unspoken questions posed by an imaginary reader.²⁸

²⁶ J.O. Halliwell, 'A Note on the "Essays and Reviews"', *St James's Magazine*, 1:1 (April 1861), p. 64.

²⁷ W. Winwood Reade, 'African Martyrology', *Belgravia*, 1:1 (November 1866), p. 46.

²⁸ Anonymous, 'Notes on Circumstantial Evidence', *Temple Bar*, 1 (December 1860), pp. 91-99.

In the *Cornhill*, as with *All the Year Round* and *Saint Pauls*, added to these common techniques were the editor's own contributions, which went a long way to establishing or not establishing this sense of intimacy. Aside from their fictional contributions, in Thackeray's case, the novella *Lovel the Widower* and *The Adventures of Philip*, in Trollope's *Phineas Finn*, and *The Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations* as well as Christmas tales and a number of other short stories by Dickens, these mainly consisted of 'The Roundabout Papers', 'The Uncommercial Traveller' and 'An Editor's Tales', long-running personal journalistic series that harked back to the familiar style of the eighteenth-century periodical essayists and Romantic writers such as Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt.

The Journalistic Series in the Family Magazine

Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' began their run in the *Cornhill* in the first issue of the magazine in January 1861, and continued throughout his tenure as editor, although they did not appear in every issue during that period. The series continued after Thackeray stepped down as editor up until his death only a few months later. Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller' first appeared in *All the Year Round* on January 28th 1860, a second series ran from May to October 1863, with a third series of 'New Uncommercial Samples' appearing from December 1868 until June 1869. Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' appeared from October 1869 until May 1870. Although clearly reminiscent of the periodical writers of prior ages, these works did not constitute a 'renaissance' of the form. While less studied than earlier, more well-known series, the personal journalistic series remained popular in the Victorian press. Within the Dickens 'family' alone, we find Charles Collins's 'Our Eye-Witness' and 'Small Beer Chronicles', John Lang's 'Wanderings

in India', Eustace Clare Grenville Murray's 'Roving Englishman', and George Augustus Sala's 'Letters from Lilliput', 'Imaginary London' and 'The Streets of the World'. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 'Asmodeus At Large' could also be seen as working in this mode.²⁹ Taking for their subject matter passing ephemera as well as moral, political and social questions that had been discussed since the seventeenth century, these series were linked by a common and continuing interest in the nature of their own discourse, that is to say with their own 'familiarity', and as with earlier writers, this was linked to a concern regarding commodification, industrialization and the dynamics of the literary field in the midst of an expanding reading population.

Bulwer-Lytton's series is vitally concerned with the position of his narrative, and the magazine that contains it, in relation to the domestic sphere. His 'Asmodeus at Large' sets out to 'fulfil for the "New Monthly" the same object as the "Noctes" fulfil for "Blackwood's" and like the "Noctes", therefore, may be continued while the world continues to furnish matter for criticism and comment'.³⁰ Through the figure of Asmodeus the narrator is given a position of omnipotence through which to view the world, but this omnipotence is coloured by the subjectivity of the narrator, 'an idle, wandering, unmarried man'³¹ who eschewed the pleasures of domesticity: 'Anything but a large chair

²⁹ Charles Collins's series 'Our Eye-Witness' appeared in *All the Year Round* from June 25th 1859 until July 28th 1860 and 'Small-Beer Chronicles' ran from August 30th 1862 until June 27th 1863 in the same magazine; John Lang's 'Wanderings in India' appeared in *Household Words* from November 1857 to February 1858; Eustace Clare Grenville Murray's 'Roving Englishman' appeared in *Household Words* from November 1851 until March 1856; G.A. Sala's 'The Streets of the World' in *Temple Bar* from December 1863 until March 1866, and 'Letters from Lilliput' and 'Imaginary London' in *Belgravia* from May 1867 until September 1869 and February 1872 until July 1873 respectively; 'Asmodeus At Large' appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* from January 1832 until February 1833.

³⁰ Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Asmodeus At Large, No. IX', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 37:145 (January 1833), p. 61.

³¹ Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Asmodeus At Large, No. X', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 37:146 (February 1833), p. 417.

by the fireside, and a family circle! Oh! the bore of going every day over the same exhausted subjects, to the same dull persons of respectability'.³²

A similar preoccupation dominates Charles Collins's 'Small-Beer Chronicles', his second series for *All the Year Round*. In his first article, Collins's Small Beer Chronicler presents himself as an historian of the nation's social life, 'the Registrar-General who shall from time to time furnish a report of how the great nation whose public doings are so adequately recorded, behave in the seclusion of private life'.³³ He begins this record of private life from an outsider's perspective, remaining firmly rooted in the collective 'we'. In the second article, however, he adopts a far more subjective point of view, utilizes the first-person singular, and places himself either as a participant in the scenes that he describes or as having received first-hand information from 'those persons in my employment whom I secrete on chairs in the Park, and other localities where they can be on the look-out'.³⁴ The Chronicler and his spies, although apparently taking in a range of subjects, are obsessed with one thing: change. 'Change [...] there has been in every direction': changes in transportation, in styles of conversation, the replacement of the door-knocker with the bell, the passing away of the old-fashioned dinner, and significantly, the new dominance of machinery. 'To say that the natural expression of the mind of the age is not through art would be to speak the truth. As it would be to say that it *is* through machinery. There *were* ages when the mind of civilisation expressed itself through art. That time is over'.³⁵

³² Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Asmodeus At Large, No. VII', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 35:143 (November 1832), p. 417.

³³ Charles Collins, 'Small-Beer Chronicles. I. Our Greatness', *All the Year Round*, 7:175 (August 30 1862), p. 583.

³⁴ Charles Collins, 'Small-Beer Chronicles. II. Our Littleness', *All the Year Round*, 7:176 (September 6 1862), p. 610.

³⁵ Collins, 'Small-Beer Chronicles. I. Our Greatness', p. 583, 584.

Unsurprisingly, many of these series link their concerns regarding the familiarity or 'unfamiliarity' of journalistic discourse, as embodied in their attention to conventions such as anonymity, the first-person plural, and the individual versus the omniscient perspective, to the present state of Victorian society, and by implication to the past from which it differed. Sala's series, in their preoccupation with urban life and their bent towards flânerie, juxtapose their style of narration and the figure of the solitary individual with the urban masses and the commodity-strewn landscape of the nineteenth-century metropolis, while as Sabine Clemm shows Murray's 'Roving Englishman' travel series connects discourses of nationalism and individualism as the series moves back and forth across the continent and his narrator moves back and forth between a type and a more individual presence.³⁶

'In periods of rapid social change an imagined domestic space of stability and continuity becomes particularly appealing, so that there is some cultural investment in the idea of a contented grouping of parents and children', posits Holly Furneaux.³⁷ At the same time, we can see in the prevalence of these series during this period that while the Victorian family magazine sought to create just such a space of stability and continuity, in the discursive meanderings of these narrators it also left room for more fluid and divergent perspectives. As Margaret Beetham has so ably demonstrated, as a form the periodical's emphasis on continuity is only matched by its propensity for change.³⁸ This was as true of the Victorian family magazine and the personal journalistic series as it was of any other periodical.

³⁶ Sabine Clemm, *Dickens, Journalism and Nationhood: Mapping the World in Household Words* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 110.

³⁷ Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 22.

³⁸ Beetham, 'Open and Closed', p. 98.

Personal Journalism in the Later Victorian Period

Like these texts, Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller', and Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales', were very much concerned with the nature of their own discourse, and in particular the relation of that discourse to the rhetoric of the magazines in which they were published. They prioritized the creation of a sense of connection with the reader, but in doing so, they entered into what was controversial territory in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The increasing 'personalization' of literature and particularly the periodical press was the subject of much discussion and some anxiety for the Victorians. Although to the modern scholar, the term 'personal journalism', may offer 'a means of characterizing a form of popular journalistic discourse which extended, with a certain continuity, from the mid-nineteenth century to the "New Journalism" of the 1880s and beyond', to the Victorians it was term laden with connotations.³⁹ The word 'personal' when used to describe journalism was often meant as criticism, indicative of what was considered an undue attention to a person's private character, concerns or appearance. It described journalism that focused on attacking public persons on the basis not of their public performance but of their private attributes. The advent of the so-called 'New Journalism' in the 1870s and 1880s, which sought to personalize both subject and object in journalistic discourse, was contentious.⁴⁰ By some it was seen as the welcome introduction of individual responsibility to journalism, while others saw it as the press intruding into areas that were not and should not be within its remit. It was seen as a kind of sensationalism, designed to sell periodicals by an attempt to appeal to the public's less worthy appetites.

³⁹ Richard Salmon, "'A Simulacrum of Power": Intimacy and Abstraction in the Rhetoric of the New Journalism', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30:1 (1997), p. 41.

⁴⁰ See Salmon, "'A Simulacrum of Power'", pp. 41-52.

As Jean Ferguson Carr has written, this was a topic of recurring interest for Dickens. In *Household Words*, and the novels he serialized in that magazine, such as *Bleak House*, Dickens privileged the intimate, private, and authoritative powers usually associated with women and the home over the social, public, and authoritative power usually associated with men. Moreover, he disrupted the conventional wisdom that sharply divided the domestic and public spheres by insisting on the interpenetration of those realms.⁴¹ For Thackeray, with his fascination with fame, it was no less interesting a theme. As Nicholas Dames has demonstrated, throughout his career Thackeray was concerned with the potential of the public world of fame to extend its reach into and shape the private realm of memory and desire.⁴² Equally, he was concerned with the manner in which private discourse was now shaping the public sphere. For Trollope, too, it was a matter of interest, or at least of anxiety, as his autobiography, with its careful negotiations of the personal and professional demonstrates: 'It will not be so much my intention to speak of the little details of my private life, as of what I, and perhaps others round me, have done in literature [...] yet the garrulity of old age, and the aptitude of a man's mind to recur to the passages of his own life, will, I know, tempt me to say something of myself'.⁴³ Though as Robert Polhemus notes, in his fiction and his short stories especially, 'he gets very personal—sometimes even confessional'.⁴⁴

Emblematic of both the public and the private spheres, the 'personalization' of journalism was an issue that was particularly pertinent for the family magazine. *St James's Magazine*

⁴¹ Jean Ferguson Carr, 'Writing as a Woman: Dickens, *Hard Times*, and Feminine Discourses', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 18 (1989), p. 163.

⁴² Nicholas Dames, 'Brushed with Fame: Thackeray and the Work of Celebrity', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 56:1 (June 2001), p. 23.

⁴³ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

⁴⁴ Robert Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex: Older Men-Younger Women relationships in Trollope' in *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels: New Readings for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Margaret Markwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse and Regenia Gagnier (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 26.

dealt with the subject upfront in its first issue in an article entitled 'Literature of Gossip'.

The writer acknowledged that

Our granddames of the last century would be very much astonished to see their children, with all their boasted enlightenment, making much of trifles which they despised, treating as treasure what they regarded as rubbish, and rescuing from oblivion all that idle gossip of which they partook as a forbidden fruit.

But he also maintained that 'we should see, in the little world of private life, histories as wonderful and issues as great as any that compel our attention in the wider theatre of public life', for there was a distinction to be made between good and bad gossip.

Nobody can see the real importance of these trivialities who does not look upon them with educated eyes...The gossip which is now in favour is always the gossip of educated persons, who are able to generalize their knowledge by a large experience, and is wide as the poles asunder from the tattle of the Dame Quicklies.⁴⁵

The writer draws a hierarchical, social division between magazines such as the *St James* and those which indulge in 'bad' gossip. His need to make the distinction and to justify the magazine's stance, however, shows the potentially contentious nature of the topic.

Although neither the *Cornhill* nor *All the Year Round* took up the matter so directly or immediately, it was a subject of as much concern for these magazines as it was for the *St*

⁴⁵ Anonymous, 'Literature of Gossip', *St James's Magazine*, 1:1 (April 1861), pp. 112-113.

James, more even because they were leaders in the field and paved the way for periodicals such as the *St James*. It was a similarly controversial topic for *Saint Pauls*. In keeping with his original object to distance the publication from the typical family-oriented monthly, in his opening address in *Saint Pauls*, Trollope begged an apology for imposing himself personally on his audience, and ended the piece with the promise that he would not 'intrude himself again in his own person before the public'.⁴⁶ Despite this apparently clear-cut declaration, the place of the personal in journalism was a topic of recurring interest in *Saint Pauls*, perhaps all the more so because of its ambivalent position as both of and outwith the family magazine genre. It was a promise after all that Trollope found himself in breach of, at least in spirit, in 'An Editor's Tales', although Trollope's playful use of personas makes the technicalities of the matter vague.

In looking at these series and the magazines in which they were published, and in particular their engagement in a rhetoric of intimacy, it is important to be aware that this rhetoric was a potential source of tension during this period for it played into controversial debates about the limits of journalism and its place in society. The term 'family' when associated with a magazine usually implied a certain level of respectability, but the association of the family with the private and an intimate and personal style of writing meant that careful positioning was needed to maintain that respectability. This association also underlined the basically commercial nature of family discourse.

Criticism and the Victorian Family Magazine

For a considerable portion of the twentieth century, journalism and periodical literature were relegated to a marginal, almost non-existent position within literary studies. Since

⁴⁶ Trollope, 'Introduction', *Saint Paul's Magazine*, 1:1 (October 1867), p. 7.

the establishment of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals and the archival work of scholars such as Walter Houghton and projects such as the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, periodical studies has become an established entity in its own right and the association of the mid-range magazines of the 1860s with some of the 'great' names of Victorian literature has meant that within this field they have received a reasonable amount of attention. Nevertheless, the overwhelming number of texts that constitute the archive, even when restricted to one genre of periodical publication, means that there is still much work to be done before there can be said to be a comprehensive map of the periodical culture of the period.

In recent years various critics have worked to demonstrate the complexities behind the well-mannered façade of this genre, from its commercialism and its links to the sensation novel, to its construction of narratives of nationalism and empire and the ambivalent connection of these narratives to the image of the family at their core. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the association of the family with women in this period, most work on the Victorian family magazine has centred on gender concerns. A rich vein for study in its own right, the gender dynamics of these magazines has interesting implications for our understanding of these magazines in a more general sense as well.

Mark Turner and Jennifer Phegley have led the way in this regard. Turner's work is of particular importance here, as he is one of the few critics to have paid any serious attention to *Saint Pauls* and Trollope's editorship of that magazine. For Turner, within any periodical, 'in a single issue and across issues, there is a network of references and understandings [...] challenging him/her with contradictions'.⁴⁷ In the case of the shilling

⁴⁷ Mark W. Turner, 'Saint Pauls Magazine and the Project of Masculinity', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 238.

monthlies that are Turner's focus, this means that there are a number of images of masculinity and narratives of manliness available. It also means that in Turner's reading of Trollope's periodical essays and stories he sees the possibility for reading potentially transgressive sexual narratives into outwardly 'respectable' works.⁴⁸

For some Turner's eroticization of Trollope's work goes a step too far. Judith Knelman, for instance, criticizes Turner for casting 'An Editor's Tales' 'as not far short of erotica'. 'Too much of what Trollope has written', she writes, 'militates against the idea that he would deliberately have titillated his readers in this vein'.⁴⁹ On a different note, Wynne takes issue with Turner's categorization of the *Cornhill* as gendered female because it addressed a family audience. Wynne argues that while it worked to appeal to women, many features, both fiction and non-fiction, were designed to appeal to both genders. Wynne draws a distinction between seeking 'to banish the competitive masculine world of controversy and discord from the leisure time pursuit of domestic reading' and seeking to banish a male audience.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, both these critics recognize the importance of Turner's work in drawing out the complexities and contradictoriness of this particular genre, and while Wynne disagrees with Turner on the nuances of the gender narratives offered by these magazines, her view of the family magazine as balancing the intrigue of the sensation narrative with the respectability of middle-class domesticity is built on a similar understanding of the readiness of the genre to challenge its own self-image.

While Turner focuses on male sexuality and gender narratives in the family magazines of the 1860s, Phegley focuses on the manner in which these magazines address and depict

⁴⁸ See Mark W. Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), in particular the chapter on 'The Editor as Predator in *Saint Pauls*', pp. 183-226.

⁴⁹ Judith Knelman, 'Review: Trollope and the Magazines', *Victorian Studies*, 44.1 (2001), p. 114.

⁵⁰ Wynne, p. 32.

women readers. Looking at a number of different magazines, Phegley holds that despite the standard contemporary view of women as 'dangerous' readers, that these magazines empowered women as readers, allowing them to make their own choices, and envisioned them as active participants in cultural discourse, rather than picturing them as passive consumers and attempting to regulate their reading. Building on Linda K. Hughes's construction of the Victorian periodical as a form that affirms 'pluralism at the local level and conformity at the global level',⁵¹ for Phegley the family literary periodical may have been conventional on the surface, but underneath it was, not subversive, but open to alternatives. Phegley writes:

While family literary magazines followed elite reviewers by setting up common critical binaries, they did not uphold them in practice. Rather, the critical oppositions served as a means to articulate cultural authority while the magazines actually conveyed that the divisions between the high and the low, the masculine and the feminine, were more permeable, blurred, and mutually constitutive. In other words, family literary magazines engaged with the terminology of the binary critical system while subtly refuting it.⁵²

Phegley's understanding of the family magazine has proven to be a productive one by those who have followed her lead such as Julia Chavez. Like Phegley, Chavez recognizes both the 'open' and 'closed' aspects of the magazine as a text and the manner in which contemporaries utilized these qualities to promote 'an alternative and potentially empowering education based on wandering reading practices'. For Chavez, the Victorian

⁵¹ Linda K. Hughes, "'Turbulence in the Golden Stream": Chaos Theory and the Study of Periodicals', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 22:3 (Fall 1989), p. 121.

⁵² Jennifer Phegley, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), p. 28.

family magazine, despite its apparent rigidity 'provides a model of sceptical, critical and active thinking about Victorian England, which readers are invited to adopt and implement for themselves'.⁵³

Another vein of periodical studies of interest is that which focuses on journalistic treatments of science in the nineteenth century, for here again we find an image of the family magazine as encouraging critical thinking and as receptive to possibilities outwith the conventional. David Amigoni in *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media* writes of how the scientific essays of G.H. Lewes and Grant Allen in the *Cornhill* adopted a familiar discourse that nonetheless worked 'to estrange its readers from the objects and spaces of everyday middle-class life'.⁵⁴ Holding that, 'readerly attitudes to the consumption of knowledge were recognized, flattered, but also dramatically challenged'.⁵⁵ Gowan Dawson takes a more detailed look at the handling of scientific subjects in the *Cornhill* in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical*. Like Amigoni, Dawson calls our attention to the magazine's willingness to challenge readerly attitudes but focuses more on the manner in which it balances this with flattery, camouflaging controversial scientific debates as 'entertaining conversational gambits, wry epigrammatic digressions and risqué literary table-talk'.⁵⁶

⁵³ Julia M. Chavez, 'Wandering Readers and the Pedagogical Potential of *Temple Bar*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40:2 (Summer 2007), p. 127.

⁵⁴ David Amigoni, 'Carving Coconuts, the Philosophy of Drawing Rooms, and the Politics of Dates: Grant Allen, Popular Scientific Journalism, Evolution and Culture in the *Cornhill Magazine*', in *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, ed. by Laura Henson, Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth and Jonathan R. Topham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 252.

⁵⁵ Amigoni, p. 255.

⁵⁶ Gowan Dawson, 'The *Cornhill Magazine* and Shilling Monthlies in mid-Victorian Britain', in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical*, Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, and Jonathan R. Topham (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 140.

For Dawson, the *Cornhill* was 'self-consciously Janus-faced' in a number of ways. Its very form embodied 'the emergent values of mechanization and mass-production' and yet it had pastoral motifs on its cover. It was apparently family-oriented and yet 'did not shy away from applying Darwin's controversial theorizing directly to humans, as Darwin himself had conspicuously avoided doing'. Importantly, it took as its dominant trope the 'paradoxical reconstitution of primarily oral forms of communication on [...] [its] printed page'. The *Cornhill* tackled 'grave and momentous issues' such as those that it had claimed would be banished from its pages, but it did so such a manner as to deflate their more controversial elements while adding piquancy to its articles. Discussions of Darwinism and slavery thus became acceptable because they were 'employed primarily as a means of discussing a trivial piece of personal gossip'. For Dawson then, the conversational style of the magazine had two major effects: its imitation of oral forms and playful negation of authority softened and made acceptable otherwise controversial subjects and it opened up those subjects to debate, inviting the possibility of a variety of different interpretations.⁵⁷

This thesis invites a similar understanding of the mid-Victorian family magazine geared towards 'relatively educated but not traditionally well-heeled or genteel readers'.⁵⁸ The adoption of a familiar and personal approach to journalism by these magazines both sought to conceal their status as mass-produced commodities and revealed an unease regarding that status. It allowed for the discussion of issues that could not be openly debated in family-oriented publications through its softer, more elusive methods. And importantly, through its emphasis on personal communication, on a dialogue between the contributors and the readers, it promoted active readers, inviting them to see beyond the cloak of respectability that the magazines shrouded themselves in. As both Wynne

⁵⁷ Dawson, p. 124, 123, 134, 140, 138.

⁵⁸ Dawson, p. 124.

and Dawson emphasize, these were magazines that were for adults as well as children, for men as well as women, and a large part of their appeal was this ability to speak to more than one audience, to wink at those in the know while maintaining a straight face for those who were not meant to see beyond the façade. The rhetoric of intimacy assumed by the mid-century family magazine was simultaneously an invitation, a mask and a game played by both writer and reader. For, we are not discussing here the realities of Victorian domestic life, nor are we discussing the perceived norm, but rather an ideal, which was sometimes situated as a norm. These texts propagated and complicated that ideal, in part because of their rather messy and open nature as periodical texts, and in part because both their elaboration of that ideal and their resistance to it were seen as means of appealing to and maintaining their audience.

'Roundabout Papers'

The thesis begins by looking at Thackeray's Roundabout series in the *Cornhill*. Modelled on the essays of Montaigne and eighteenth-century periodical essayists such as Addison and Steele, Thackeray presents himself to his readership through the person of Mr Roundabout and his egotistical, ironic yet benevolent meanderings. Through the use of the first-person singular, an emphasis on the domestic, and the apparent divulgence of personal details, memories, thoughts and dreams, Thackeray establishes a sense of intimacy and familiarity between his editorial persona and the reader, one which belies the commercial nature of the enterprise in which the texts appeared, and the anonymous nature of the relationship between reader and writer.

In 'To A Friend and Contributor', the letter which prefaced the first issue of the magazine, Thackeray adopts a 'hospitable simile' and imagines contributors as friends gathered

round a dining table, 'pleasant and instructed gentlemen and ladies [...] brought into friendly communication' with the readers and each other.⁵⁹ The reader is given the impression of being invited into a select gathering, where the rules of refined society will apply. Yet at the same time, Thackeray admits, 'We hope for a large number of readers'.⁶⁰ The *Cornhill* was, all of Thackeray's careful posturing aside, designed specifically with a large and commercial audience in mind. Providing instalments of not one but two novels and a variety of articles and poems by well-known authors as well as illustrations for the much reduced price of one shilling, the *Cornhill* was an innovative and aggressively commercial publication, seeking to appeal to a broad readership. This was clear even in its choice of name. As Richard Pearson has pointed out, the *Cornhill* 'symbolized commercial success and banking respectability', located as it was on the edge of the City.⁶¹ Although contemporaries exaggerated the figures, and its circulation soon dropped, the 100 000 or so copies that the first issue of the *Cornhill* sold, and the 'million' readers that Thackeray supposed in his Roundabout article, 'On Some Late Great Victories' (RP, p. 27), was far removed from the circle of intimacy that Thackeray portrayed in his opening number.

The 'Roundabout Papers' play upon this seeming contradiction while appearing to obfuscate it. They help establish the domestic and personal tone of the magazine through the figure of Mr Roundabout, and his apparently anti-commercial, far from anonymous, stylings. At first glance, Mr Roundabout is educated, gentlemanly, and immersed in the hierarchies of conventional society. He is depicted in various domestic settings. He dwells on childhood and the trivialities of everyday life. He claims to communicate directly and honestly with the reader. It is not long, however, before it becomes evident to the reader

⁵⁹ Ray, *Letters*, IV, pp. 160-161.

⁶⁰ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 160.

⁶¹ Richard Pearson, *W.M. Thackeray and the Mediated Text: Writing for the Periodicals in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 196.

that Mr Roundabout is not as straightforward a character as he asserts. From the beginning Mr Roundabout, as the name would suggest, plots a meandering, divergent and sometimes cyclical course, both in terms of narrative and/or argument and his connection with his readers, playing upon what Paul De Man terms the 'whirligig' of autobiography, pointing out the formulaic in his own language and story-telling, eluding concrete definitions through the use of allusions, irony and outright contradiction, and juxtaposing moments of pathos and genuine emotion with humour and satire.⁶² Mr Roundabout is both the reader's familiar friend and an unknown quantity. While Thackeray might proclaim that he and the world 'are too long acquainted' for them to believe he intends 'to set the Thames on fire', his and Mr Roundabout's respect for the hierarchies of society is far from full-bodied and while always gentlemanly, other elements do creep in, though they are often left unaccounted for on the borderline between reality and fantasy.⁶³ For example, consumer culture and literature and the author as part of that consumer culture are a recurring theme, as the series alternatively embraces and distances itself from its commercial context.

Throughout his career Thackeray was keenly aware of the realities of the literary profession: 'In some way or other, for daily bread and hire, almost all men are labouring daily. Without necessity they would not work at all, or very little, probably'.⁶⁴ Writing for Thackeray was a trade, and therefore entailed hard work, craftsmanship and the buying and selling of goods. But by the time the *Cornhill* was launched, the commodity that Thackeray was selling was not simply his texts but also his name. Never one for false dignity, Thackeray was happy enough to use his name to promote the magazine, as the

⁶² Paul De Man, 'Autobiography as De-facement', *MLN*, 94: 5 (December 1979), p. 922.

⁶³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 160.

⁶⁴ W. M. Thackeray, 'A Brother of the Press on the History of a Literary Man, Laman Blanchard, and the Chances of the Literary Profession', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 33: 195 (March 1846), p. 333.

prominent position of his name on all related advertisements demonstrate. However, for Thackeray his name and his public image were quite distinct from his private life. There were lines that he believed should not be crossed. He famously forbade his daughters from involvement in any kind of biography of his life after his death, and his final fall-out with Dickens was related to Dickens's friend Edmund Yates crossing that line in publishing comments he overheard in the Garrick Club.⁶⁵

Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', although recurrently described as gossiping both by contemporaries and later critics, never descended to the sort of 'personal' journalism that was disparaged by many of his fellow men of letters. Nor can they be aligned with the New Journalism that followed it, though one of the leading newspapers responsible for the emergence of that form was named after his fictional newspaper the *Pall Mall Gazette* and was owned by *Cornhill* publisher George Smith. Nevertheless, the question of when the personal becomes too personal, and the consequences of making the personal public, of transforming it through the processes of writing and of publication and turning it into a commodity, features repeatedly in the texts.

It is unsurprising given Thackeray's tendency to pull back the curtains that he draws attention to the caveats and qualifications that mark his self-proclaimed direct and intimate relationship with the readers. This in itself is part of a ploy on Thackeray's part to establish a simulacrum of honesty and closeness with his readers, as the texts in their cyclical logic reveal. This paradoxical stance was typical of Thackeray. He recognized the 'conditions and restraints of periodical writing' and 'trenchantly' refused to 'transcend

⁶⁵ See Thackeray's letter to Yates on 13 June 1858 in Ray, *Letters*, IV, pp. 89-90.

them', instead he utilized them to bring his own aesthetic of reality into the discourse of the family magazine.⁶⁶

'The Uncommercial Traveller'

Having examined Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', the thesis will turn to Dickens's editorial contributions in *All the Year Round*. John Drew has suggested that Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller' was an attempt to emulate Thackeray's success at establishing a personal relationship with his readers through his Roundabout series.⁶⁷ Like Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', Dickens's series was modelled on the works of earlier periodical writers, most obviously the essays of Charles Lamb written under the pseudonym of Elia. The first-person singular is used throughout, and the thoughts, memories and dreams of the central figure, all of which feature prominently, help to establish a sense of intimacy between the reader and the narrator.

His relationship with his readers was of great personal importance to Dickens. He believed that there was a 'peculiar personal relation between my audience and myself'.⁶⁸ *Household Words* made creating a sense of personal connection with its readers central to its enterprise from the outset: 'We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers'. However, like the *Cornhill*, it hoped for a broad readership, and both acknowledged and sought to disguise the consequences of that desire: 'We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never

⁶⁶ Richard Salmon, *William Makepeace Thackeray* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2005), p. 15.

⁶⁷ John M. L. Drew, 'The Nineteenth-Century Commercial Traveller and Dickens's "Uncommercial" Philosophy, Part One', *Dickens Quarterly*, 15 (1998), p. 57.

⁶⁸ Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols, ed. by Madeleine House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), IX, p. 502.

look'.⁶⁹ Established in April 1859, *All the Year Round* was similar to its predecessor in many ways, a family magazine, which sought to establish a sense of comradeship between its writers and readers. 'Household Harmony' was one potential name that Dickens considered for his new publication, as was 'The Hearth', 'Home', and 'Home-Music'.⁷⁰

As Malcolm Andrews argues, 'Dickens's lifelong theme as a writer was connection, the reuniting, as in a family, of a fragmenting society, and the mitigation of the harsher effects of social and economic divisions'.⁷¹ His mission as an editor was little different. Of course, his motivations were pecuniary as well as social and aesthetic. *All the Year Round* had a rather austere appearance, eschewing illustrations and advertisements, in an attempt to distance itself from the penny weeklies whose market it was encroaching upon. Nonetheless, it was a resolutely commercial operation, more so even than its predecessor, which had focused more on social problems and placed far less emphasis on serial fiction. It sought a large readership and was willing to cross social boundaries to gain that readership. Andrew Maunder has written about the 'multiple appeal' of the *Cornhill*, and the 'multiple, social layers' it straddled by qualifying as both high and popular culture.⁷² But the *Cornhill's* appeal, as a shilling monthly, was comparatively narrow compared to that of *All the Year Round*, published as a 2d. weekly and reissued monthly, with a peak circulation of 300 000.⁷³ Dickens's editorial contributions to the magazine at once attempted to conceal the implications of this with a façade of face-to-face contact with those 'on whose faces we may never look', and like Thackeray's

⁶⁹ Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1:1 (March 30 1850), p. 1.

⁷⁰ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, pp. 15-16.

⁷¹ Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 21.

⁷² Maunder, "'Discourse of Distinction'", p.242, 245.

⁷³ Lorna Huett, 'Among the Unknown Public: *Household Words*, *All the Year Round* and the Mass-Market Weekly Periodical in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 38:1 (Spring 2005), p. 69.

'Roundabout Papers', point them out to the readers, apparently undermining his own rhetoric.

The very title, 'The Uncommercial Traveller', shows up the series' concern with the commercial underpinnings of literature, and journalism in particular, and while overtly distancing the series from commerce, illustrates the manner in which even while in opposition to it, 'uncommercialism' cannot ignore commercialism. Dickens was far from being anti-commercial himself, and often celebrated modernity and progress in his works, but he was aware of a darker side to the rapid change that dominated Victorian society. The possibilities for dehumanization in consumer culture and the commercialization of literature, like the dehumanizing qualities of Utilitarianism, struck him with horror, as is shown in these texts. Seeking as Andrews says to unite a fragmented society through a common literature that showcased values such as sympathy, imagination, family and comradeship, this later series features a narrative protagonist who embodies the human values that Dickens championed, and yet who is plagued by visions of the inhuman, suggesting the possibility that the very means by which unity is sought may be the cause of further fragmentation. At times depicted with surprising psychological depth, the moments in which the Uncommercial's psyche is shown to be haunted by images of anonymity, consumption and the decaying effects of commercialism, resound throughout the rest of the text.

The sense of intimacy between writer and reader shifts back and forth throughout the course of the series. The figure of the Uncommercial Traveller vacillates between a fully-realized human agent and an anonymous representative, an observer whose personality is subsumed in the act of observing. Like Thackeray with Mr Roundabout, although to a lesser extent, the use of the persona of the Uncommercial is but a thin veil for Dickens

himself, yet the adoption of a persona and the particular use that Dickens makes of it puts into question the autobiographical readings that the texts invite. At various points this distancing device threatens to overshadow the reader's impression of a personal connection with Dickens. The insights that the reader is given into the darker recesses of the Uncommercial's mind may create a sense of knowledge and closeness, but their suggestion of the alienating effects of modern society implies a fragility to the project of intimacy that is an inherent part of the construction of magazines such as *All the Year Round*.

This sense of alienation is propounded by the distinct absence of hearth and home in the series. The Uncommercial is very much a bachelor, living in hotels and lodgings, critiqued in the series for their lack of warmth and hospitality. Even the faux-domestic setting of the Club is missing. At one point the Uncommercial even takes on the persona of Houselessness. The series fixates on non-domestic abodes such as the workhouse, the lunatic asylum, and the alms house. The homes that do feature in the series are frequently dens of inequity, most likely a world apart from the homes of even *All the Year Round's* poorest readers, and certainly from the kind of household ideal that was projected by 1860s magazine discourse. The series' social mission of revealing injustices and shining light on the living conditions of the marginalized presents the reader with a world in which there is little distinction between inside and outside in least in terms of the public/private divide, and in which the bonds between the family are weakened by poverty and its co-conspirators, crime and alcoholism.

The name, *All the Year Round*, was taken from a passage from *Othello*, regarding the manner in which Othello wooed Desdemona. Love, marriage and intimacy are thus embodied in its title and motto, 'The story of our lives from year to year'. Like *Othello*,

however, 'The Uncommercial Traveller' introduces an element of doubt into the mix, by telling a very personal story about the paralyzing effects of impersonality in commerce, in literature, and in society in general.

'An Editor's Tales'

Finally, the thesis will look at Anthony Trollope's swansong to his unsuccessful stint as editor of *Saint Pauls Magazine*. Not so long ago critics viewed Trollope as bland and conventional, but as Markwick and Morse note

Today, Trollope is simultaneously the sociologist providing the raw material for every researcher's project, and the originator of a highly individualistic, esoteric, visionary take on issues such as colonialism, imperial power, the ethics of capitalism, liberalism, and gender. Thus he has become both the reflector of his times and a dissident voice subverting convention and inviting change.⁷⁴

Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' appeared in the last year of Trollope's editorship of the magazine, after proprietor Alexander Strahan had asked him to step down in order that the running costs of the magazine might be reduced. The magazine had been unsuccessful, in large part because of a lack of a distinctive and marketable identity. The original proprietor James Virtue had hoped to establish a family magazine in the vein of the *Cornhill* when he approached Trollope with the offer of the editorship. Trollope, however, had a more 'male-oriented', political magazine in mind. In the end, *Saint Pauls*

⁷⁴ Margaret Markwick and Deborah Denenholz Morse, 'Introduction' in *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels: New Readings for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Margaret Markwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse and Regenia Gagnier (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 2.

was something in between, and it did not sell. When Strahan took over the running of the magazine, he sought to push it more towards the family market in an attempt to rescue it from imminent demise, while also adopting other measures, such as taking over the editing himself in order to lower the production costs. It was in this context that Trollope wrote his series of tales for the magazine.

Trollope's introduction to the first issue of *Saint Pauls* stated what Trollope wanted the magazine to be and what he did not want it to be. And while he noted that 'the public will have what it demands, and it is the duty of those who provide for that demand to see that the article produced is as good of its kind as it can be made', he nevertheless held to 'an intention and settled purpose of our own'. He complains that 'There has of late apparently come up an idea that as politics are by consent banished from certain meetings — committee-rooms, dinner-parties, and other gatherings of men which are assembled for purposes especially non-political, — therefore should the subject also be banished from the pages of all periodical literature' and remarks that *Saint Pauls* 'if it be anything will be political'.⁷⁵ Trollope, while recognizing the importance of bowing to public taste, never had much patience with what he deemed a low kind of squeamishness adopted on behalf of the public by the literary classes, or the idea that family literature necessarily entailed the banishment of whole aspects of human life from discussion. In a letter to Thackeray on the rejection of his short story 'Mrs. General Talboys' for the *Cornhill*, he wrote

You speak of the squeamishness of "our people". Are you not magnanimous enough to feel that you write *urbi et orbi* [From the Pope's blessing]; — for the best & wisest of English readers; and not mainly for the weakest?

⁷⁵ Trollope, 'Introduction', *Saint Pauls Magazine*, 1:1 (October 1867), p. 2, 4.

He added, 'I of course look forward to bringing out my own story in a magazine of my own'.⁷⁶

One might then expect from *Saint Pauls*, a modified discourse directed at the entire family, but instead as Mark Turner has shown, *Saint Pauls* presented a fragmented whole, with the majority of its contents aimed at an adult male audience, and its fiction directed towards a female audience. But where the magazine as a whole fails, 'An Editor's Tales' succeeds. 'An Editor's Tales', while still firmly in the family literature milieu, does not shy away from the presentation of, as Trollope would see it, life as it is, including poverty, alcoholism, and male nudity. It moreover questions the sanctity of the family ideal held up by magazines such as the *Cornhill*. Trollope's various representations of domesticity are unconventional, and there is a frequent confusion of domestic space and work space. In fact the public and private co-exist in rather an awkward juxtaposition in the assorted locales visited in the course of the series. Like Thackeray's Roundabout series and Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller', it participates in and questions the rhetoric of intimacy that was an inherent part of the Victorian family magazine. Trollope utilizes 'An Editor's Tales' to advocate a family discourse which allows for the acknowledgement of the untraditional, the different, and the individual, and their place in Victorian domesticity.

Conclusion

Fraser, Green and Johnston assert in relation to gender that

⁷⁶ Ray, *Letters*, I, pp. 128-129.

Individual male and female editors and reviewers also subverted such discursive practices as the use of the pronoun 'we' and the anonymity of the author, to reshape gender issues or re-present them in alternative modes, or ignore them outright. There are thus two kinds of gendered practice to be considered in editing as revealed by house style: that which works assiduously to maintain the separate spheres ideology and that which equally assiduously attempts to breach it.⁷⁷

These texts reveal this to be a false dichotomy in relation to both gender and to family discourse in general.

Apparently family-oriented, placing emphasis on the personal and the human, and attempting to imitate the face-to-face familiarity of direct speech, they nonetheless embodied the essence of the magazines in which they were published, magazines which enthusiastically embraced modern technology, mass-production and the commercialization of the press. The adoption of an intimate, conversational style of journalism in these series seeks to conceal their commercialism while forwarding their commercial potential. As suggested above, however, they do so self-consciously, raising the two-faced nature of their discourse to the level of subject within the texts.

They pay deference to the orthodox ideas regarding respectability current amongst the educated readers to whom they were attempting to appeal, while introducing a number of subjects outwith the domain of respectability in their texts. In the context of the personal, usually unacceptable topics became acceptable. The informal pose adopted by these series, their simulation of the spoken word and their good-humoured repudiation

⁷⁷ Fraser, Green, and Johnston, p. 81.

of conventional authority mitigates the more controversial nature of these subjects and opened them up to discussion, thereby welcoming the prospect of a more multifaceted view, not just of the subjects in question but of Victorian society in general.

Salmon writes that 'Personal journalism assumed an asymmetrical character inasmuch as its rhetorical form flagrantly contradicted contemporary developments in the organizational structure and technological resources of the newspaper and periodical press'.⁷⁸ The personal, sold on the basis that it was the stylistic manifestation of the idealized image of family life that was at the core of these magazines' marketing campaigns, was in actual fact the means by which these writers challenged that image with a more complex view of reality. Their use of the personal was in many ways a deceit, but it was a deceit that they acknowledged and explored — sometimes with a wink, and at other times with something like unease.

Fraser, Green and Johnston maintain that editorial comment allows the editor to "shut down" the range of possible meanings in a periodical's discourse'. Moreover, they write, 'The authority in an editor's personal column always has this effect which must surely be more profound when the editor has public reputation as is the case with Thackeray'.⁷⁹ It is part of the appeal of journalistic series in this style, however, that just as they shut down certain possibilities, they open others up.

⁷⁸ Salmon, "A Simulacrum of Power", p. 43.

⁷⁹ Fraser, Green, and Johnston, pp. 85-86.

CHAPTER 1: THACKERAY'S 'ROUNABOUT PAPERS' AND THE *CORNHILL MAGAZINE*

Has any like circumstance now conceivably the value, to the charmed attention, so far as anything worth naming attention, or any charm for it, is anywhere left, of the fact that Trollope's Framley Parsonage there began? – let alone the still other fact that the *Roundabout Papers* did and that Thackeray thus appeared to us to guarantee personally, intimately, with a present audibility that was as the accent of good company, the new relation with him and with other of company not much worse, as it then seemed, that such a medium could establish.¹

The *Cornhill* was the representative magazine of the age. With it, although it was not the first of its kind in the field, George Smith and William Thackeray 'founded something of a school in magazine literature'.² A kind of *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* for the educated and upwardly mobile reader, as Gowan Dawson describes it, the *Cornhill* sought to be both informative and entertaining, combining fact and fancy in a similar vein to Dickens's weekly periodicals, but with somewhat higher literary pretensions.³ It aimed itself squarely at the family market and eschewed the discussion of politics and public affairs or anything that put out of joint Mrs Grundy and 'the nose of orthodox convention'. Yet, as E.T. Cook points out, while such subjects 'have for the most part been avoided [...] the fringe of them is often touched'.⁴ The *Cornhill* set itself up as a forum for friendly and informed conversation in which the reader was invited to participate. Mass-produced and seeking a broad audience, 'a triumph of trading enterprise and trading skill', it

¹ Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1914), pp. 19-20.

² Edward Tyas Cook, *Literary Recreations* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1918), p. 91.

³ Dawson, p. 130.

⁴ Cook, p. 86, 92.

nevertheless depicted its writers and readers as existing together in terms of warmth and intimacy.⁵

Integral to this depiction were Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers'. As its first editor, the *Cornhill* was closely identified with Thackeray throughout its run. Publisher George Smith recognized that 'Thackeray was a name to conjure with' and made sure that his editor's name was front and centre in the £5000 advertising campaign that launched the first issue.⁶ Thackeray himself was concerned that if he was to be editor that the magazine 'must bear his cachet'.⁷ From the first, anonymous as they were, the 'Roundabout Papers' associated themselves with the editor's chair, a chair which they placed by the hearthside.

The 'intimate charm' of Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' has been noted by a number of critics.⁸ People like personal confidences, writes one contemporary reviewer, and 'in this way Mr. Thackeray is constantly flattering his readers. He invites them to a strictly domestic *séance*, he brings his easy-chair and dressing-gown, lights a cigar, offers his guest a place on his sofa, and hopes that everyone will imitate him in feeling quite at home'.⁹ Another writes that in the 'Roundabout Papers', 'we meet the great man at home, divested of his robes of ceremony, and discoursing right pleasantly of his likes and dislikes, his personal feelings [...] one is brought face to face with the genial, loveable personality of William Makepeace Thackeray'.¹⁰ Herman Merivale has written of Thackeray that 'no man could talk to you more familiarly in pen and ink'. He designates

⁵ Anonymous, 'The *Cornhill Magazine*', *Leader*, 11:511 (January 7 1860), p. 18.

⁶ George Smith, 'Our Birth and Parentage', *Cornhill Magazine*, 10:55 (January 1901), p. 4.

⁷ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 150.

⁸ Anonymous, 'The Wolves and the Lamb; Lovel the Widower; Roundabout Papers; and Denis Duval', *Athenaeum*, 3728 (April 8 1899), p. 427.

⁹ Anonymous, 'Roundabout Papers', *London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, Art, and Science*, 6:131 (January 3 1863), p. 17.

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper, 'Some Book Friends', *Time*, 9:56 (November 1883), pp. 563-564.

him a 'gossip' and writes of the 'Roundabout Papers' that 'Gossip Montaigne and Gossip Charles Lamb, who had no creative side, are not more delightful reading in that delightful speciality than he'.¹¹ More recent critics such as Robert Colby have emphasized the central place of youth and childhood in the series, which also ties in with the image of domesticity that the magazine promotes.¹²

But as Richard Pearson has pointed out these papers were also 'part of a process of marketing'.¹³ This is in line with Ann Horn's contention that 'the self-consciousness of this prose, along with the role-playing and ostentation, mark it as highly theatrical writing', which 'helped Thackeray establish a connection with his readers in a way that less theatrical rhetorical methods might not'.¹⁴ Yet, as Peter Shillingsburg indicates, this theatricality or 'role-playing' is part of Thackeray's emphasis on the distance between appearance and reality, which can also be seen in the series' repeated return to the well-known Thackerayan themes of vanity and hypocrisy.¹⁵ Or as Judith Fisher puts it, it is part of Thackeray's 'hermeneutic of scepticism' through which he deliberately attempts to disrupt the reading process, 'in order to thwart any stable interpretation'.¹⁶ However, this 'hermeneutic of scepticism', while acting to destabilize the impression of intimacy that the magazine projects, simultaneously feeds into that impression, as a part of Thackeray's persona as a truth-teller, the man who pulls back the curtain to reveal the reality behind the scenes of the literary façade. Here it would seem sound to revisit Horn's argument that it is the 'self-consciousness' of Thackeray's prose that helps him to

¹¹ Herman Merivale, 'About Two Great Novelists', *Temple Bar*, 83 (May 1888), p. 190.

¹² Robert A. Colby, "'Into the Blue Water': The First Year of *Cornhill Magazine* Under Thackeray", *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32:3 (Fall 1999), p. 219.

¹³ Pearson, p. 199.

¹⁴ Ann Horn, 'Theater, Journalism, and Thackeray's "Man of the World Magazine"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32:3 (Fall 1999), p. 233.

¹⁵ Peter Shillingsburg, *William Makepeace Thackeray: A Literary Life* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 122.

¹⁶ Judith L. Fisher, *Thackeray's Sceptical Narrative and the 'Perilous Trade' of Authorship* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 1.

establish a connection with his readers, although this is not to fully dismiss the disruptive potential of his methods.

As Pearson details the Papers were also torn between ‘the aesthetic of the real and the fascination of the sensational’.¹⁷ The *Cornhill* claimed that it would avoid politics and other controversial subjects, and always bear in mind the presence of women and children at its ‘social table’.¹⁸ Whether it lived up to these claims is another matter. The *Dublin Review* is happy to advise its readers that there is nothing in its pages ‘that would unfit it for the young or for general reading in Catholic families’.¹⁹ However, the perhaps more discerning critics at the *Leader* point out that even in the very first issue the *Cornhill* exceeded its self-imposed boundaries.

Any one who carefully read the paragraph in the prospectus [...] would have come to the conclusion that no political questions would have any pages devoted to their discussion in the Cornhill Magazine [...] These are very fair sounding words, but how has their promise been kept? Surely not by the admission of such an article upon China as disgraces the first number of the Magazine.²⁰

In October 1860 the *Saturday Review* exclaimed in an article entitled ‘Sentimental Economics’ that ‘A great deal of surprise has been expressed that such a periodical as the *Cornhill Magazine* should have given its imprimatur’ to John Ruskin’s series on political

¹⁷ Pearson, p. 206.

¹⁸ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

¹⁹ Anonymous, ‘The *Cornhill Magazine*’, *Dublin Review*, 17:2 (April 1887), p. 460.

²⁰ Anonymous, ‘The *Cornhill Magazine*’, *Leader*, p. 18.

economy 'Unto this Last'.²¹ The publication in the magazine of an article entitled 'Stranger than Fiction', an account of the contributor's experiences at a séance, also caused a furore in the contemporary press, and suggests, despite contrary evidence, that as E. T. Cook says, 'Thackeray was not afraid of what, if it appeared in the newspaper Press of to-day, might be called sensational journalism'.²²

Thackeray had originally envisioned the magazine as 'a man of the world' magazine, with the front cover bearing 'a little cut of Temple Bar'.²³ Instead, it bore illustrations of the four figures of reaping, sowing, ploughing and threshing, invoking the pastoral rather than the city. This might perhaps explain the conflict between editor and author that Judith Fisher sees in Thackeray's relations to the magazine. Fisher portrays Thackeray as a 'morally fastidious' editor who as an author wrote of 'seduced and abandoned women and characterized British heroes as debauched earls'.²⁴ However, the evidence above suggests that Thackeray was not so much a morally fastidious editor who wantonly or hypocritically broke his own rules but rather was an editor who was attempting to maintain a careful balancing act between respectability and 'piquancy', to use Dawson's word, which sometimes went awry.²⁵ As Bill Bell notes, many studies of literary greats such as Thackeray, or Dickens or Trollope, tend to focus on the difficulties faced by these writers as artists forced to work within a restrictive medium.²⁶ This would be a mistake in regards to Thackeray. As the 'Roundabout Papers' show, much as he might have privately rebelled against the realities of writing for the periodical press, in his writings Thackeray

²¹ Anonymous, 'Sentimental Economics', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 10:261 (October 27 1860), p. 514.

²² Cook, p. 84.

²³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 150.

²⁴ Judith L. Fisher, 'Thackeray as Editor and Author: *The Adventures of Philip* and the Inauguration of the *Cornhill Magazine*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 33:1 (2000), p. 7.

²⁵ Dawson, p. 133.

²⁶ Bill Bell, 'Fiction in the Marketplace: Towards a Study of the Victorian Serial', in *Serials and their Readers 1620-1914*, ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1993), p. 126.

revelled in them, declining to rise above them, and choosing rather to explore the possibilities that they presented.

This chapter will examine Thackeray's construction of intimacy in the 'Roundabout Papers', and the relation of this construction to his use of irony in the series, which both destabilizes and reinforces the semblance of domestic relations between reader and writer. It will also look at how he challenges the magazine's image of respectable domesticity in other ways, from his use of the sensational to his depiction of the hypocrisy underlying Victorian family life. Finally, it will look at the series' recognition of its participation in consumer culture and how it relates this back to its construction of intimacy within the context of the association between the 'personal' and the commercial in the periodical press in the mid-nineteenth century.

Writing for a family magazine

The construction of intimacy

Key to the *Cornhill's* self-designation as a family-oriented magazine was creating a sense of familiarity between its contributors and readers. The choice of Thackeray as editor gave the magazine a head start in this regard. As he writes in the Prospectus to the magazine: 'The present Writer has been for five-and-twenty years before the world, which has taken his measure pretty accurately. We are too long acquainted to try and deceive one another'.²⁷ The 'Roundabout Papers' allowed the *Cornhill* to enlarge upon this pre-existing sense of knowledge by presenting the reader with a familiar 'face' with which to associate the magazine and by giving the impression of furthering that knowledge. As Thackeray writes in his first Roundabout essay, 'We are fellow-travellers,

²⁷ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 159.

and shall make acquaintance as the voyage proceeds' ('On A Lazy, Idle Boy', RP, p. 5). The reader and writer are figured as setting out on a journey of mutual knowledge and understanding together, and throughout the series Thackeray works to continue this sense of growing familiarity and intimacy. He does this through his use of the first-person singular, his establishment of a sense of immediacy and spontaneity, and the apparent revelation of his inner life in the recounting of his past, and of various fantasies and dream sequences. His preoccupation with peeling back the layers of hypocrisy in society and human behaviour is also an important part of this.

The use of the first-person singular, as opposed to the first-person plural, otherwise known as the editorial 'we', was the subject of much debate in the periodical press during this period. The first-person plural was associated with the long-standing tradition of anonymity in journalism that came under increasing attack in the second half of the century, and also with ideas of the periodical as a collective entity. It presupposed a position of authority on the part of the writer based upon this collectivity. J Boyd Kinnear asserts in the *Contemporary Review* regarding articles written under the auspices of the editorial 'we' that 'because they are not avowedly the product of one man's brain, we elevate them into the dignity of almost divine utterances; and, supposing them to be the result of deliberations in which all personal weaknesses are eliminated, we accept them as oracles'.²⁸ But as Fisher has argued, 'while "I" supposedly has less infallible authority, it creates another kind of authority in its seemingly intimate connection between individual writer and reader that suggests an empathetic identity'.²⁹ The use of the first-person singular is a confession of one's own limitations. It puts the writer on a level with the

²⁸ J. Boyd Kinnear, 'Anonymous Journalism', *Contemporary Review*, 5:3 (July 1867), p. 327.

²⁹ Fisher, *Perilous Trade*, p. 45.

reader, rather than positioning the writer above the reader in the manner of 'Sir Oracle',³⁰ or a 'modern Veiled Prophet of Mokanna', as some contemporaries would have it.³¹

Thackeray directly contrasts his own subjective positioning of his narrative to the more authoritative stance of periodicals such as the *Saturday Review*. In a paper on the vanity of believing oneself to be greater than one actually is, Thackeray turns the spotlight on the reader, then onto himself and then compares his own attitude to that of the *Saturday Reviewer*:

Search, search within your own waistcoats, dear brethren — *you* know in your hearts, which of your ordinaire qualities you would pass off, and fain consider as first-rate port. And why not you yourself, Mr. Preacher? says the congregation. Dearly beloved, neither in or out of this pulpit do I profess to be bigger, or cleverer, or wiser, or better than any of you. A short while since, my favourite *Superfine Review* announced that I gave myself great pretensions as a philosopher. I a philosopher! I advance pretensions! My dear Saturday friend. And you? Don't you teach everything to everybody? and punish the naughty boys if they don't learn as you bid them? ('Small-Beer Chronicle', RP, p. 93)

Thackeray admits to taking on the role of preacher at times, but any flaws he points out in others, he confesses to himself as well. He demonstrates this equality through his willingness to answer the questions of his 'congregation' and by showing how his preaching can be turned back on himself. As seen above, he places himself in a dialogue with his readers, contrasting the formality of the rhetoric of the pulpit, 'dear

³⁰ Thomas Hughes, 'Anonymous Journalism', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 5:26 (December 1861), p. 162.

³¹ Anonymous, 'Journalism from the Interior', *Scottish Review*, 28:56 (October 1896), p. 355.

brethren/'dearly beloved' with the informality of lines such as 'why not you yourself' to ironic effect. Unlike his 'Saturday friend', he does not place himself above his readers by use of the editorial 'we', but even when apparently preaching remembers that he is only one individual, neither cleverer nor wiser than any other. Or as he puts it in 'De Juventute' when discussing the '*Superfine Review*' and its criticism of 'Mr. Dickens' and 'Mr. Thackeray': 'If we are unwarrantably familiar, we know who is not' ('De Juventute', RP, p. 47).

Thackeray also argues in the second article in the Roundabout series that the first-person singular provides a more direct and honest form of communication between writer and reader:

Sometimes authors say, "The present writer has often remarked;" or "The undersigned has observed;" or "Mr. Roundabout presents his compliments to the gentle reader, and begs to state," &c.: but "I" is better and straighter than all these grimaces of modesty: and although these are Roundabout Papers, and may wander who knows whither, I shall ask leave to maintain the upright and simple perpendicular ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 7).

This passage suggests that while Thackeray is less direct in some ways, his narrative is nevertheless the more truthful and provides a closer connection between him and his readers.

Thackeray's use of the first-person singular is also a part of the conversational ethos of the magazine, that trope that Dawson identifies as dominating the *Cornhill's* discourse on

the world around it.³² Although the *Cornhill* was primarily anonymous, or at least its articles remained unsigned within its pages, and many of its contributors used the editorial 'we' as a matter of course, the majority slipped back and forth between the first-person plural and the first-person singular. Their use of 'we' as often included the readers of the magazine as it excluded them, for it was frequently used to refer to a particular class of society, the nation or even humanity as a whole. The formality of the editorial 'we' as it was employed by newspapers such as the *Times* or the higher-end periodicals such as the quarterlies or the *Saturday Review* would not have suited the *Cornhill's* idea of its readers and contributors as participating in 'a pleasant ordinary'.³³ Answering accusations made by the *Saturday Review*, with which he seemed to exchange constants barbs, Thackeray writes

No, I do not, as far as I know, try to be port at all; but offer in these presents, a sound, genuine ordinaire, at 18s. per doz. let us say, grown on my own hill-side, and offered *de bon coeur* to those who will sit down under my *tonnelle*, and have a half-hour's drink and gossip ('Small-Beer Chronicles', RP, p. 93).

In this passage, the use of the direct address to an imaginary reader, 'No', combined with asides such as 'as far as I know' and 'let us say', and the use of the first-person singular, work together to give the reader a taste of the ordinaire at 18s. per doz. that Thackeray describes.

Most importantly, the adoption of the first-person singular gives a greater impression of 'personality' to the narrative voice. 'Personality', like 'personal', was a word with ambivalent and very particular associations in this period. If an article was described as

³² Dawson, p. 140.

³³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

having too much ‘personality’, it often meant that rather than discussing particular issues it focused on attacking the individual involved. It also referred to the practice of looking beyond the public façade and investigating or writing about the private person, an act which was considered by many as transgressing almost sacrosanct boundaries and as exhibiting a tasteless and vulgar curiosity. At the same time, there was a long tradition of respectable personal journalism, dating back to Addison and Steele, and it was recognized that personality sold. As Fisher notes, the strong personal voice was a crucial marketing device for Thackeray and for Dickens.³⁴ Anne Thackeray Ritchie also points to this in her preface to the Centenary Biographical edition of the series in which she writes that ‘the “Roundabout Papers” might serve for a diary of the last years of my father’s life’.³⁵ This was very much a part of the series’ appeal to readers, and Thackeray played upon this, despite his reservations, with his use of the first-person singular.

Thackeray draws attention to this in an essay entitled ‘Ogres’, in which he conflates the writer with the ‘vowel’ he uses to represent himself with on the page, suggesting an intrinsic link between the author and the words that he writes.

I dare say the reader has remarked that the upright and independent vowel, which stands in the vowel-list between E and O, has formed the subject of the main part of these essays. How does that vowel feel this morning? — fresh, good-humored, and lively? The Roundabout lines, which fall from this pen, are correspondingly brisk and cheerful. Has anything, on the contrary, disagreed with the vowel? Has its rest been disturbed, or was yesterday’s dinner too good, or yesterday’s wine not

³⁴ Fisher, *Perilous Trade*, p. 45.

³⁵ Carol Hanbery MacKay, ed., *The Two Thackerays: Anne Thackeray Ritchie's Centenary Biographical Introductions to the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), p. 580.

good enough? Under such circumstances, a darkling, misanthropic tinge, no doubt, is cast upon the paper ('Ogres', RP, p. 99).

His Roundabout essays, he implies, can be taken as a barometer of his moods. They reflect in tone at least what is going on in the writer's mind and life. The domestic nature of the examples of the kind of incidents that might affect the writer's mood is also notable. The reader, it is suggested, is being allowed a peek into a private world normally closed to them.

This is also suggested by Thackeray's use of memory as a narrative technique in the series. Memory as a literary trope has many functions, personal and collective, and while Thackeray utilizes a number of these in the series, it is the personal that first attracts the attention of the reader. The subjective nature of memory is the reader's primary impression, as well as the importance of memory to the narrator's sense of individual identity. Their depiction focuses on the emotions of the narrator both during his original experience and on recollecting that experience. Continual emphasis is laid upon how this experience, and the remembrance of it, defines the narrator.

'Bodily, I may be in 1860, inert, silent, torpid; but in the spirit I am walking about in 1828, let us say, in a blue dress-coat and brass buttons, a sweet figured silk waistcoat (which I button round a slim waist with perfect ease)' ('Notes of a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 129). The past often overlays the present for Mr Roundabout — he sees a family on a dog-cart and recognizes the father and 'I saw that very laugh which I remember perfectly in the time when this crown-piece was coined — in *his* time, in King George's time, when we were school-boys seated on the same form' ('De Juventute', RP, p. 46). At home, late at night, he looks out across a starlight landscape and 'the silence is peopled with the past;

sorrowful remorse for sins and short-comings — memories of passionate joys and griefs rise out of their graves, both now alike calm and sad. Eyes, as I shut mine, look at me, that have long ceased to shine' ('De Juventute', RP, p. 55). Constantly caught up in the past, he sees himself as belonging to another age.

We elderly people have lived in that prærailroad world, which has passed into limbo and vanished from under us [...] We who lived before railways, and survive out of the ancient world, are like Father Noah and his family out of the Ark. The children will gather round and say to us patriarchs, "Tell us, grandpapa, about the old world." And we shall mumble our old stories; and we shall drop off one by one; ('De Juventute', RP, p. 48).

Notably, that age has long since disappeared, and it only exists in the memories of those who belong to it and the stories that they tell.

Annette Kuhn has written that for the modern individual, what 'I' remember is the source of their own singular identity.³⁶ For Thackeray's Mr Roundabout this is certainly largely true, and sharing his memories allows the reader a glimpse into an essentially private part of that identity. It is not the writer or the public figure that the reader is introduced to through these memories, but the child separated from his mother and brought home from India, the schoolboy, and the youth abroad. He remembers 'a July day, a garden' and 'a little boy lying in that garden reading his first novel'. He remembers his great grandmamma's 'long tortoise-shell cane' and her 'little black-velvet slippers' and a thousand other seemingly trivial domestic details ('On a Peal of Bells', RP, p. 185). He recollects old dinners and jokes in 'On Letts's Diary' and the feeling of guilt at spending

³⁶ Annette Kuhn, 'A Journey Through Memory', *Autobiography*, 4 vols, ed. by Trev Lynn Broughton (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), III, p. 268.

four pence of his parents' money on coffee as a child because he had found himself in debt over a pencil-case. Such is the focus of his memories.

The series foregrounds the revisionary quality of remembrance, rewriting the past, organizing it, repressing some parts and emphasizing others, often in order to fit in with a present need. Paradoxically, Thackeray's evocation of his memories of times past in the series gives a sense of immediacy to his narrative. As Kuhn writes, 'In memory texts, time rarely comes across as fully continuous or sequential. Literally, formally, or simply in terms of atmosphere created the tenses of the memory text do not fix events to specific moments of time or temporal sequences. Events are repetitive or cyclical'.³⁷ They resist linear constructions of time. Instead, time is organized on a psychical basis, along the narrator's frequently associative train of thought, the logic of which is not necessarily evident. It is this configuration of the structure of the narrative to patterns of thought which creates a sense of immediacy, and it is an important part of the manufacturing of a feeling of intimacy between reader and narrator.

This kind of associative patterning can be seen in 'On a Peal of Bells', in which the sound of the titular church bells 'clanging in the summer afternoon' remind the narrator of 'a great clanging of bells years and years ago, on the very day when George IV. was crowned' ('On a Peal of Bells', RP, p. 185). On that day the narrator was at the house of his great grandmamma reading his first novel. He describes this venerable old lady and the town she lived in, which leads him to the remembrance of the old ladies of that town, which leads him to recall the pictures of their deceased husbands that were hung with pride in their houses, which leads him to the discussion of soldiers and seamen and British

³⁷ Kuhn, p. 265.

interests abroad, which brings him at last to Captain Cook, at which point he gets lost in his own imaginings.

I perfectly recollect old Mr. Gilbert, who had been to sea with Captain Cook [...] Ah! don't you remember his picture, standing on the seashore [...] Don't you know that Cook was at the siege of Quebec, with the glorious Wolfe, who fought under the Duke of Cumberland, whose royal father was a distinguished officer at Ramillies, before he commanded in chief at Dettingen? Huzza! Give it them, my lads! My horse is down? Then I know I shall not run away. Do the French run? then I die content. Stop. Wo! *Quo me rapis?* My Pegasus is galloping off, goodness knows where, like his Majesty's charger at Dettingen ('On a Peal of Bells', RP, pp. 185-186).

In typical Thackerayean style, he stops short to draw the reader's attention to his own narrative techniques with reference to his 'Pegasus', going beyond the common Victorian metaphor of the horse and the rider as representing automatic and voluntary mental power respectively to cast Pegasus as his artistic genius. The underlying implications remain, however, particularly in the idea that his Pegasus is not fully within his conscious control.³⁸

Again and again throughout the series Thackeray emphasizes the digressive and associative pattern of his narrative. The extract quoted above is followed by this next passage:

³⁸ Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Forms and Fallacies of Memory in 19th-century Psychology: Henry Holland, William Carpenter and Frances Power Cobbe', *Endeavour*, 23:2 (1999), p. 63.

How do these rich historical and personal reminiscences come out of the subject at present in hand? What *is* that subject, by the way? My dear friend, if you look at the last essaykin [...] if you look at the last paper, where the writer imagines Athos and Porthos, Dalgetty and Ivanhoe [...] you will at once perceive that NOVELS and their heroes and heroines are our present subject of discourse [...] Are you one of us, dear sir, and do you love novel-reading? To be reminded of your first novel will surely be a pleasure to you. Hush! I never read quite to the end of my first, the "Scottish Chiefs." I couldn't. I peeped in an alarmed furtive manner at some of the closing pages. ('On a Peal of Bells', RP, p. 186).

Thackeray's personal reminiscences, as he states, add depth to his discussion of novels. They enliven his 'essaykin' through their wandering structure, presenting the article as something akin to the narrator's stream of consciousness, dramatizing what otherwise might be a rather dry discourse on literature.

The use of memory in the series constructs a sense of intimacy in other ways too. As noted above, memory is both a personal and a collective force. Thackeray frequently reaches out to his readers by invoking shared memories. He addresses the reader with the phrase 'you remember' more than once and the question 'do you remember' repeatedly: 'You remember how once upon a time your heart used to beat, as you beat on that brass knocker, and whose eyes looked from the window above' ('On a Joke I Once Heard from the Late Thomas Hood', RP, p. 56); 'You remember that old story of the Abbe Kakatoes' ('On Being Found Out', RP, p. 83); or 'Do you remember how warmly you loved Jack and Tom when you were at school; what a passionate regard you had for Ned when you were at college, and the immense letters you wrote to each other?' ('On Letts's

Diary', RP, p. 124). Shared cultural experiences, from school to courtship to literature and historical events, are dwelled upon as a means of uniting the narrator and the readers on a personal level. 'Well, well, my friend and reader, whoe'er you be — old man or young, wife or maiden — you have had your grief-pang', writes Thackeray in 'Autour de Mon Chapeau' (RP, p. 213). He uses his reminiscences strategically to emphasize the shared experience that unite him and his readers despite differences of age, gender and even station.

Furthermore, Thackeray's alliance of personal and collective memory connects 'public' narratives of history with individual stories and memories. Thackeray uses the trope of memory to bring together the social and the historical with the personal and give these narratives a more familiar feel, as in 'On Letts's Diary' when he juxtaposes his own memories of his cousin as a child with the obituary in the newspaper. The newspaper account is presented as follows:

In his military capacity he saw much service, was present in eight general engagements, and was badly wounded in the last. In 1840, when a young lieutenant, he had the rare good fortune to be the means of rescuing from almost hopeless slavery in Khiva 416 subjects of the Emperor of Russia; and, but two years later, greatly contributed to the happy recovery of our own prisoners from a similar fate in Cabul ('On Letts's Diary', RP, p. 126).

Compare this with Thackeray's account of this public servant and military figure:

In one of the stories by the present writer, a man is described tottering "up the steps of the ghaut," having just parted with his child, whom he is

despatching to England from India. I wrote this, remembering in long, long distant days, such a ghaut, or river-stair, at Calcutta; and a day when, down those steps, to a boat which was in waiting, came two children, whose mothers remained on the shore. One of those ladies was never to see her boy more; and he, too, is just dead in India, "of bronchitis, on the 29th October." We were first-cousins; had been little playmates and friends from the time of our birth ('On Letts's Diary', RP, p. 125).

By placing his own eulogy to his lost cousin beside the official obituary Thackeray sets these two narratives up for comparison by the reader. The combination of the two within the same article shows the interconnection between the private narrative of family and the public narrative of British imperialism, but more than this, Thackeray uses his own personal remembrances to critique the public narrative, demonstrating the gaps in the former and its failure to provide a well-rounded picture of a man's life in its exclusion of the private.

Both accounts lay emphasis on the Indian connection but from entirely different perspectives. The former refers to the deceased in his professional capacity, is punctuated with references to shared public historical events, and connects him to the reader through these events. He helped saved 'our own prisoners' – the use of 'our' here suggesting to the reader why he or she should care about the life and death of this one specific individual. In contrast, the latter focuses on one or two formative moments in the private life of the man and involves the reader by presenting the experience to the reader's imagination allowing the reader to put him or herself into the shoes of the deceased and sympathize with him, and with Thackeray, on a personal level. So while the public narrative excludes the personal from its discourse, Thackeray's retelling of his

private recollections does not exclude the public narrative but introduces it subtly but effectively as an inescapable part of the background. Thackeray rewrites his cousin's obituary in a manner representative of his discursive technique in the 'Roundabout Papers' and of the magazine's discursive technique as a whole, humanizing a range of subject matter for more palatable consumption by the *Cornhill's* target audience of consumers.

Thackeray's emphasis on the associative nature of memory, and its non-linear construction of time, also promotes a sense of fragmentation structurally, while his positioning of memories of certain events and cultural phenomena as integral to the identity of the *Cornhill* reader has the potential to alienate as much as it unites. The stress Thackeray places on memories of private schooling, for example, excludes women and could have inspired ambivalent feelings in 'aspirational' readers. Lines such as 'as for the first night at a strange school, we most of us remember what *that* is' makes an assumption of unity that acts to estrange a large part of his audience ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 9). Unity and division coexist in the Roundabout text. The fragmented nature of Thackeray's reminiscences helps to underline the revisionary quality of these memories, the distinction between the past and how it is remembered in the present, which highlights the gap between language and narrative on one side and 'reality' on the other. It points to the interrelation of fiction with apparently factual or real life discourses, showing how the latter is shaped according to the individual or even the collective's imagination and psyche. Everything is story in Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers'. This includes the moments of collective unity through memory that he stages, and Thackeray is the first to acknowledge this, as is shown clearly in the manner in which he merges memory and dream.

In 'Notes on a Week's Holiday', the reader receives a fragmented rundown of a week the narrator spent abroad, presented initially as reminiscences, but which towards the end of the essay increasingly takes on the appearance of a dream sequence. By the conclusion, the question of which of the events of the essay are real and which are imaginary is very much up in the air.

Was it a dream? it seems like one. Have we been to Holland? have we heard the chimes at midnight at Antwerp? Were we really away for a week, or have I been sitting up in the room dozing, before this stale old desk? Here's the desk; yes. But, if it has been a dream, how could I have learned to hum that tune out of Dinorah? Ah, is it that tune, or myself that I am humming? ('Notes on a Week's Holiday, RP, p. 145).

Although the narrator eventually concludes that the holiday was real, the uncertainty behind these questions remains, for it builds on doubt already embedded in the narrative in which dream and memory as well as dream and actuality merge at various points. Near the beginning of the essay, Thackeray establishes the fluidity of these boundaries:

In that work you will read that when gentlemen's or ladies' spirits travel off a few score or thousand miles to visit a friend, their bodies lie quiet and in a torpid state in their beds or in their arm-chairs at home. So in this way, I am absent. My soul whisks away thirty years back into the past ('Notes on a Week's Holiday, RP, p. 130).

Dreams and memories are fused here. At other points, it is dream and reality that are difficult to distinguish from each other: 'That dear old world of painting and the past, yet

alive, and throbbing, and palpable — actual, and yet passing before you swiftly and strangely as a dream!’ (‘Notes on a Week’s Holiday, RP, p. 144). What is dream and what is reality and what is even simply imagination becomes confused in the digressive flow of Thackeray’s narrative. This confusion is pointed to again and again by Thackeray, in what could be seen as an attempt to instil the sceptical approach he himself is known for into his readers’ minds. Alternatively, it could be viewed as another layer to his construction of intimacy.

Thackeray’s practice of introducing dream sequences into his narratives in the ‘Roundabout Papers’ adds to the personal quality of the series in a number of ways. First, as with his use of memory in the texts it contributes to the reader’s sense of gaining access to the inner workings of his mind. Second, and again like his reminiscent vision, its narrative structure enhances the feeling of immediacy in the texts and creates a sense of stream of consciousness, which again augments the impression of getting a sneak peek into the mind of Thackeray. Third, in its connection to the critical approach that Thackeray encourages in the reader in relation to his own narrative compositions, it can be seen as part of the rhetoric of authenticity that is part of Thackeray’s oeuvre as a whole.

The idea of truth-telling is important in the works of Thackeray. For many mid-century Victorians, Thackeray was the archetypal realist — ‘Our verdict upon Mr. Thackeray, then, would be this: — That he is the greatest of modern realist novel-writers’.³⁹ This was in part because of his focus on everyday domestic life and in part because of what G.H.

³⁹ Anonymous, ‘Reading Raids. No. X. — Apropos of Mr. Thackeray’, *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 22:11 (November 1855) p. 677.

Lewes calls a 'detailism which calls itself Realism'.⁴⁰ But it was also because Thackeray believed that art should paint the world as it was as far as it was possible to do so. This can be seen in his praise for the Dutch artist Bartholeomeus van der Helst and his painting *Banquet of the Amsterdam Civic Guard in Celebration of the Peace of Münster*:

None of your slim Van Dyck elegancies, which have done duty at the cuffs of so many doublets; but each man with a hand for himself, as with a face for himself. I blushed for the coarseness of one of the chiefs in this great company [...] splendidly attired, sitting full in the face of the public; and holding a pork-bone in his hand. Suppose the *Saturday Review* critic were to come suddenly on this picture? Ah! what a shock it would give that noble nature! Why is that knuckle of pork not painted out? at any rate, why is not a little fringe of lace painted round it? or a cut pink paper? or couldn't a smelling-bottle be painted in instead [...] or suppose you covered the man's hand (which is very coarse and strong), and gave him the decency of a kid glove? But a piece of pork in a naked hand? O nerves and eau de Cologne, hide it, hide it! ('Notes on a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 143).

Thackeray admires the painter's presentation of life as it is without the resort to 'a little fringe of lace' to cover the coarseness of reality. 'Having beheld it you have lived in the year 1648, and celebrated the treaty of Munster', he writes of the painting ('Notes on a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 142). The passage quoted above is also of interest because once again Thackeray cuts a thrust at the *Saturday Review* and its 'superfine' notions of taste

⁴⁰ G. H. Lewes, 'The Principles of Success in Literature', *Fortnightly Review* 1:6 (July 15 1865), p. 588.

and respectability in a move which seems at once somewhat hypocritical and noteworthy in regards to the *Cornhill's* own stance.

Thackeray's beliefs regarding realism unsurprisingly extended to his attitude towards the depiction of history. As Rosemary Mitchell has shown, Thackeray thought that much past and contemporary historical writing was pageantry, more concerned with its own dignity than with accuracy. He sought to replace this in his novels with 'an alternative, more truly authentic form of history, concerned with everyday life'.⁴¹ There were two main elements to this 'authentic' form of history. The first was its focus on private life, as Thackeray wrote in *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.*, 'I would have History familiar rather than heroic: and think that Mr. Hogarth and Mr. Fielding will give our children a much better idea of the manners of the present age in England, than the Court Gazette and the newspapers which we get thence'.⁴² A sentiment which he echoes in the 'Roundabout Papers' when he writes about the suitability of discussing such a vulgar subject as inns:

Do you object to talk about inns? It always seems to me to be very good talk. Walter Scott is full of inns. In "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas" there is plenty of inn-talk. Sterne, Fielding, and Smollett constantly speak about them; and, in their travels, the last two tot up the bill, and describe the dinner quite honestly; whilst Mr. Sterne becomes sentimental over a cab, and weeps generous tears over a donkey ('Notes on a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 137).

⁴¹ Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 214.

⁴² W. M. Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.* The Biographical Edition of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1904), pp. 11-12.

Eighteenth-century writers such as Fielding and Sterne are watchwords for truth and honesty for Thackeray. For him, they represent the kind of honest depiction of real life that most educated Victorians would find unseemly. As such, honesty and familiarity are frequently associated in Thackeray's works.

However, it is significant that Mitchell writes that Thackeray seeks a 'more truly authentic' history rather than simply a 'truly authentic' history. This brings us to the second main element of Thackerayan history – deflation. For Mitchell, Thackeray challenges not just the pageantry of public history but the process of historical reconstruction, including his own preferred mode of everyday history.⁴³ He points out the inaccuracies and subjectivity of his narrative and the manner in which it is clouded by human fallibility. For Thackeray, the pursuit of both history and realism as narrative modes required recognition of the impossibility of recovering anything that could be quantified as objective fact. As Elizabeth Ermarth points out, while the 'local texture' of Thackeray's works 'often seem realistic and historical, maintaining a common, neutral medium which makes possible [...] mutually informative measurements and thus the development of individual and social identities', the framework within which these scenes are played works against this, questioning this sense of mutuality and the individual and social identities arising out of it. For Ermarth, the result of this for the reader of Thackeray's novels is a 'renewed sense of the arbitrariness of every conclusion'. As for his journalism, Ermarth declares that 'his journalistic sketches pivot on ironic undercuts and the production of contradictions that remain inassimilable from any constant point of view'.⁴⁴

⁴³ Mitchell, p. 215.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History 1840-1895* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 17, 23, 20.

Yet there is a constancy to his scepticism — he points out to the reader the fictional nature of apparent truths and in doing so binds the reader and himself together in a community of knowledge, while setting himself up as a truth-teller by indicating both the lies or fictions of others and by revealing his own tendencies in that direction as well. While challenging the concept of absolute truth, Thackeray establishes himself and his ironic mode of discourse as the closest thing the reader is going to get to it. For example, in the 'Roundabout Papers' when Thackeray uses dream sequences or memories to suggest the fictionality of his non-fictional essays, it undercuts the sense of intimacy the reader gains from the suggestion of an insight into the workings of his mind but establishes in its place a bond of trust between Thackeray and the reader not dissimilar from the intimacy it displaces.

Naturally then, Thackeray's construction of intimacy in the 'Roundabout Papers' is far from straightforward, or perhaps rather it is simultaneously roundabout and straightforward. He writes of his use of the first-person singular in the series that: 'That right line "I" is the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication between us [...] and although these are Roundabout Papers, and may wander who knows whither, I shall ask leave to maintain the upright and simple perpendicular' ('Two Children in Black', RP, p. 7). Similarly, Thackeray's relation to his readers is simple and direct, yet wandering and complex. Intimacy is both offered up on a plate and elusive, as is demonstrated by another key form in the series – the anecdote.

Helen Deutsch maintains that anecdotes both 'solicit and deny intimacy'.⁴⁵ On the one hand, the anecdote as a form is associated with the 'unpublished', the subjective, the small story missed by the grand narrative of history. The word itself comes from the

⁴⁵ Helen Deutsch, 'Oranges, Anecdote and the Nature of Things', *SubStance: A Review of Critical and Literary Theory*, 38:1 (2009), p. 33.

Greek *ekdidomi*, meaning 'to give out', plus an alpha privative, so that at a basic level the definition of 'anecdote' is something not given out.⁴⁶ A large part of its power as a form is related to the impression of intimacy it creates. But on the other hand, as Richard Bauman has pointed out, anecdotes have a long written history dating back to classical antiquity.⁴⁷ 'Publishing the unpublished' is what an anecdote does, either orally or as a written text.⁴⁸ And as Eric Mechoulan and Roxanne Lapidus have shown, the impression of immediacy and revelation that they create is as much based on a lack of communication as it is on the actual confession of new or private details. For Mechoulan and Lapidus the anecdote is a site of memorialization but it is also a site of forgetting. Brevity is at the heart of the anecdote, as is the need to be striking or interesting, therefore as a form it necessarily emphasizes certain aspects of a story and marginalizes others. In Mechoulan and Lapidus's words, it enacts 'the definitive erasure of traces of history in favor of the power of immediacy'.⁴⁹ Or as Deutsch says, it 'emphatically refus[es] the whole story'.⁵⁰

Interestingly, despite its usual connection to the fragmented, the subjective and the oral, and through the oral to the ephemeral, Deutsch's analysis of the anecdotal form invests it with an unexpected solidity. She sees anecdotes functioning as touchstones that give reality and solidity to historical narratives, 'stones critics kick to prove the reality and solidity of the historical matter they analyze'. For Deutsch, an anecdote is 'the closest narrative thing to a thing'. In her analysis the anecdote becomes an object and even a commodity. It is 'the literary equivalent to a still life in which the passage of time and the

⁴⁶ John McCumber, 'To Be Is To Be An Anecdote: Hegel and the Therapeutic Absolute', *SubStance*, 38: 1 (2009), p. 58.

⁴⁷ Richard Bauman, 'Anecdote', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 22.

⁴⁸ Dominique Jullien, 'Anecdotes, *Faits Divers*, and the Literary', *SubStance*, 38:1 (2009), p. 68.

⁴⁹ Eric Mechoulan and Roxanne Lapidus, 'Immediacy and Forgetting', *SubStance*, 34:1 (2005), p. 147.

⁵⁰ Deutsch, p. 33.

fragmentation of analysis is frozen in the shape of an exchangeable object' and as such the subject of fetishes.⁵¹

The anecdote, like the digression, is a core unit of Thackeray's narrative in the 'Roundabout Papers'. It is also a subject of discussion to which he returns more than once. In his various perambulations around the topic he touches on its status as an unpublished curiosity intrinsically linked to the private sphere, and as a repeatable, exchangeable literary object, and the contradictions therein. In one passage he emphasizes its resistance to written form and repetition:

The party assembles round a table with pens, ink, and paper. Some one narrates a tale containing more or less incidents and personages. Each person of the company then writes down, to the best of his memory and ability, the anecdote just narrated, and finally the papers are to be read out [...] They say the variety of narratives is often very odd and amusing. The original story becomes so changed and distorted that at the end of all the statements you are puzzled to know where the truth is at all ('On a Hundred Year's Hence', RP, p. 86).

But then in another passage he discusses how repetition is at the core of what the anecdote is. Thackeray begins 'Notes on a Week's Holiday' with a discourse on paterfamilias' tendency to recycle the same stories over and over again to the dismay of his long-suffering family.

⁵¹ Deutsch, p. 31, 48, 35.

Most of us tell old stories in our families. The wife and children laugh for the hundredth time at the joke. The old servants (though old servants are fewer every day) nod and smile a recognition at the well-known anecdote [...] As we twaddle, and grow old and forgetful, we may tell an old story; or, out of mere benevolence, and a wish to amuse a friend when conversation is flagging [...] but the practice is not quite honest, and entails a certain necessity of hypocrisy on story hearers and tellers. It is a sad thing, to think that a man with what you call a fund of anecdote is a humbug, more or less amiable and pleasant ('Notes on a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 128).

An anecdote is not something to be repeated and yet it seems that it is part of its nature that it is repeated, or at least the continuous repetition of anecdotes is something that Thackeray casts as an intrinsic part of family life.

In 'On Two Children in Black' he takes this further by comparing his favourite anecdote to a bottle of '25 claret.

Now every word is true of this little anecdote, and I submit that there lies in it a most curious and exciting little mystery. I am like a man who gives you the last bottle of his '25 claret. It is the pride of his cellar; he knows it, and he has a right to praise it. He takes up the bottle, fashioned so slenderly — takes it up tenderly, cants it with care, places it before his friends, declares how good it is, with honest pride, and wishes he had a hundred dozen bottles more of the same wine in his cellar ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 8).

Thackeray's metaphor of the anecdote as a bottle of claret is interesting for several reasons. First, it casts his anecdote as an object. Second, that object is curiously positioned. It is a private, domestic object, and significantly a unique object that he makes a personal gift of, but it has the potential to be something quite different. As Mr Roundabout notes, he 'wishes he had a hundred dozen bottles more of the same wine'. Third, it is interesting because of Thackeray's previous use of the claret metaphor in his prospectus for the magazine, in which Thackeray wrote that the *Illustrated London News* had accused him of 'purchasing first-class claret for first-class contributors, and second-class for those of inferior *cru*' and then takes up the metaphor of the claret to describe the atmosphere of hospitality that he envisages for the prospective magazine.⁵² His use of the metaphor thus seems somewhat pointed.

Repetition or the transmission of the oral into the written within a domestic setting is one thing, however, and public publication is another. Thackeray engages with both in his various digressions on the subject of anecdotes. In 'Notes on a Week's Holiday', he overtly compares domestic anecdotes to the story-telling of the professional author, and in 'Strange to Say, On Club Paper' he shows how in the modern world of journalism the boundaries between the two have become blurred. In this latter paper he discusses the circulation of a scandalous story regarding the late Lord Clyde:

Here I have been imagining a dialogue between a half-dozen gossips such as congregate round a Club fireplace of an afternoon. I wonder how many people besides — whether any chance reader of this very page has read and believed this story about the good old lord? Have the country papers

⁵² Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 160.

copied the anecdote, and our "own correspondents" made their remarks on it? ('Strange to Say, On Club Paper', RP, p. 238).

This blurring of boundaries comes at a cost.

You remember Balzac's tale of the "Peau de Chagrin", and how every time the possessor used it for the accomplishment of some wish the fairy *Peau* shrank a little and the owner's life correspondingly shortened? I have such a desire to be well with my public that I am actually giving up my favorite story. I am killing my goose, I know I am. I can't tell my story of the children in black after this; after printing it, and sending it through the country. When they are gone to the printer's these little things become public property. I take their hands. I bless them. I say, "Good-by, my little dears." I am quite sorry to part with them: but the fact is, I have told all my friends about them already, and don't dare to take them about with me any more ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 8).

Here Thackeray characterizes the content of an anecdote as belonging to the deeply personal and the transformation of that content into an anecdote as something of a self-betrayal. By making the personal public in this manner, he loses something vital of himself.

Such discussions of the anecdote question Thackeray's own use of the form. At times challenging the idea that they are part of familiar and intimate discourse, while at other times lending depth to that intimacy only to instil doubts as to its appropriateness within a public setting. For the most part Thackeray places the anecdote firmly within the

domestic field, but in his comparison of his anecdote to Balzac's pigskin above he quite clearly casts both the 'Roundabout Papers' and the *Cornhill* in opposition to the personal and the domestic sphere in which his anecdote originally circulated.

Of course, as with his discourses on the indistinct line between fiction and reality in relation to memory and dream sequences, there is an element of playfulness to his 'revelations' regarding his use of the anecdote. His commentary on the anecdote as a form at various points in the series emphasizes its conventional nature and the manner in which this can be used to create the impression of intimacy. Then again, his willingness to admit this to the reader, to share this secret, could be seen as a deeper level of intimacy. There is a sense of game-play which underlies Thackeray's 'familiar' discourse throughout the series, which extends to the rhetoric of family that underpins the *Cornhill* as a magazine. But as with the careful tightrope act between sensationalism and respectability that Wynne pinpoints in the family magazines, the manner in which Thackeray teases the reader, drawing close and then pulling back, can be seen as a part of their appeal. But, however much Thackeray flirted with his readers, the magazine's central ethic remained one of respectable domesticity.

Cultivating the Domestic

Hand in hand with Thackeray's construction of intimacy in the 'Roundabout Papers' was his recreation of himself in an image suited to that of the editor of a magazine that supposed 'ladies and children always present'.⁵³ Thackeray created a very particular image of himself as Mr Roundabout, distinct from the 'man of the world' persona that he had previously been known for as a writer. The *Cornhill* sought to establish itself at the heart of the home, a family magazine above all else, so it was that Mr Roundabout, for all

⁵³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

his wandering about and his digressions, is based firmly in the home, a figure of genteel domesticity, and while the exact details of his household remain vague and the members of his family amorphous, their importance is noted by the emotion with which they are dealt.

In the course of the 'Roundabout Papers' Thackeray leads the reader to Germany, Italy, America, India, to France more than once, back into the past, forwards into the future, round London theatres and Continental art galleries, but most frequently the journeys he has Mr Roundabout make are of the mind, and the scenes most commonly depicted are in the home or similarly domestic surroundings. As Mr Roundabout states, 'I pick up my small crumbs of cogitation at a dinner-table; or from Mrs. Mary and Miss Louisa, as they are prattling over their five-o'clock tea' ('On a Hundred Years Hence', RP, p. 87). We see the family round 'the kindly Christmas tree [...] yet all aflame whilst I am writing' ('Round the Christmas Tree', RP, p. 65), or at the breakfast table where Mr Roundabout admits that 'I tried uncouthly to imitate the tune to the ladies of the family' ('Notes on a Week's Holiday', RP, p. 130). If it is not Mr Roundabout's home, it is someone else's, and recurrently that of the reader. This is assumed to conform to the respectable, educated image that Thackeray constructs in his essays, admonishing fathers for 'spending insane sums of money in bric-a-brac, tall copies, binding, Elzevirs, &c.; '20 Port, outrageously fine horses, ostentatious entertainments, and what not' and for 'going to sleep immediately after dinner, instead of cheerfully entertaining Mrs. Jones and the family, rebuking wives for 'sneering at Mrs. Brown and the Miss Browns, because they are not quite du monde, or quite so genteel as Lady Smith' and lecturing daughters for 'keeping your wretched father up at balls till five o'clock in the morning' ('On Letts's Diary', RP, p. 121).

The home is the location for one of the few moments of unalloyed emotion in the series, as Mr Roundabout contemplates his sleeping family:

It is night now: and here is home. Gathered under the quiet roof elders and children lie alike at rest [...] The clock tolls sweetly in the silent air. Here is night and rest. An awful sense of thanks makes the heart swell, and the head bow, as I pass to my room through the sleeping house, and feel as though a hushed blessing were upon it ('De Juventute', RP, p. 55).

Mr Roundabout's greatest sympathy is often reserved for the partings of families and separation of children from their homes.

Perhaps I have tried parting with my own, and not found the business very pleasant. Perhaps I recollect driving down (with a certain trunk and carpet-bag on the box) with my own mother [...] I smart the cruel smart again: and, boy or man, have never been able to bear the sight of people parting from their children' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 9).

A young relative by the name of Bobby Miseltow comes to stay for a week at Christmas and when he leaves, Mr Roundabout says, 'I brush away the manly tear of regret as I part with the dear child' ('Round about the Christmas Tree', RP, p. 65). There are no attempts at humour, no distractions, no different levels of meaning undercutting one another when Thackeray writes 'as we leave the fond mother's knee, the rough trials of childhood and boyhood begin; and then manhood is upon us, and the battle of life, with its chances, perils, wounds, defeats, distinctions' ('On Letts's Diary', RP, p. 126).

Thackeray casts himself in the role of the tender and loving paterfamilias as Mr Roundabout, the head of household, who grumbles about the spending of his wife and daughters, but who is openly and demonstrably affectionate. In doing so, Thackeray reveals a side of his life usually not seen by the public nor offered up for their consumption, thus working in tandem with his use of the first-person singular, and his semi-autobiographical recollections to help establish the magazine's façade of intimacy. It also ties in with the magazine's central model for that intimacy—the family. However, as with Thackeray's reminiscences, dream sequences and anecdotes, his treatment of the domestic in the 'Roundabout Papers' and Mr Roundabout's status as a domestic figure is both straightforward and circuitous.

One reason why Mr Roundabout is so centred round his home life, and therefore why he functions so well as the representative of a domesticated male, is that he is not depicted as having a separate work life or sphere. Tosh has written of how in the Victorian period 'as work became detached from home, so its association with a heartless commercial ethic became closer'.⁵⁴ Thackeray avoids this association in the 'Roundabout Papers' through the interconnection of Mr Roundabout's home and work life. This acts to domesticate that work life but it also breaks down the boundaries between the public world of work and the private world of the home, a proceeding which Thackeray enacts with some discomfort. In typical Thackerayan fashion, he establishes a particular scenario seemingly with the sole purpose of then introducing a sense of ambivalence and highlighting it as a subject for debate. In the 'Roundabout Papers' he sets up the idea of the domesticated male in the form of the writer who gain his crumbs at the tea-table, who writes at his desk in his study at home, who reads over the manuscripts of would-be contributors in his arm-chair or even in bed, and whose public and private worlds merge.

⁵⁴ Tosh, p. 30.

In doing so he creates a narrator in keeping with the image of unity that the magazine is striving for and also in accordance with the familiar style that is key to the magazine's rhetorical project, delivering up 'public' discourse in a form fit for family consumption. But even as he paints a rosy picture of this union of home and work, and the contemporary man's place in it, Thackeray queries just how rosy the picture actually is.

It is all very fine to advertise on the Magazine, "Contributions are only to be sent to Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co., and not to the Editor's private residence." My dear sir, how little you know man- or woman-kind, if you fancy they will take that sort of warning! How am I to know, (though, to be sure, I begin to know now,) as I take the letters off the tray, which of those envelopes contains a real bona fide letter, and which a thorn? ('Thorns in the Cushion', RP, p. 31).

The narrator is clearly not at ease with the confusion of the personal with the public represented in the direction of business letters to his home address. Boundaries are being crossed, and he is not happy.

Thackeray recurs to the subject again in 'On a Chalk-Mark on the Door' and is on this occasion quite fierce on the topic, comparing the letters he receives at his home to the intrusion one morning of an agent of a Cattle-food Company, whom Thackeray 'could have throttled' and whose visit left him 'tinged with a ferocious misanthropy' for the rest of the day ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 72). Yet as he indicates the source of this confusion lies in his own commingling of the domestic scene and the work place:

That the *Cornhill Magazine* is taken in in that house I know. In fact I have seen it there. In fact I have read it there. In fact I have written it there. In a word, the house to which I allude is mine — the "editor's private residence," to which, in spite of prayers, entreaties, commands, and threats, authors, and ladies especially, *will* send their communications ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 72).

Thackeray expresses his frustration at female readers/contributors who continue to send him letters to his 'private residence', yet in the preceding sentence acknowledges that this 'private residence' is often where the *Cornhill* is written.

The subject comes up again in the essay, 'On Screens in Dining-Rooms', when the letters the editor receives represent an even greater intermingling of the personal and the public. One letter in particular bears 'the well-known superscription of another old friend, which I open without the least suspicion' but then discovers 'a few lines from my friend Johnson, it is true, but they are written on a page covered with feminine handwriting' in which a would-be contributor solicits Johnson to get in touch with editor on her behalf 'as that is much better than writing in a roundabout way to the Publishers, and waiting goodness knows how long for an answer' ('On Screens in Dining-Rooms', RP, p. 35). The narrator's horrified tones, light-hearted as they are, demonstrate his negative opinion of what he clearly sees as an intrusive invasion of his private sphere by this female correspondent.

The use of the word 'roundabout' here is important for it signposts a connection between Thackeray and this letter-writer. On the one hand, it places the writer in opposition to Thackeray, Mr Roundabout, the advocate of the circuitous route. On the other hand,

despite this tendency to wander 'who knows wither', in the second article in the series, Thackeray espoused his belief in maintaining 'the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication' between himself and his readers, readers who in his prospectus to the magazine he expressed the hope might join in with the conversation ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 7). To what degree then is this lady contributor simply following Thackeray's own directions? To what extent is her objectionable blending of the public and private simply a mirroring of his own blurring of those same lines? Thackeray thus subtly draws the reader's attention to the complexities of the periodical press's occupation of 'a liminal space between public and private domains'.⁵⁵

The 'Roundabout Papers' are centred upon the creation of a domestic, family-oriented image for the magazine and establishing a bond of familiarity between the magazine and its readers. At the same time, the nature of Thackeray's discourse could be seen as working against this while simultaneously seeking to establish it. From one perspective this could be seen as Thackeray trying to sneakily transgress the boundaries that 'Mrs Grundy' and the desire to gain her monthly shilling force him to bow down to as editor. But this would seem to be a simplistic view, and although it may be very well part of what is going in these texts, it does not cover all the different levels of meaning at work in the series. An alternative explanation seems to be called for.

⁵⁵ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 5.

Pulling back the curtain

The Use of Irony

Mark Turner has called the practices of anonymity and naming in the mid to late Victorian periodical press a form of coquetry.⁵⁶ Serious and semi-serious debates upon anonymity and the collective authority of the journal were staged, while so-called anonymous journals paraded the names of their contributors in adverts in other journals or notices pasted upon walls in London. Thackeray's ironic perspective and his cultivation of a familiar connection with his readers are similarly flirtatious, as well as potentially subversive. In fact, the possibility of transgression, of Thackeray's own boundaries but transgression nonetheless, is part of the enticement.

In 'A Letter from the Editor to A Friend and Contributor', as has been noted above, Thackeray attempts to utilize the public's pre-existing acquaintance with him to cast the *Cornhill* in the light of a respectable family magazine. Establishing the length of the public's acquaintance with him, he goes on to write:

You, then, who ask what 'The Cornhill Magazine' is to be, and what sort of articles you shall supply for it? — if you were told that the Editor, known hitherto only by his published writings, was in reality a great reformer, philosopher, and wise-acre, about to expound prodigious doctrines and truths until now unrevealed, to guide and direct the peoples, to pull down the existing order of things, to edify new social or political structures, and,

⁵⁶ Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines*, p. 123.

in a word, to set the Thames on Fire; if you head such designs ascribed to him — *risum teneatis?* [Can you help but laugh?].⁵⁷

Certainly, Thackeray was neither a reformer nor a philosopher, nor did his novels or his journalistic writings pretend to such goals. He did not seek to ‘pull down the existing order’, but he did question, ridicule and even attack it. In 1857, just two years before the publication of the Cornhill prospectus, a reviewer in the *Leader* called him ‘a democrat more formidable than WAT TYLER’.⁵⁸ He was alternatively praised and criticized for ‘his flings at the world’,⁵⁹ his ‘sly jesting sneer at all respectable institutions’,⁶⁰ and ‘his power of exposing cant and Pharisaism in all its phases’.⁶¹ Perhaps readers would have been surprised had he sought to ‘set the Thames on fire’, but it would have been a fine line for some. Flattering pictures and Thackeray do not seem to go hand in hand in the minds of his contemporaries — ‘We did not, it is true, expect from the author of “*Vanity Fair*” any flattering pictures of men and manners, nor of the world at large, of any age’. This reviewer’s expectations when he hears the name ‘Thackeray’ do not seem quite in keeping with those that Thackeray assigns to his readers in the prospectus.⁶² It is hard to believe that Thackeray would not have been aware of this.

To George Smith, when discussing the constitution of their new magazine, he wrote ‘the Magazine must bear my cachet you see and be a man of the world Magazine’.⁶³ Phegley may be correct in arguing that the *Cornhill* promoted an active female audience, but it

⁵⁷ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 160.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, ‘Thackeray on the Georges’, *Leader*, 8:354 (January 3 1857), p. 15.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, ‘Thackeray and his Works’, *Palladium: A Monthly Journal of Literature, Politics, Science and Art*, 2 (March 1851) p. 185.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, ‘Mr. Thackeray on George the First’, *Saturday Review*, 3:62 (January 3 1857), p. 11.

⁶¹ Anonymous, ‘Article II. Thackeray’s Works’, *Westminster Review*, 59:116 (April 1853), p. 364.

⁶² Anonymous, ‘Thackeray’s Lectures – Swift’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 74:456 (October 1853), p. 494.

⁶³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 150.

also attempted to appeal to the educated male reader as well, 'the man of the world'. This can be witnessed in Thackeray's depiction of himself as editor: 'having lived with educated people in many countries, and seen the world in no small variety'. It can be seen in his portrait of readers at home: 'A professor ever so learned, a curate in his country retirement, an artisan after work-hours'. And in his description of the reading matter available: 'familiar reports of scientific discovery, description of Social Institutions'.⁶⁴ More than 'a man of the world', and the various different things that might imply, such as experience and knowledge, Thackeray was considered by many of his peers to be a cynic, a sceptic and an occasionally ruthless satirist. He points to this within the 'Roundabout Papers' when he speaks of a lady seated next to him at dinner asking him 'how comes it, dear sir, there is a certain class of persons whom you always attack in your writings, and savagely rush at, goad, poke, toss up in the air, kick, and trample on?' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 6). Thackeray was flirting with his audience in more ways than one. There is a knowingness to Thackeray's prospectus that gave the reader a preview of the manner in which Thackeray and the *Cornhill* sought to negotiate the various audiences that they looked to capture with their new brand of family magazine.

If the first article in the Roundabout series, 'On a Lazy, Idle Boy', acts as an introduction to the *Cornhill*, despite rather strangely being positioned at the end of the magazine, then the second essay, 'On Two Children in Black', acts as an introduction to the series and to Mr Roundabout. It defines the nature of the series, traces its ancestry and firmly locates its place in the reader's life. It is a 'bundle of egotisms' following in the footsteps of those 'dear old egotists', Montaigne and Howell. As such, its place, like theirs, is the bedside, 'a nightcap book', that might 'prattle' the reader to sleep, 'a book that you can muse over, that you can smile over, that you can yawn over' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 6).

⁶⁴ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 160.

Alongside the knowing self-deprecation in the idea that his books are sleep-inducing, and the humour in the notion of an author seeking to write a book that makes people yawn, there is something very personal in the way in which Thackeray links reading with sleep. This is in part because the scene of reading is thus the bedroom, in part because of the familiarity implied in Thackeray's relationship with the books he falls asleep over, his bedside books are his 'dear friends', and in part because of the association of sleep with dreaming and the unconscious. It also places the 'Roundabout Papers' in the category of the everyday, picturing the series as occupying a mundane part of one's domestic routine, and suggests that its subject-matter will be similarly commonplace, familiar enough to yawn over, and not out of place at a respectable bedside.

This is what Thackeray seems to suggest. There is however one quibble. As he himself admits, Montaigne and Howell are not particularly respectable bedside reading.

I am informed that both of them tell coarse stories. I don't heed them. It was the custom of their time, as it is of Highlanders and Hottentots to dispense with a part of dress which we all wear in cities. But people can't afford to be shocked either at Cape Town or at Inverness every time they meet an individual who wears his national airy raiment. I never knew the "Arabian Nights" was an improper book until I happened once to read it in a "family edition." Well, *qui s'excuse* [...] Who, pray, has accused me as yet? Here am I smothering dear good old Mrs. Grundy's objections, before she has opened her mouth ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 6).

Thackeray quite clearly questions the idea of family reading that is central to his own editorial policy and hints that the *Cornhill* might not be quite so respectable after all.

W.H. Fichett, looking back at his first acquaintance with the *Cornhill*, wrote that

Thackeray, I am sometimes tempted to think, might be judged better, perhaps, from his 'Roundabout Papers' than from anything else he ever wrote [...] Thackeray imagined himself to be a cynic, and he often posed enough in the attitude and talked in the accents of a cynic, but it was pure affectation.

For Fichett, the 'Roundabout Papers' revealed the 'the pools of tender, natural, yet half-ashamed pathos hidden beneath a very thin ice of apparent cynicism'.⁶⁵ While his cynicism might have been an affectation, his scepticism was not, and while the 'Roundabout Papers' certainly have their moments of emotion, the entire series is underpinned by Thackeray's ironic view of the world, his questioning of its structures and conventions, not least those of his own making. Thus on the one hand, he sets up strict rules of conduct for family reading and on the other, points out the absurdity of such rules, and their conventional nature.

He similarly plays with the bond of intimacy that he constructs with the reader, stating at one point that his use of the personal voice 'stands for what it is worth and no more', seemingly saying that 'it is what it is' or at least what it appears to be, but he never properly defines 'what it is worth' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 7). Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', despite his desire for them to be seen as bedside reading that might lull the readers to sleep, require an active engagement on the part of the reader. The question of what is autobiographical and what is fictional, and where the line between the

⁶⁵ W. H. Fichett, 'How I Came to Know the *Cornhill*', *Cornhill Magazine*, 28 (January 1910), p. 61.

two starts and finishes, of whether Thackeray is really revealing his real self to the reader, and whether the reader can trust what he or she is being told, adds a piquancy to the text that was of particular relish to a public increasingly caught up in the cult of personality.

Family Editions and Improper Reading

It should come as little surprise then, that for all its promotion of a genteel domestic ideal, the domestic sphere is far from sacrosanct in the pages of the 'Roundabout Papers'. Thackeray's frequently ironic treatment of the domestic sphere in the series can be viewed from different perspectives. It can be seen as attempting to appeal to as broad an audience as possible by maintaining the façade of kid gloves upfront while allowing the discussion of adult, 'masculine' matters through the backdoor, thereby appealing to the whole family but by different means from those advertised. Alternatively, it can be seen as questioning the domestic sphere's separate status or as an illustration of the complicity of 'the family' in the public world of commerce, war and empire. Banished as they are from the magazine, contentious political and social issues make a surprising number of appearances in the series. The American Civil War is a subject that Thackeray tackles more than once and leads him to the discussion of other controversial issues such as slavery and the British class system. Thackeray also deals with poverty, the workhouse, the school system and fraud.

The two aspects of the Victorian domestic ideal that are most regularly cast doubt upon in the series are the notion of respectability and the idea of the domestic sphere as separate from the public, the two aspects that Thackeray stresses most in his prospectus for the magazine. The public and the private are regularly shown to meet in Thackeray's domestic scenes. One of the most memorable depictions of family life in the series occurs in 'On

Letts's Diary', when Thackeray describes the scene as a family bids adieu to their eldest son.

My good Eliza, what a sad, sad day that is — how fondly and bitterly remembered — when your boy went off to his regiment, to India, to danger, to battle perhaps. What a day was that last day at home, when the tall brother sat yet amongst the family, the little ones round about him wondering at saddle-boxes, uniforms, sword-cases, gun-cases, and other wondrous apparatus of war and travel which poured in and filled the hall; the new dressing-case for the beard not yet grown; the great sword-case at which little brother Tom looks so admiringly! ('On Letts's Diary', RP, p. 123).

The meeting of the public and the private here is shown to be incongruous — dressing-cases and sword-cases sit side by side, 'wondrous apparatus of war' are listed like any other items of furniture or purchased commodities commonly used to define the domestic scene. There is an absurdity as well as a hint of tragedy about Thackeray's description of little Tom's admiration of his brother's weapons. Yet the scene shows that for some or even many, war, death and empire are intrinsically woven into family life. Eliza is a clearly a representative, not an individualized person. This is a scene that Thackeray expects the reader to be familiar with, a common scene, with which many will be able to identify.

In other scenes Thackeray shows the domestic space as a workspace, once again showing the collision of two apparently separate spheres. This can be seen in Thackeray's various discourses on servants and the relationship between families and servants within the household. A prime example of this is in 'On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', in which

Thackeray takes the hierarchical structure of his household as the starting point for a discussion of the hierarchies within society, by which means he illustrates the ridiculousness of such structures. The very mention of servants reminds the reader that for some the domestic sphere is also their public sphere. Expanding his vision of the household to include its under-reaches, he calls into question the idea of there being a distinction between the private and the outside world. 'There are orders, gradations, hierarchies, everywhere', he writes making no distinction between the domestic and non-domestic, and in fact welding them together through this notion of hierarchy ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 73). The safety and familiarity of the domestic space thus becomes questionable: 'in your house and mine there are mysteries unknown to us' ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 73). There are people, 'uncovenanted servants', unknown to the family, 'who have an occult right on the premises' ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 73). The choice of words here is significant, suggesting the presence of dark magic at work. These strange and suspect figures, though unknown to the master and mistress of the house, are an intrinsic part of the hierarchical structure of their household, connecting the genteel world above the stairs with 'the world of darkness, and hunger, and miserable cold, and dank, flagged cellars, and huddled straw, and rags, in which pale children are swarming' ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 73).

More than calling into question the separateness of the domestic and the public, Thackeray demonstrates the marriage of the two to make a point about the way in which society is structured — in a manner that while perhaps not setting the Thames on fire, speculates on whether that fire would be such a bad thing, and extends the reach of that fire to the reader's inner sanctum. Having noticed a chalk-mark on his front door, the narrator speculates on what might happen if he cleaned the mark off himself. Having

helped one servant with her duties, the other servants would expect similar help and the result would be that:

You should have a set of servants for the servants, and these under servants should have slaves to wait on them. The king commands the first lord in waiting to desire the second lord to intimate to the gentleman usher to request the page of the ante-chamber to entreat the groom of the stairs to implore John to ask the captain of the buttons to desire the maid of the still-room to beg the housekeeper to give out a few more lumps of sugar, as his Majesty has none for his coffee, which probably is getting cold during the negotiation ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, p. 73).

The domestic flavour to this satire curbs its sting in this instance, but provides less padding at others:

It may be your beer (which runs with great volubility) has a pipe or two which communicates with those dark caverns where hopeless anguish pours the groan, and would scarce see light but for a scrap or two of candle which has been whipped away from your worship's kitchen ('On a Chalk-Mark on the Door', RP, pp. 73-74).

Here the triviality of the domestic fripperies only serves to underline the darkness of the caverns and the anguish endured there.

We find similar moments of darkness in 'On Some Carp at San Souci', an essay which questions the series' rhetoric of domesticity and intimacy in a number of ways, focusing as it does on the life of an aged female inmate of a workhouse. The workhouse is the very opposite of the cosy, genteel home-life represented in and by the *Cornhill* and Thackeray's treatment of it may be seen as the kind of social criticism that he designated outwith the bounds of the magazine's field of interest. Beginning with a scene that seems more reminiscent of Dickens's style of journalism, this essay initially places itself in the genre of socially investigative reportage, with its description of

an old lady of ninety who has passed the last twenty-five years of her old life in a great metropolitan establishment, the workhouse [...] a forlorn aged creature, shaking with palsy, with no soul among the great struggling multitude of mankind to care for her, not quite trampled out of life, but past and forgotten in the rush ('On Some Carp at San Souci', RP, p. 207).

For all his claims to respectability, there are moments in the series when Thackeray seems quite willing to tear down the structures of society. However, such is his style of narrative that these moments are for the most part subsumed within the discourse of a reputable and upright magazine such as the *Cornhill*. The ironic perspective which he maintains throughout the series resists the idea of definitive truths and so never absolutely condemns any practice as 'wrong', rather it holds all to be questionable. The familiarity of his discourse, its grounding in the mundane and the everyday, and the humour that it finds in that, has the effect of softening Thackeray's critical edge. If the 'Roundabout Papers' are transgressive, they are subtly so, adding a depth and interest that is crucial to their appeal but which doesn't disrupt the framework within which they are presented. But then as G.H. Lewes has pointed out in reference to Thackeray's earlier works, 'A

semblance of truth has more effect in a jest [...] The laughter passes, but the idea remains: it has gained admittance in our unsuspecting minds, and is left here unsuspected'.⁶⁶

The Auto/biographical Whirligig

When as the editor of the *Cornhill*, Thackeray rejected Trollope's short story 'Mrs. General Talboys', Trollope asked Thackeray, 'Are you not magnanimous enough to feel that you write urbi et orbi; — for the best & wisest of English readers; and not mainly for the weakest?'. On the surface of things, this appeared to be a legitimate question.⁶⁷ When Thackeray apologetically passed on a poem of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's, he wrote 'our Magazine is written not only for men and women, but for boys, girls, infants, sucklings almost, and [...] there are things my squeamish public will not hear on Mondays though on Sundays they listen to them without scruple'.⁶⁸ But looking at the 'Roundabout Papers', and their place in the magazine's construction of its identity, suggests that there was a more complex rhetorical strategy at work within the periodical. Perhaps Elizabeth Barrett Browning came closer to the mark than Trollope in her response to Thackeray's rejection when she refers to Thackeray's 'Cornhill standpoint, (paterfamilias looking on)' as in the 'Oriental traditions' with its 'veiled female faces' in that it is not that such subjects as Trollope and Barrett Browning touch on are not covered by the magazine but they are done so under a veil.⁶⁹

'You offer me an autobiography: I doubt all autobiographies I ever read' — this statement by Thackeray seems somewhat opposite to his claims to sincerity in the 'Roundabout

⁶⁶ G.H. Lewes, 'Literature', *Morning Chronicle*, Issue 24452 (6 March 1848), p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 207.

⁶⁸ Ray, *Letters*, IV, pp. 226-227.

⁶⁹ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 228.

Papers'.⁷⁰ But these claims are not as straightforward as they might at first appear, and like Thackeray's treatment of the domestic, tend to question his construction of the concept at the same time as they propagate it. In 'The Notch on the Axe.— A Story a la Mode', the first part of Thackeray's three-part mock Gothic parody of contemporary sensation fiction that comes mid-way through the series, the enigmatic Mr Pinto refers to the 'Roundabout Papers' as 'your little Whirligig Papers' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 159). Whirligig, of course, is a synonym for 'roundabout': both indicate a circular motion, and cast up images of merry-go-rounds. The former, however, loses the extra comic dimension of referring to a plump person and the sense of a not necessarily circular but an indirect route, the idea of wandering which is so important to the series. Mr Pinto seems to use the word derogatively, as if exchanging 'roundabout' for 'whirligig' diminishes the series, perhaps because as well as merry-go-rounds, a whirligig can also refer to a small toy that spins in comparatively diminutive circles. The idea of the series as childish play with no purpose beyond simple pleasure is noteworthy. The use of the word 'whirligig' is also worth mentioning because of the connotations it has for the modern critic, most significantly in relation to Paul De Man's 'autobiographical whirligig'.

Paul De Man argues against the traditional treatment of autobiography as a literary genre. For him, all such attempts founder for a number of reasons, the most important of which is the difficulty of setting up a distinct line between autobiography and fiction. 'Autobiography seems to depend on actual and potentially verifiable events in a less ambivalent way than fiction does. It seems to belong to a simpler mode of referentiality, of representation, and of diegesis [...] But are we so certain that autobiography depends on reference?' De Man holds that in fact autobiography belongs to an equally complex

⁷⁰ W. M. Thackeray, *The Lectures of the English Humourists* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1911), p. 199.

mode of referentiality and representation, catching the reader in a series of circular questions. Does the life produce the autobiography or does the autobiography produce the life? Does the referent determine the figure or does the figure determine the referent? For De Man these questions can be asked about any text. All texts are autobiographical and similarly none of them are or can be. Thus he posits autobiography, not as 'a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding', presaged and followed by instability. The distinction between autobiography and fiction is undecidable, states De Man. The reader is caught in a whirligig, 'an endless discussion between a reading of the novel [or any text] as fiction and a reading of the same novel as autobiography'.⁷¹

In this sense, Thackeray's series truly are 'Whirligig Papers'. While all texts may involve the reader in just such a whirligig, Thackeray brings it to the fore in the 'Roundabout Papers', making it a central theme of the texts. Again and again he holds up the texts as autobiography, or a better term might be 'life writing', encompassing as it does biography and other forms of 'factual' narrative. He makes claims based upon the idea of life writing as a simpler mode of referentiality, only to turn around and emphasize the fictional nature of the texts, before returning once more to the idea of life writing. He leaves the decision of what is fictional to the reader while demonstrating quite clearly that the reader can never know for sure. This can be seen in his equivocal discussions of his use of the first-person singular, and his various asides and digressions when recounting real-life occurrences, as well as in various smaller stories within the text, such as 'The Notch on the Axe' or the story of the titular boys in 'On Two Children in Black'.

⁷¹ De Man, pp. 920-921.

'On Two Children in Black' demonstrates the manner in which we construct fictions around real-life happenings. After an extended preamble, 'On Two Children in Black' focuses on a series of encounters between Thackeray and two boys he meets abroad and Thackeray's failed attempts to create a story regarding these encounters. The first time he meets them in Heidelberg they are respectably dressed in black with a woman he assumes is their mother whom he believes is taking them to school. The second time he meets them in Baden-Baden they are with a fierce-looking man of whom they are clearly frightened and who Thackeray imagines to be their uncle. The third time he sees them in Venice, they are barefoot and dressed in rags in the company of 'an old hag of a woman' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 10). Finally, a companion of the narrator's sees them at a railway station in Trieste once more under the guardianship of the fierce-looking man. Thackeray is fascinated with these boys and the explanation behind their disparate appearances in his life, but is unable to arrive at any definitive answers. Thackeray's favourite anecdote, as he labels it, can hardly even be called an anecdote, being as it is a story about the absence of story.

Who were they? What could they be? How can you explain that mystery of the mother giving them up; of the remarkable splendor and elegance of their appearance while under her care; of their barefooted squalor in Venice, a month afterwards; of their shabby habiliments at Laybach? Had the father gambled away his money, and sold their clothes? How came they to have passed out of the hands of a refined lady (as she evidently was, with whom I first saw them) into the charge of quite a common woman like her with whom I saw one of the boys at Venice? ('On Two Children in Black', RP, pp. 10-11).

The narrator has more questions than answers. His few attempts to construct an answer are proven wrong throughout the course of the essay, and are shown to have been based solely on the workings of his own imagination. Real life proves resistant to the closure of narrative and the connections between events remain obscure. An element of the fictional is seen to be a part of even factual narratives.

Thackeray also sets out to show that the opposite is also true, that the autobiographical can be read in the fictional:

We humbler writers cannot create Faustus, or raise up monumental works that shall endure for all ages; but our books are diaries, in which our own feelings must of necessity be set down. As we look to the page written last month, or ten years ago, we remember the day and its events; the child ill, mayhap, in the adjoining room, and the doubts and fears which racked the brain as it still pursued its work [...] I own for my part that, in reading pages which this hand penned formerly, I often lose sight of the text under my eyes. It is not the words I see; but that past day; that bygone page of life's history; that tragedy, comedy it may be, which our little home company was enacting; ('De Finibus', RP, pp. 179-180).

Read from a certain perspective then, Thackeray's novels contain the story of his 'little home company' as well as personages such as Arthur Pendennis and Becky Sharpe. They hint at events in the author's own life, such as the illness of a child, a reference possibly to the death of Thackeray's own child while he was writing *Catherine*. Frequently, however, it is simply a case of life writing and fiction intermingling so that the line between the two becomes almost completely obscured. He likens writers to madmen, who 'see visions,

hold conversations with, even draw the likeness of, people invisible to you and me', for his characters, he says, are like real people to him ('De Finibus', RP, p. 179). In fact, they at times appear more concrete: 'I often forget people's names in life; and in my own stories contritely own that I make dreadful blunders regarding them; but I declare, my dear sir, with respect to the personages introduced into your humble servant's fables, I know the people utterly' ('De Finibus', RP, p. 179).

'The Notch on the Axe' provides a particularly interesting angle from which to observe the manner in which Thackeray spins this autobiographical whirligig. The story begins in medias res with Mr Roundabout in conversation with the mysterious Mr Pinto, with Pinto discussing a painting by Joshua Reynolds and Mr Roundabout wondering, seemingly out of the blue, whether Pinto is in fact over a hundred years old. The bulk of the narrative is taken up with the conversation of these two as Pinto, a figure in the mould of the Wandering Jew, tells stories of his long life and Mr Roundabout tries to figure what truth there is, if any at all, to the story he is hearing. Pinto claims he has come to give Mr Roundabout a clue as to what happened to the two children referred to in 'On Two Children in Black', but at the end of the first part the interest shifts to a guillotine that Mr Roundabout sees in Pinto's rooms, the axe referred to in the title. In the second part, the two dine together and Pinto claims to have known Mr Roundabout's great grandmother, previously described to the readers in 'On a Peal of Bells', and offers the narrator a thousand guineas to buy her snuff box from him, which the narrator sells to him despite admitting that 'My poor granny's legacy was valuable and dear to me' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 168). The rest of the second part and much of the third part is concerned with the story of the axe, at the end of which the sun rises and Pinto disappears. The story ends with the revelation that it has been a dream induced by the narrator reading a sensation

novel late at night, but with the assertion that the guillotine of the title does exist and is to be found at 'Mr. Gale's, No. 47, High Holborn' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 177).

The story clearly raises questions about truth in narrative, both fictional and non-fictional. A reference to 'Stranger than Fiction' by Pinto in the first part is notable. 'Stranger than Fiction' was a particularly controversial article that appeared in the *Cornhill* regarding séances. Many people questioned Thackeray's decision to publish this article as a factual work that gave credence to ideas and beliefs that to many were palpably absurd and certainly had no scientific basis. Dawson reads this as an acknowledgement of the magazine's subtle but definite leanings towards sensationalism, but it can also be interpreted as part of a discussion regarding how we define truth in stories.⁷² For Thackeray, it would seem it is a matter of perspective, as his editorial disclaimer to 'Stranger than Fiction' might imply:

As the Editor of this Magazine, I can vouch for the good faith and honourable character of our correspondent, a friend of twenty-five years' standing; but as the writer of the above astounding narrative owns that he "would refuse to believe such things upon the evidence of other people's eyes," his readers are therefore free to give or withhold their belief.—Ed.⁷³

Certainly the overall arc of 'The Notch of an Axe' seems to suggest this. 'The Notch of an Axe' presents the reader with a life-story that is questioned by the one hearing it. Fantastical as that life-story is, this is no surprise. At a certain point, however, Mr Roundabout begins to believe the story, unlikely as it sounds. Pinto's knowledge of his great grandmother, his ability to provide apparently tangible evidence, soothes the

⁷² Dawson, p. 141.

⁷³ Robert Bell, 'Stranger than Fiction', *Cornhill Magazine*, 2:8 (August 1860), p. 211.

narrator's qualms, and earns his trust to a certain degree. But then the entire narrative is revealed to be a fantasy, although the fact that it is the narrator's fantasy, who here stands in the place of the reader, is interesting.

Also of interest are the parallels between Pinto's story-telling and Mr Roundabout's own narrative style. At one point, Mr Roundabout criticizes Pinto for digressing, "'Sir, you are wandering from your point!" I said, with some severity' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 170) and at another for the egotistical bent of his conversation, 'Perhaps I may as well own that I was *not* attending, for he had been carrying on for about fifty-seven minutes; and I don't like a man to have *all* the talk to himself' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 169). Moreover, Pinto claims parts of the narrator's life-story as part of his own autobiography. Throughout the tale, Thackeray hints at the affinities between Pinto and Mr Roundabout, in terms of style but also in the indecipherable mix of fact and fiction in his narrative. That the story ends with the revelation that the tale was borne of the narrator's subconscious only serves to emphasize this connection. Pinto becomes a Gothic version of the narrator himself. Characters presented previously, such as the two children in black and the narrator's great grandmother, now appear within the context of Pinto's fantastical tale. Are these real figures now employed in a fantastical context or were they always imaginary? Where is the line between the real and the fictional? As with 'Stranger than fiction', Thackeray leaves this entirely up to the reader. After waking, he asks himself a series of questions: 'What is dreaming? What is life? Why shouldn't I sleep on the ceiling? — and am I sitting on it now, or on the floor?' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 177). While these questions are asked facetiously, they also make a real point. Significantly, Thackeray ends the story by turning this question back round onto the reader, the reader's thoughts, the reader's opinions, as he asks '*Et vous?*' ('The Notch on the Axe', RP, p. 170).

Screens in Dining-Rooms

The whirligig nature of autobiography and Thackeray's dual perspective on the domestic as both an idealized haven from the outside world and as intrinsically connected to public events and discourse come together in his discussion of various periodical encounters in the series. The most notable of these is in 'On Screens in the Dining-Rooms', in which Thackeray discusses the manner in which the periodical press facilitates the public sphere's intrusion on the private.

Thackeray's treatment of both the autobiographical and the domestic in the series is related to the idea of the personal in Victorian journalism as well as being part of his ironic outlook on language and truth. While Thackeray admits that 'in former days — I too have militated; sometimes, as I now think, unjustly', he is keen to point out 'always, I vow, without personal rancor' ('On Screens in Dining-Rooms', RP, pp. 36-37). Thackeray had very strong opinions on the line between the public and the private in the press. 'We don't like men writing about our privacies on this side of the water' writes Thackeray in a letter to an American friend.⁷⁴ This he shows clearly in 'On Screens', which deals with the publication of a story first in the American press and then in the *Saturday Review* regarding the famous *Cornhill* dinners and publisher George Smith.

Thackeray's castigation of these articles and his defence of Smith are strangely straightforward, as the lengthy passage quoted below shows:

That a writer should be taken to task about his books, is fair, and he must abide the praise or the censure. But that a publisher should be criticised

⁷⁴ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 202.

for his dinners, and for the conversation which did *not* take place there, — is this tolerable press practice, legitimate joking, or honorable warfare? I have not the honor to know my next-door neighbor, but I make no doubt that he receives his friends at dinner [...] Now, suppose his servants were to tell mine what the doings are next door, who comes to dinner, what is eaten and said, and I were to publish an account of these transactions in a newspaper, I could assuredly get money for the report; but ought I to write it, and what would you think of me for doing so?

And suppose, Mr. Saturday Reviewer — you *ensor morum*, you who pique yourself (and justly and honorably in the main) upon your character of gentleman, as well as of writer, suppose, not that you yourself invent and indite absurd twaddle about gentlemen's private meetings and transactions, but pick this wretched garbage out of a New York street, and hold it up for your readers' amusement — don't you think, my friend, that you might have been better employed? ('On Screens in Dining-Rooms', RP, p. 38).

Thackeray does not play with words here. There are certain things that have a place in a newspaper and certain things that don't and Thackeray clearly indicates that the dinner-table conversation is not one of them. This is a matter of honour for Thackeray and of gentlemanly conduct. For a newspaper or a periodical to concern itself with 'private meetings and transactions' is not only unethical, even immoral (*'ensor morum'*), but also breaking a social code. The idea of the gentleman was in transition in the Victorian period, and although was increasingly taken to relate to education and behaviour rather than birth, still was considered to relate to one's rank in society, even if this rank was

determined by somewhat different criteria than it once was. The implication here is that in publishing private details the *Saturday Review* was breaking with its general character as a gentlemanly publication, and lowering itself to the behaviour of its lessers in the periodical world, cheap publications aimed at a less educated audience that dealt in sensation and scandal and which in the 1860s became increasingly personal in both approach and content.

The sense of a more roundabout view of the subject comes from the context in which Thackeray launches his tirade. Thackeray himself traverses the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of private revelations and the use of personality in his journalism. When it was originally published the *Cornhill* was notable for several reasons. First, it provided high quality literary journalism at a reduced price. Second, it launched an unprecedented and innovative advertising campaign.⁷⁵ Third, it sought to establish a place for itself at the heart of the home, promising as it did so that all 'public' matters would be excluded from its discourse. The *Cornhill* did not indulge in personalities in the specifically Victorian meaning of that term. It did not make scurrilous attacks on public figures and certainly did not reveal the private details of such men's lives. However, it did blend the public with private, it did attempt to appeal to those on a lower income with its price of a shilling, and it did participate quite vigorously in the increasing personalization of journalism in the 1860s that foreshadowed the establishment of New Journalism in the 1870s and 1880s. Thackeray notes in a letter in May 1861 that John Forster, friend and biographer of Dickens, had started to cut him in the street 'because he fancied that I meant him in one of the Roundabout Papers'.⁷⁶ Clearly others had problems seeing the divide that Thackeray claims to see so clearly in 'On Screens'.

⁷⁵ Maunder, p. 244.

⁷⁶ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 237.

Thackeray works hard to draw the line between his own personal discourse and the revelation of privacies which he so derides. The distinction is not simply that the 'Roundabout Papers' deals with Thackeray's own privacies rather than that of another person. He carefully guarded his own private life, banning his daughters from participating in any form of biographical endeavour after his death.⁷⁷ It is perhaps to be expected then that in the most personal of his texts, the work most obviously inviting autobiographical readings, Thackeray peppers it with warnings about the dangers of the personal in journalism and the literary magazine as a form of personal journalism.

Thackeray depicts the magazine as a transgressive form, both in its contents and as an object that belongs in equal parts to the public realm and the domestic. Magazines are shown to transcend boundaries, combining images of war with those of the family as in 'On Letts's Diary' or attacking the public man in his home, with his family watching as in 'On Screens':

I may have undergone agonies, you see, but every man who has been bred at an English public school comes away from a private interview with Dr. Birch with a calm, even a smiling face. And this is not impossible, when you are prepared. You screw your courage up — you go through the business [...] But to be caught suddenly up, and whipped in the bosom of your family — to sit down to breakfast, and cast your innocent eye on a paper, and find, before you are aware, that the Saturday Monitor or Black Monday Instructor has hoisted you and is laying on — that is indeed a trial ('On Screens in Dining-Rooms', RP, p. 37).

⁷⁷ Mackay, p. xii.

They also cross social boundaries as seen in the opening scene of 'On Some Late Great Victories':

A newsboy had stopped in his walk, and was reading aloud the journal which it was his duty to deliver; a pretty orange-girl, with a heap of blazing fruit [...] leant over the railing and listened; and opposite the nympham discentem there was a capering and acute-eared young satirist of a crossing-sweeper [...] That intelligent reader, with his hand following the line as he read it out to his audience, was saying: — “And — now — Tom — coming up smiling — after his fall — dee — delivered a rattling clinker upon the Benicia Boy’s — potato-trap [...]”&c. &c.; or words to that effect [...] Having read every word of the battle myself in the morning, I did not stay to listen further; but if the gentleman who expected his paper at the usual hour that day experienced delay and a little disappointment I shall not be surprised ('On Some Late Great Victories', RP, p. 23).

With amusement Thackeray notes that gentlemen and newsboys enjoy the same morning paper, though one can barely read, a fact that Thackeray emphasizes. Thackeray exhibits both pleasure and wariness at the tendency of the periodical as a form to break down barriers. It is notable that several contemporary sources did not see the 'Roundabout Papers' as particularly personal at all. The *Saturday Review* remarked that 'there are no personal confidences. Mr. Thackeray is not the man, nor is this the age, for confidences like those of Montaigne. Mr. Thackeray does not pictures his youth, but muses upon it, which is a very different thing',⁷⁸ while E.H.L. Watson in the held that 'I doubt whether

⁷⁸ Anonymous, 'Roundabout Papers', *Saturday Review*, 14:374 (December 27 1862), p. 776.

Thackeray allowed quite sufficient of himself to appear in his *Roundabout Papers*.⁷⁹ Yet Thackeray was concerned by the idea that in the *Cornhill* he was selling not just his public image and his name, but personal and irreplaceable parts of himself in the private stories that he was revealing in the 'Roundabout Papers'. This is made clear in 'On Two Children in black' and more definitively in 'The Notch on the Axe', a nightmare about, amongst other things, Thackeray selling a prized personal possession in the form of his great grandmother's snuff box. It is apparent from this that Thackeray himself was not always so sure where the line was to be drawn or that he was drawing it in the right place.

Conclusion

Behind its image of respectable domesticity then, and despite its claim to always be wearing kid gloves, the *Cornhill* articulated a far more complex understanding of Victorian private and public life in its pages, and Thackeray himself set the standard for this in his works for the magazine, particularly in the 'Roundabout Papers'. In this series, Thackeray sought to further the image of cultivated domesticity and intimacy he established in the prospectus for the magazine, but he also pointed out its weak spots. In the world of the 'Roundabout Papers', public and private merge, the personal and the commercial are not entirely polar opposites, and the definition of what is 'respectable' is up for debate. Thackeray's adoption of the intimate mode in this series was at once a way of solidifying the magazine's identity as a family magazine and a means of surreptitiously critiquing that same identity. The result was a sophisticated series of journalistic essays that managed to be both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, questioning the very possibility of journalistic intimacy while maintaining the stance of the reader's confidential friend, overcoming these binary positions to inhabit a murkier, and more tangled, but more interesting space.

⁷⁹ Watson, E.H.L., 'The Essay Considered from an Artistic Point of View', *Westminster Review*, 141 (January 1894), p. 560.

CHAPTER 2: DICKENS'S 'THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER' AND *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*

It may be doubted if any author of note has furnished such vivacious and interesting series of personal details and reflections, as well as of light and airy adventures pleasantly told, as did Dickens in 'The Uncommercial Traveller'.¹

All the Year Round was quite a different proposition from the *Cornhill*. A weekly magazine sold at 2d., issued in a format resembling the penny weeklies that scandalized Wilkie Collins in 'The Unknown Public',² it made no pretence of wearing the white kid gloves that the *Cornhill* prided itself on nor did it construct its suitability as family reading on the basis of its exclusion of certain topics. Social reform had always been high on the agenda for Dickens, and if this made way somewhat for fiction within the pages of *All the Year Round* in contrast to its predecessor *Household Words*, it was never entirely neglected. Nonetheless, there are similarities between the *Cornhill* and *All the Year Round*, particularly in the equivocal attitude that their editors demonstrated in their own regular contributions towards the intimacy of their own journalistic stylings and their status as 'family' magazines.

Like the *Cornhill*, in its construction of itself as a family magazine, *All the Year Round* held to an idea of the family as connoting intimacy, respectability and unity. This last aspect was important to Dickens, for as Malcolm Andrews writes, his life-long theme was the connection or reuniting of a fragmented society.³ Similarly, respectability can be seen to be a thread that is woven throughout his oeuvre and an issue of significance to characters

¹ Percy Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens, with an Account of 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round' and the Contributors Thereto* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., 1913), p. 236.

² Wilkie Collins, 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words*, 18:439 (21 August 1858), pp. 217-222.

³ Andrews, p. 21.

such as Pip in *Great Expectations*, the novel closest to 'The Uncommercial Traveller' chronologically. The focus of this chapter is the complex relationship of the texts to the rhetoric of intimacy employed by Dickens in this series, but through that focus hopefully a better understanding of these other aspects will emerge, for all three are integrally connected in contemporary understandings of the family magazine.

Percy Fitzgerald in his *Memories of Charles Dickens* has suggested that Dickens began 'The Uncommercial Traveller' as an attempt to emulate Thackeray's success with the 'Roundabout Papers' and the success of the *Cornhill* as a magazine.⁴ This seems not only plausible but likely. Dickens did not shy away from the commercial aspect of his role as an editor and paid keen attention to those elements which might increase or decrease subscriptions to the magazine. Equally, his relationship with his readers was of the greatest importance to him. Dickens's own take on the personal journalistic series, however, did not just utilize the rhetoric of intimacy for commercial reasons or as a kind of psychological salve to Dickens's craving for his readers' love. It explored, as the 'Roundabout Papers' did but in a different fashion, the nature of the personal in journalism and its connection to issues of publicity and privacy as well as to consumerism. It also examines the impersonal aspects of journalism, pointing out the connection between these two apparent opposites. It does this within the context of what is portrayed as an increasingly cold and commercial society and an abiding awareness of Dickens's own commercialism. There is a moment or two in the 'Roundabout Papers' in which Thackeray seems haunted by the past, most of them comic, but some exhibit a palpable melancholy. In 'The Uncommercial Traveller', such moments abound. Dickens's narrator comes face to face time and again with stark, visual reminders of the alienating effects of Victorian society, which challenge the ambience of comfortable fireside

⁴ Fitzgerald, p.207.

companionship which Dickens sought to propagate in his magazines, and play with the bounds of respectability at the same time. The commercialism of the personal as a journalistic mode is hinted at as Dickens explores the narrator's guilt at his complicity in the impersonal forces at work in contemporary society. As with the *Cornhill* then, *All the Year Round* presents a rather more complex understanding of the realities of Victorian private life than its initial propaganda would suggest. As 'The Uncommercial Traveller' shows, the *All the Year Round* that Victorians knew and read within the sanctity of their homes was quite a different magazine from the one that it frequently proclaimed itself to be.

Dickens and the Personal

Any study of Dickens's journalism must take account of John Drew's groundbreaking work on this subject. One of the most significant aspects of this work for this thesis is Drew's contention, as Juliet John puts it, that Dickens's Uncommercial essays 'are not crassly anti-commercial, but advocate the supplementing of "wholesale" with "personal retail" values and methods'.⁵ For Drew, Dickens's 'uncommercialism' is a multifaceted philosophy which 'embraces both reactionary and Utopian alternatives to liberal modernity' rather than a simple 'commercialism equals bad' equation.⁶ But while Drew's work remains the touchstone for any study of Dickens's journalism, John's work on the topic is also of importance. John sees Dickens's Uncommercial essays not just as expounding the virtues of personal retail values but rather sees both his Uncommercial essays and his journalism as a whole as embodying those values as part of 'a complex

⁵ Juliet John, "'Getting Down into the Masses": Dickens, Journalism and the Personal Mode', *Shaping Belief: Culture, Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, ed. by Victoria Morgan and Clare Williams (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 190.

⁶ John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 153.

response to the larger “wholesale” processes of the mass media which Dickens simultaneously resisted and accelerated’.⁷

Robin Gilmour compares ‘The Uncommercial Traveller’ to Matthew Arnold’s poem ‘Dover Beach’ and the ‘melancholy, long, withdrawing roar’ of Arnold’s ‘Sea of Faith’⁸ — certainly in both there is a sense of the old world slipping away, while the new world presents itself like a ‘darkling plain’.⁹ By the 1860s the world had changed a great deal since Dickens’s boyhood. Besides the coming of the railway, and the development a new postal network, the Reform Act of 1832, the growth in literacy and the corresponding expansion in the periodical press and the literary market in general had transformed the face of Victorian Britain. London in particular was affected, as urbanization, population expansion, and large-scale architectural projects transformed the landscape. In terms of commerce, by the mid-nineteenth century those movements that had begun in the eighteenth century were taking off on an unprecedented scale. Advertising, retail practices, mass production techniques had all developed and grown and commodity culture was spreading at an increasing rate. As Catherine Waters states, there was ‘a new world of retailing and consumption at mid-century’, the result of which was that ‘such developments as the growing impersonality of the relationship between producers, retailers and consumers, innovative retail methods and the ideology of economic liberalism, are shown not only to undermine the morality of the market, but the cultural meaning invested in goods as constituents of selfhood’.¹⁰

⁷ John, p. 190.

⁸ Robin Gilmour, ‘*The Uncommercial Traveller and Later Dickens*’, *Dickens Quarterly*, 16:4 (December 1999), p. 260.

⁹ Matthew Arnold, *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 211-212.

¹⁰ Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens’s Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 64.

Dickens's antipathy to the impersonal side of commerce, however, was long-standing, and can be traced back far beyond 'The Uncommercial Traveller', as can his application to his journalism of the 'personal retail values' that John identifies. As early as 1845 Dickens was outlining plans for a form of personal journalism 'which should separate me, instantly, from all other periodicals periodically published' by taking up the persona of a cricket who 'would at once sit down upon their [his readers] very hobs; and take a personal; and confidential position with them'.¹¹ In 1848 he reformulated this idea in a letter to John Forster in the shape of 'a certain SHADOW [...] a semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature [...] a sort of previously unthought-of Power going about [...] at everybody's elbow, and in everybody's footsteps'. For the modern reader, there is something disturbing about the notion of this Big-Brother style Shadow, but Dickens pictured his Shadow as 'odd' certainly but also 'cheerful, useful and always welcome'.¹² As was observed in the introduction, Dickens had always insisted on the interpenetration of the public and private realms. In relation to the Shadow he clearly does not view this mingling as problematic — this was not quite the case with his narrator in 'The Uncommercial Traveller'.

With the establishment of *Household Words* in 1850, Dickens realized the plans he had been slowly evolving over the course of the five previous years. In its 'Preliminary Word', Dickens declared that 'We aspire to live in the Household affections and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all faces and conditions, on whose faces we may never look'.¹³ Dickens here acknowledges the 'wholesale' nature of periodical publishing, the distance between readers and producers who will never know each

¹¹ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IV, pp. 327-328.

¹² House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, V, pp. 621-623.

¹³ Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1:1 (March 30 1850), p. 1.

other's faces, and makes it clear that his aim is to re-establish a more intimate relationship with the periodical-reading public. The magazine was to become part of the domestic arena. Just as in his plans for previous endeavours, Dickens pictured himself overriding the impersonality of modern print culture and finding a place within the inner sanctum of his readers' lives.

In many ways *All the Year Round* was simply a direct extension of *Household Words*. It came into being as the result of Dickens's fall out with his publishers Bradbury & Evans over their refusal to publish his statement on the break-up of his marriage in *Punch*, rather than any desire to change what circulation figures proved to be a winning formula. Its prospectus declared that 'nine years of HOUSEHOLD WORDS, are the best practical assurance that can be offered to the public, of the spirit and objects of ALL THE YEAR ROUND'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, as *All the Year Round* developed, several significant changes were brought into play. Like *Household Words*, it placed a premium on its social conscience. As one reviewer for the *Examiner* wrote 'it claims a full right to be interested in the social movements of the day, and to write out of a full mind on any one of them'.¹⁵ Yet increasingly articles on social issues gave way to fiction within the magazine's pages. In its first few years, *All the Year Round*, like its predecessor, abstained from including advertisements within its pages, but by the mid-1860s this ceased to be the case and as well as regular advertisements it also carried as a supplement the eight to ten page *All the Year Round Advertiser*. In an innovative commercial move, Dickens managed to arrange for the magazine to be published almost simultaneously in Britain and the United States. This resulted in a relatively international focus for the magazine in comparison to *Household Words* in order to maximize the magazine's appeal for American readers.

¹⁴ Charles Dickens, 'All the Year Round', *Household Words*, 19:479 (May 28 1859), p. 601.

¹⁵ Anonymous, 'All the Year Round', *Examiner*, 2701 (November 5 1859), p. 708.

In light of these changes, its increased circulation figures and what has been described as a 'less personal' tone by contemporaries such as Percy Fitzgerald and by later critics, *All the Year Round* has been seen as a more commercial enterprise than its forerunner.¹⁶ Certainly, *All the Year Round* could be described as having a more complicated relationship to the ideas of personality and family than *Household Words*. Part of this is a result of particular commercial strategies that were adopted in the early to mid-1860s, but part of it also is related to Dickens's changing image and the evolution of the way in which he presented himself in this later period. Margaret Beetham has written that 'each article, each periodical number, was and is part of a complex process in which writers, editors, publishers and readers engaged in trying to understand themselves and their society'.¹⁷ Similarly, we can see each article, periodical number and periodical printed under the name of Charles Dickens as a part of a complex and continually evolving process by which a public image of Dickens was constructed by himself, his staff and his readers, to which must also be added the numerous critical articles devoted to him in other periodicals of the time.

In *All the Year Round*, as with *Household Words*, the name 'Charles Dickens' appeared on every page, while other contributors for the most part remained anonymous. The style in which the articles were written very much followed the Dickens formula, taking a fanciful approach to serious matters, and emphasizing the individual reporter or contributor's experience of a situation over facts or statistics. As *The Critic* notes at the magazine's inception, 'personal explanations [...] promise to become a standing feature of his weekly journal'.¹⁸ The magazine cannot unequivocally be designated as less personal than

¹⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 206.

¹⁷ Margaret Beetham, 'Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Aled Jones and Lionel Madden (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 20.

¹⁸ Anonymous, 'The Critic', *Critic*, 19:494 (December 24 1859), p. 623.

Household Words, either in respect to the positive or the negative connotations of that word in the period.

At the same time, however, as Lorna Huett states, 'When it [*Household Words*] began publication in 1850, it was the only publication to offer respectable, good-quality serialised fiction to a middle-class audience, at a low price, under the aegis of a celebrated novelist known in part for his depictions of idealised domesticity', whereas when *All the Year Round* began publication it was under the aegis of a celebrated novelist most recently known for his scandalous separation from his wife or worse for his scandalous publication of a personal statement regarding that separation.¹⁹ As the *Saturday Review* recognizes, 'We are all dear brothers and sisters in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*, just as we were in *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby*',²⁰ but these later novels, and the ones that were to follow in *All the Year Round*, had a darker tone and a more serious purpose, which was acknowledged and often derided at the time. *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* presented an intricate picture of familial relations and a writer concerned with 'social estrangement'.²¹

But in relation to the period in which he was editor of *All the Year Round*, the most important texts in the construction of Dickens's image, and therefore also the magazine's image, were those written under the guise of the Uncommercial Traveller. Despite the not insignificant use of a persona, these papers clearly invited autobiographical readings and until recent years much Dickens criticism treated these texts as straightforward

¹⁹ Huett, 'Among the Unknown Public', p. 68.

²⁰ Anonymous, 'Mr. Dickens', *Saturday Review*, 5:132 (May 8 1858), p. 475.

²¹ Brian Cheadle, 'The Late Novels: *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*', *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 78.

biographical evidence (Leslie C. Staples's introduction to the 1958 edition of the papers suggests that 'here is much that he probably originally intended for the autobiography that he never wrote').²² Although not a regular part of every issue, they did provide a more continuous vehicle for Dickens to express himself than his miscellaneous contributions to *Household Words*, which could easily be confused with those of his contributors who frequently attempted to imitate his unique style. The use of a consistent and named persona for his journalistic contributions to *All the Year Round* gave a greater impression of unity to his offerings, allowing for the establishment of a more concrete sense of identity within the periodical.

The picture of Dickens created by the Uncommercial texts, most particularly in relation to his idea of his role as a journalist and a novelist as the intimate and trustworthy friend of his public, is multifaceted to say the least. As with Thackeray in the 'Roundabout Papers', Dickens's Uncommercial series is almost shockingly intimate. Its narrative strategies are designed to give the impression that the reader is seeing not only into the narrator's thoughts but also into the deeper reaches of his unconscious, as it introduces long-forgotten memories, dream sequences, hallucinations, and adopts a wandering style that seeks to copy the meanderings of the narrator's thoughts. It maintains the first-person singular throughout almost the entire text. It deliberately and repeatedly invites autobiographical readings. But, and again like Thackeray, while Dickens invites such readings in one moment, he resists them in the next. A current of irony runs throughout his various recollections of his experiences as the Uncommercial Traveller. The use of the persona creates a distance between writer and narrator but also between writer and reader. At times he portrays his role as a journalist not so much as that of a close comrade but as almost mechanistic. He becomes in his own vision simply an observer and

²² Leslie C. Staples, 'Introduction' in *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces*, ed. by Leslie C. Staples (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. vi.

a recorder, his humanity stripped bare. The hallucinations that haunt him and contribute to the personal tone of the series, the dreams that are invoked, and the memories, are all concerned with the impersonal, with the objectification of the human, and with the disruption of the home by the effects of the impersonal and the objectification of the human on society at large.

Far from an idealized realm within the Uncommercial series, the home is as often as not significant by its absence. The Uncommercial is clearly delineated as a bachelor. His abode is rarely referenced. Family is never mentioned, except for one brief remark related to his youth (a remark which can hardly be said to fly the flag for family and domesticity).²³ From time to time he takes up other lodgings, in hotels on his travels, or in his hatter's shop in 'Arcadian London'. In one particular essay, 'Night Walks', he takes on the guise of 'Houselessness'. Frequently he visits living situations that defy the description of 'home', such as hospitals, asylums, workhouses, and almshouses. Those households that might be referred to as homes are still far from idealized. They are set out as examples of continuing social problems. Like the Shadow, the Uncommercial Traveller seems to have free and easy access to these households in his role as unofficial journalistic inspector, but he is quite clearly there in a public capacity, and he is not confident about the appropriateness of his presence in these homes, his role as a journalist at times coming across as invasive if not voyeuristic, at least in the narrator's own view.

John writes that 'in many ways the most influential journalist of his age, Dickens saw the "personal" flavour of his journalism as helping to militate against the increasing

²³ 'The thing happened, say five-and-twenty years ago [...] Having newly taken the lease of a house in a certain distinguished metropolitan parish — a house which then appeared to me to be a frightfully first-class Family Mansion, involving awful responsibilities — I became the prey of a Beadle' ('Some Recollections of Mortality', UCT, p. 225).

depersonalization that accompanied growing industrialism and commercialism'.²⁴ But as an advocate of the personal style in journalism, Dickens was nonetheless aware of the complications it presented. 'People were all but bewildered and almost stunned, so unexpected was the revelation', writes Percy Fitzgerald regarding Dickens's address to the public on his separation from his wife — one cannot but agree with John's statement that in relation to this publication 'Dickens seemed to have lost his grip on the line between public and private', but in his series of Uncommercial articles it is that very line and the journalist's relationship to it that comes under scrutiny.²⁵

Dickens was particularly attentive to the close connection between the personal and the commercial in the periodical press. In the 1870s with the onslaught of New Journalism, the personal and the commercial became intrinsically linked in the minds of its critics, in large part because the personal sold. In the latter half of the century, publishers, editors and writers increasingly recognized the desire of the reader for a more personal element in journalism and played upon this for commercial effect. The adoption of signed articles escalated while anonymity within the text increasingly co-existed with the large-scale advertisement of names extra-textually. The recounting of personal details about public figures and other persons began to feature more prominently in the news, and the use of interviews, short punchy headlines, and illustrations became common. Although these developments came late in the century, and after the period under discussion here, this trend within the press did not represent a sudden break with the past but the continuation of a gradual process of change that had its roots much earlier in the century,

²⁴ John, p. 190.

²⁵ Fitzgerald, p. 190.

as Laurel Brake has noted in her work on the reality behind the myths that surround New Journalism.²⁶

Though the journalism of Dickens and of Thackeray was far removed from the kind of writing that was produced later in the century under that heading, they also sought to introduce a personal aspect to their periodical offerings and this was in part because they knew that this element of intimacy would attract readers. This, Thackeray would no doubt have been openly willing to admit, having once written, 'In some way or other, for daily bread and hire, almost all men are labouring daily [...] Do not let us try blink this fact, or imagine that the men of the press are working for their honour and glory, or go onward impelled by an irresistible afflatus of genius'.²⁷ Dickens would have objected to this statement strenuously as undermining the dignity of their mutual profession. Nevertheless, he was quite clear in the prospectus for *All the Year Round* that in establishing this new magazine, 'I look, and plan, for a very much wider circle of readers, and yet again for a steadily expanding circle of readers'.²⁸ His Uncommercial articles were very much a part of these plans, as he writes on one occasion to his subeditor W.H. Wills, 'it is very important, with our tendency to drop, not to be too long without an Uncommercial, and to break a promise'.²⁹ Dickens also firmly believed that, as John states, that the exercise of the personal mode of journalism was key not just to appealing to a mass market but also 'to inter-class communication, cultural inclusivity and social cohesion'.³⁰

²⁶ Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender & Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), p. 102.

²⁷ W. M. Thackeray, 'A Brother of the Press on the History of a Literary Man, Laman Blanchard, and the Chances of the Literary Profession', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 33: 195 (March 1846), p. 333.

²⁸ Dickens, '*All the Year Round*', p. 601.

²⁹ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 312.

³⁰ John, p. 199.

The importance of such aims to Dickens is made plain in the first issue of *Household Words*:

— to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that theirs is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding — is one main object of our Household Words.³¹

The continuing importance of this project in *All the Year Round* is demonstrated in its prospectus as Dickens writes that ‘that fusion of the graces of the imagination with the realities of life, which is vital to the welfare of any community, and for which I have striven from week to week as honestly as I could during the last nine years, will continue to be striven for “all the year round”’.³² It is difficult to imagine Thackeray expressing such deep-set ideological beliefs, though he did hold in the prospectus to the *Cornhill* and repeated in the ‘Roundabout Papers’ that

Dear youth of ingenuous countenance and ingenuous pudor! I make no doubt that the eminent parties above named all partake of novels in moderation — eat jellies — but mainly nourish themselves upon wholesome roast and boiled. Here, dear youth aforesaid! our Cornhill Magazine owners strive to provide thee with facts as well as fiction; and though it does not become them to brag of their Ordinary, at least they

³¹ Dickens, ‘A Preliminary Word’, p. 2.

³² Dickens, ‘*All the Year Round*’, p. 601.

invite thee to a table where thou shalt sit in good company ('A Lazy Idle Boy', RP, p. 4).

There is an irony in such remarks by Thackeray that distinguishes his comments on such subjects from Dickens's. Even so, in 'The Uncommercial Traveller', as in the 'Roundabout Papers', there is a sense of revelation, of the narrator pulling back the curtain and allowing the reader to see behind the rhetoric to the realities of mass market journalism. Fitzgerald in his *Memories* discusses what he sees as the lack of 'the old tranquil home-like flavour' of *All the Year Round* compared to *Household Words* and imagines 'Boz rather ruefully contemplating his own somewhat conventional journal'.³³ More than just rueful, however, 'The Uncommercial Traveller' depicts Boz as haunted by guilt. The series is an exploration of Dickens's own complicity in the encouragement of the forces of alienation that he saw as the darker side of commercialism. John has argued that for Dickens the adoption of the personal mode was neither 'patronizing [n]or insincere',³⁴ and certainly it is not in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' in which he illuminates what John calls the 'performative' nature of his personal mode.³⁵ As with Thackeray, this can be seen as a form of enticement on the writer's side and part of the construction of a bond of intimacy between the reader and writer, but there is more to it than this. As Grahame Smith remarks, 'the value of *The Uncommercial Traveller* and *Great Expectations* [the novel which grew out of an idea for one of Dickens's Uncommercial papers] lies, if only partially, in their unwillingness to allow narratives to *remain suppressed*'.³⁶

³³ Fitzgerald, p. 206, 208.

³⁴ John, p. 200.

³⁵ By this John means that in his personal mode Dickens is 'always bi-focal, aware of a speaker and a social audience', p. 202.

³⁶ Grahame Smith, 'Suppressing Narratives: Childhood and Empire in *The Uncommercial Traveller* and *Great Expectations*', *Dickens and the Children of Empire* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 49.

For John, 'Dickens's journalist method, as well as his message, employs a "personal retail tone"', which is 'not simply an antidote to "wholesale" values but a product of them'.³⁷ She sums up: 'the idea that his commercial humanism is either sincere or insincere, personal or wholesale, is misguided. Dickens' continued mass appeal owes much to the fact that he embraced humanism and commercialism simultaneously'.³⁸ Following John, this chapter takes the view that there is an integral relationship between the personal and the commercial in Dickens's journalism, and that the personal is constructed both in opposition and in tandem with the commercial within his texts. It sees 'The Uncommercial Traveller' as an example of this and also an exploration of the concerns raised by this. Moreover, it views this as part of a larger issue regarding the rhetoric of family reading in 1860s magazine culture.

The Uncommercial as Family Reading

All the Year Round was a family magazine. Dickens's original idea for its title was 'Household Harmony'.³⁹ It placed a large emphasis on fiction, one of the defining features of the family magazine in the 1860s. It featured both *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, novels that Catherine Waters describes as having a fascination with family, as well as sensation novels such as Wilkie Collins's *A Woman in White*, which took the home as their seat of interest and held mid-Victorian domestic ideology at its core.⁴⁰ Additionally, as we have seen in its prospectus, as a miscellany that sought to appeal to a large cross-section of readers, it very much modelled itself on its predecessor, *Household Words*, which sought

³⁷ John, p. 190.

³⁸ John, p. 205.

³⁹ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰ Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of the Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 122.

to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes “that give delight and hurt not”, and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearths.⁴¹

This desire resulted in the cultivation of the personal and familiar style that can be seen in both *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

Albert D. Hutter has written that in *A Tale of Two Cities* there is a ‘correlation between family and nation’, and that in this novel Dickens uses ‘the language of psychological conflict and psychological identification to portray social upheaval and the restoration of social order’.⁴² Similarly, in ‘The Uncommercial Traveller’ and in *All the Year Round* in general, Dickens conceives of his audience in terms of familial feeling. The intimacy and personal relations of the family serves as a model for society. For Dickens, the concept of a family magazine was about more than just appealing to the largest number of readers, and was certainly about more than fitting in with a particular notion of respectability, although this was a concern. It was about imagining a different kind of society.

However, as Waters points out in relation to *Household Words*, ‘the discourse of domesticity [...] was not unmixed’.⁴³ It has been posited that for Dickens, the image of the family was a means of uniting people, a universal model that could transcend social and economic difference. ‘The Uncommercial Traveller’ both seems to confirm and deny this view. While at one moment, the narrator might address his audience with ‘O reader, haply

⁴¹ Dickens, ‘A Preliminary Word’, p. 2.

⁴² Albert D. Hutter, ‘Nation and Generation in *A Tale of Two Cities*, *PMLA*, 93 (1978), p. 448.

⁴³ Waters, *Politics of Family*, p. 24.

turning this page by the fireside at Home and hearing the night wind rumble in the chimney' ('The Shipwreck', UCT, p. 29), with the assumption that whatever their differences the reading multitude can all be brought together under the common denominator of 'home', at other points in the series it is quite clear that even if this is the case, such fireside scenes are not even close to being universal. This is particularly evident in the Uncommercial's various visits to workhouses, hospitals, almshouses and his brief experience of 'Houselessness' in 'Night Walks'. It is also made clear in his visits to the homes of factory workers and the families of merchant seamen, in which the fireside is far from being a haven from the world's cruelties.

Not that Dickens ever pictured the hearth as quite the ring-fenced sphere that it is depicted as by the advertisements for the *Cornhill*. For Dickens, family reading did not necessarily mean the banishment of controversial subjects from the pages of the magazine, but was more a matter of accessibility, cultivating a sense of familiarity, and balancing entertainment with instruction. Dickens laid out his philosophy of how 'to speak appropriately' to 'a motley assemblage of people' that includes 'many boys and young men' and 'also many girls and young women' and 'a very fair proportion, of family groups' in 'Two Views of a Cheap Theatre' (UCT, p. 55). This consisted of expressing 'an understanding of the general mind and character of his audience', avoiding 'all slangs and twangs' ('Two Views of a Cheap Theatre', UCT, p. 59), and emphasizing 'our common humanity [...] our common capacities for pain and pleasure [...] our common laughter and our common tears [...] our common aspiration to reach something better than ourselves' ('Two Views of a Cheap Theatre', UCT, p. 60). For Dickens this also meant speaking to them as 'fellow-creatures' rather than talking down to them ('Two Views of a Cheap Theatre', UCT, p. 62). The *Cornhill's* air of 'kid gloves' was antithetical to Dickens's beliefs about how to address his audience.

At the same time, there was a sense that laughter should be 'harmless' and tears 'gentle'. Whether this is the case in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' is a matter of debate. Harry Stone sees a darker side to the series in its recurring images of cannibalism and violent consumption.⁴⁴ Of course, as Waters has pointed out, for all that Dickens was considered as 'the quintessential celebrant of the hearth' by his contemporaries, his novels in fact show an overwhelming interest in 'fractured families', while those idealizations of family life for which he is remembered are relegated to the margins of most of his narratives.⁴⁵ Examining closely his portrayal of these fractured families in a number of his works, Waters concludes that the reason for this apparent disjunction is that despite 'the grotesque failure to exemplify the domestic ideal' by the majority of Dickens's families, 'this ideal is almost everywhere implied as the standard against which the families portrayed in the novels are evaluated'.⁴⁶ Despite their fractured nature, these families suggest a universality to the domestic idyll imagined in the prospectuses of magazines such as *All the Year Round*, picturing the values embodied in that image as general rather than socially and historically specific.

Images of the Home

A similar strategy can be seen at work in a number of scenes in Dickens's Uncommercial papers. For example, the grotesque versions of the domestic exhibited in the Uncommercial's exploration of the Liverpool underworld in 'Poor Mercantile Jack' are grotesque because of their perversion of an ideal which they are clearly contrasted to. In each of the parlours into which the Uncommercial is admitted the 'family' is seated round the hearth. The parlours are 'dirty and offensive', and in some the distinction between

⁴⁴ Harry Stone, *The Night Side of Dickens: Cannibalism, Passion, Necessity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994), p. 90.

⁴⁵ Waters, *Politics of Family*, p. 15, 28.

⁴⁶ Waters, *Politics of Family*, p. 27.

inside and outside is not quite set — the Uncommercial describes one parlour as ‘a nauseous room with an earth floor, into which the refuse scum of an alley trickled’ (‘Poor Mercantile Jack’, UCT, pp. 71-72). Some of the inhabitants of these dwellings are occupied by activities that seem to fit in with the domestic ideal but turn out to be a subversion of it. In the last room into which the Uncommercial enters, ‘three weird old women of transcendent ghastliness, were at needle-work’, but their needle-work is revealed to consist of making money bags and their labour is given a diabolical twist by the manner in which Dickens portrays it: ‘Witch sisterhood all, stitch, stitch’—their stitching is linked to the Uncommercial’s identification of them as ghastly, supernatural creatures (‘Poor Mercantile Jack’, UCT, p. 73). In another room that the Uncommercial enters, the reader witnesses a similar perversion of the Victorian ideal of motherhood. The Uncommercial takes a child into his arms, but ‘on my offering to restore it to a ferocious joker not unstimulated by rum, who claimed to be its mother, that unnatural parent put her hands behind her, and declined to accept it’ (‘Poor Mercantile Jack’, UCT, p. 71). The use of the word ‘unnatural’ is worth remarking here. The horror with which the Uncommercial regards these homes and their inhabitants, and the manner in which he portrays them as part of some kind of Gothic horror, albeit with a comic edge, reinforces the standard hegemonic image of the Victorian family and the values that it stands for.

This can be seen in other essays as well. In ‘Titbull’s Alms-Houses’, the titular alms-houses, ‘parentheses in the close and blotted texts of the streets’, are contrasted with country establishments in which old men and women lived out their lives ‘behind a picturesque church and among rich old convent gardens, and ‘between the light of their fires and the light shining in at their latticed windows’ (‘Titbull’s Alms-Houses’, UCT, p. 317, 316). In ‘Arcadian London’, autumnal London is a place deserted except for servants and ‘the Klem species’. At this time of year, the Klem species ‘creep about with beds, and go to bed in

miles of deserted houses', only to disappear when 'London will come back to town' ('Arcadian London, UCT, p. 185, 189). Shadows of the people that live in these homes throughout the year, the Klems point to the domestic ideal in their differentiation from it. Simultaneously, however, the life they live during the autumn points to the deviations from the ideal in the lives of those whose homes they inhabit. As the Uncommercial states, 'a chaste simplicity obtains in the domestic habits of Arcadia', but when 'London will come back to town' then 'the iron age will return' ('Arcadian London, UCT, p. 189). Arcadia is characterized by the fact that 'there is nothing else to do but love' so that 'everybody loves, and openly and blamelessly loves' ('Arcadian London', UCT, p. 189). This is not the case in 'Iron London' ('Arcadian London', UCT, p. 188). In Arcadian London, 'It is the morning custom to glide from shop to shop, and exchange tender sentiments', in Iron London 'if I show my tongue then in Saville-row for half a minute, I shall be prescribed for' ('Arcadian London', UCT, p. 189). Iron London is occupied by the pursuit of commerce and pretends that the 'unprofessional innocence' of Arcadian London's domesticity never existed ('Arcadian London', UCT, p. 189).

But while the validity of Waters' argument can be seen, in relation to 'The Uncommercial Traveller' it might be a little too neat. Holly Furneaux argues that despite Dickens's reputation 'as an icon of Victorian respectability and of, in particular, so-called Victorian family values', by which she means 'a false logic that places marriage and/the biological family as central', the Dickensian domestic can be seen to accommodate 'other forms of intimacy, affinity, and family formation'. She writes, 'while domesticity is undoubtedly at the heart of Dickens's work, offering fantasized panacea to wider social suffering, it is a rigorously de-familiarized domestic that Dickens persistently recommends'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Furneaux, p. 3, 9-10, 23.

More than this, while essays such as 'Arcadian London' do work to reinforce the values embodied in the dominant domestic ideology of the era in the end, one must ask whether the fractures that they expose can so easily be contained once they have been revealed. The essay raises 'the question of whether true domesticity could be found in the modern era and especially in the modern city'. This is not a question that is easily answered and for all that he seems to hold firm to the idea that there is such a thing as 'true domesticity', capable of acting as 'a panacea to wider social suffering', it is not a question which Dickens attempts to answer in this essay.⁴⁸ There is an inherent ambiguity to the series' relationship to the domestic which is reflected in the Uncommercial's bachelor-like status, in his role as anonymous reporter and objective observer, and even his development of his Uncommercial voice and his utilization of those tropes of the personal (first-person narration, dream sequences, reminiscences), so key to Thackeray's Mr Roundabout.

The Personal in 'The Uncommercial Traveller'

'Allow me to introduce myself — first negatively' ('His General Line of Business', UCT, p. 28). Like Thackeray, Dickens utilizes the first-person singular in his journalistic series to establish a sense of intimacy, which he immediately subverts by phrasing his introduction in the form of a description of what he is not, followed by a description of what he does, and failing at any point to actually tell the reader who in fact he is. Playing upon the meanings entailed in the series' title, the narrator simultaneously draws parallels between himself and the typical commercial traveller and distances himself from that figure, saying nothing directly and hinting at a double meaning with every sentence. Such an opening, while humorous, does little to establish a sense of emotional connection between the reader and the Uncommercial.

⁴⁸ Katherine V. Snyder, *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 34.

Nonetheless, intimacy is established as after the brief ironic interlude that is 'His General Line of Business', Dickens quickly moves on to 'The Shipwreck', which opens with a scene of deep reflection.

Never had I seen a year going out, or going on, under quieter circumstances. Eighteen hundred and fifty-nine had but another day to live, and truly its end was Peace on that sea-shore that morning [...] and as I stood upon the beach, and observed it dimpling the light swell that was coming in, I cast a stone over it. So orderly, so quiet, so regular — the rising and falling of the Tug-steamer, the Light and the boat — the turning of the windlass — the coming in of the tide that I myself seemed, to my own thinking, anything but new to the spot ('The Shipwreck', UCT, p. 29).

The end of one year and the beginning of the next is traditionally a time for meditation and Dickens emphasizes this in the above passage as he lingers over the calmness of the ocean. He recreates this mood for the reader, sharing not just what he observes but also 'my own thinking'. He turns his gaze inwards and an analysis of self accompanies his description of the external scene, establishing an air of familiarity and casual intimacy, as though the narrator is speaking with someone with whom he is well-acquainted.

This movement between distance and intimacy becomes the pattern for the series. On the one hand, Dickens utilizes all the tools at his disposal to imbue the series with a sense of the personal, adopting a first-person singular voice, dwelling on childhood memories, invoking dream sequences and a meandering narrative style to emphasize the subjective nature of the essays. On the other hand, Dickens remains an elusive figure, one moment

peeping out from behind his Uncommercial mask, and then firmly distancing himself from his persona in the next. Though the series frequently invites autobiographical readings, on close examination these moments often reveal themselves to be, as Michael Slater and John Drew state, 'a sly half-truth' on Dickens's part.⁴⁹

One of the most quoted passages from the series combines childhood memories, a dream sequence and allusions to the autobiographical. Setting out on a journey to the Continent, the Uncommercial sees a small boy standing at the side of the road.

'Holloa!' said I, to the very queer small boy, 'where do you live?'

'At Chatham,' says he.

'What do you do there?' says I.

'I go to school,' says he.

I took him up in a moment, and we went on. Presently, the very queer small boy says, 'This is Gads-hill we are coming to, where Falstaff went out to rob those travellers, and ran away.'

'You know something about Falstaff, eh?' said I.

'All about him,' said the very queer small boy. 'I am old (I am nine), and I read all sorts of books. But *do* let us stop at the top of the hill, and look at the house there, if you please!'

'You admire that house?' said I.

'Bless you, sir,' said the very queer small boy, 'when I was not more than half as old as nine, it used to be a treat for me to be brought to look at it.

And now, I am nine, I come by myself to look at it. And ever since I can

⁴⁹ Michael Slater and John Drew, 'Introduction' in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism: The Uncommercial Traveller and Other Papers, 1859-70*, ed. by Michael Slater and John Drew (London: J.M. Dent, 2000), p. xvi.

recollect, my father, seeing me so fond of it, has often said to me, "If you were to be very persevering and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it." Though that's impossible!' said the very queer small boy, drawing a low breath, and now staring at the house out of window with all his might. I was rather amazed to be told this by the very queer small boy; for that house happens to be *my* house, and I have reason to believe that what he said was true ('Travelling Abroad', UCT, p. 86).

Through this queer small boy the Uncommercial allows the reader a glimpse into his past, albeit it in an unorthodox manner. This however does not negate the insight gained on the part of the reader, nor does the revelation at the end of the essay that the Uncommercial's entire journey was all part of a dream induced by the sight of a German travelling chariot for sale in the London Pantechnicon. This simply adds to the sense of being allowed a look at thoughts and memories normally kept out of the public light. The implication is that of an insight into the unconscious reaches of the mind, to areas buried or long forgotten, but clearly significant.

The recollection of childhood is an important tool in Dickens's construction of intimacy in the series, and 'Dullborough Town' is also notable, like 'Nurse's Stories' and 'Chatham Dockyard', for its emphasis on the narrator's childhood memories and their significance to him as an adult. As John Drew notes, although the Uncommercial's 'backward journeying [...] into a re-imagined "private" past [...] was as much generic pre-Victorian childhood idyll as genuine autobiography', it nonetheless gives the nostalgia that haunts this essay and many others in the series, 'a personal, romantic intensity'.⁵⁰ The narrator's

⁵⁰ John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist*, p. 153.

invocation of his childhood memories adds to the 'warmly intimate tone' of the series,⁵¹ in part because the presentation of these memories suggests the revelation of a private past, in part because as Peter Ackroyd writes these are the 'essays of a man who remembers an earlier time with infinite longing and infinite regret', and so they speak a deep well of emotion within the narrator and in part because the image of the child is at the centre of that of the family.⁵²

At the same time, the Uncommercial's return to childhood takes place 'within the nightmarish context of the suffering of children brought to light by and in the series'.⁵³ In 'A Small Star in the East' the Uncommercial visits a children's hospital in the East End. 'On an Amateur Beat', he picks up a little child from the street, a 'poor weeping wretch, and fifty like it but of both sexes were about me in a moment: begging, tumbling, fighting, clamouring, yelling, shivering in their nakedness and hunger'(UCT, p. 381). In 'Wapping Workhouse', the Uncommercial writes that 'I hardly knew whether the voices of infant children, penetrating into so hopeless a place, made a sound that was pleasant or painful to me' (UCT, p. 47). The plight of impoverished children is a recurring theme in the series. These texts make quite a contrast to essays such as 'Dullborough Town', 'Nurse's Stories', 'Chatham Dockyard' or 'Mr. Barlow', which focus on the narrator's memories of his own childhood, which may at times have an air of melancholy about them but are generally pleasant. The figure of the child is used to draw the reader into a warm circle of intimacy with the narrator on the one hand, but on the other, it pulls the reader out of this circle by reminding him or her of the harsh realities of the outside world.

⁵¹ Paul Schlicke, 'The Uncommercial Traveller', *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, ed. by Paul Schlicke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 578.

⁵² Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Minerva, 1991), p. 922.

⁵³ Smith, 'Childhood and Empire', p. 51.

Allusions to the autobiographical are also a significant element of Dickens's cultivation of a familiar discourse in these essays. In the passage quoted above from 'Travelling Abroad', one of the more attention-grabbing features is the autobiographical slant given to the text by its references to house and home. Here Dickens and the Uncommercial merge into one as Dickens's house becomes the Uncommercial's house. The queer small boy emerges as Dickens's younger self through reference to Chatham, Dickens's childhood home, and to Gad's Hill, his current home. But at other points in the series, Dickens evades such connections between himself and his Uncommercial persona, emphasizing the fictional aspects of the character. John states that 'the Charles Dickens projected to the public was both himself and not himself' — never was this more the case than in his Uncommercial papers.⁵⁴

We know from Dickens's letters that a number of the trips recorded in the series were based on real journeys, referred to variously in his correspondence as Dickens being 'Uncommercially absent',⁵⁵ on an 'Uncommercial journey',⁵⁶ or 'going to have a look [...] in the Uncommercial interest'.⁵⁷ More detailed letters exist relating to the visit that resulted in 'Wapping Workhouse' and his weekend visits to the Britannia theatre for the purpose of 'Two Views of a Cheap Theatre'.⁵⁸ A half-formed plan regarding the writing of a series entitled 'The Uncommercial Traveller Upside Down' based on a proposed trip to Australia confirms the view expressed by Philip Drew that despite the influence of such genres as the familiar essay on the series Dickens was committed to his mission as a reporter in the texts, insisting 'on seeing what is to be seen and describing it with scrupulous exactness'.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ John, p. 205.

⁵⁵ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 292.

⁵⁶ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 289.

⁵⁷ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, X, p. 147.

⁵⁸ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, pp. 201-202, 204.

⁵⁹ Philip Drew, 'Dickens and the Real World: A Reading of "The Uncommercial Traveller"', *Essays & Studies* (1985), p. 72.

While such knowledge was not available to Dickens's readership, enough details of his life were known to his audience for certain correspondences between the Uncommercial's life and Dickens's to be recognizable, at least to some. In fact, within the context of *All the Year Round*, with the name 'Charles Dickens' splashed across every page, Dickens would have to work hard to fully disassociate himself from the series in the minds of many readers. In 1862 Dickens commented in a letter on 'the mistaken idea — a very common one — that it is possible for me, or for any one individual, to transact the whole business of a great periodical'.⁶⁰ Then again, the use of a persona was not an unusual device in journalism in this period and harked back to a long tradition that can be traced back to publications such as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, still commonly read in the Victorian period. As has been seen with Thackeray's Mr Roundabout in the previous chapter, the game of guessing what was real and what was not was considered to be all part of the fun.

Certainly, whatever the series' actual correspondence to reality, Dickens leaves each reader to decide upon the degree of fidelity for him or herself. As with Thackeray's Roundabout articles, the more fanciful elements of the texts, such as the inclusion of dream sequences, the urban gothic of his descriptions of various parts of London, and their wandering structure all suggest that fiction plays a large part in the series. Then again it is these same elements that add to the psychological realism of the texts. Although this is not to say that the psychology of the narrator is truly Dickens's. Dickens never claims to be presenting a clear-cut autobiographical account or straightforward examples of investigative reporting. The 'fusion of the graces of the imagination with the

⁶⁰ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, X, p. 122.

realities of life' is his proclaimed aim.⁶¹ The real and the fictional are of equal importance in Dickens's work and he does not distinguish between the two in his journalism.

For Ella Kusnetz, in both the Uncommercial series and essays such as 'Gone Astray', 'the essay-writer himself is a character as rich and complex as any creation of fiction, a narrator whose interests, preoccupations, and anxieties present themselves repetitively and even obsessively in the work'. Kusnetz works with this idea of reading Dickens's journalistic essays in terms of the interiority that they project upon an apparently objective external world, focusing mainly on his work in *Household Words* but touching also on his Uncommercial essays.⁶² Dickens points to this in a number of the essays in the series, actively promoting psychological readings of the texts.

The article 'Nurse's Stories' recounts the places in the Uncommercial's imagination that he revisits both voluntarily and involuntarily, childhood fantasies constructed out of the stories he read as a child and the tales told to him by his nurse. In relating these stories the Uncommercial depicts himself as giving the reader an insight into his mental landscape, both its light airy spaces and its gloomy recesses. Of those places built out of stories such as *Robinson Crusoe* he writes 'my acquaintance with those spots is of such long standing, and has ripened into an intimacy of so affectionate a nature, that I take a particular interest in assuring myself that they are unchanged' ('Nurse's Stories', UCT, p. 171). Of the tales told to him by his nurse he writes, 'If we all knew our own minds (in a more enlarged sense than the popular acceptance of that phrase), I suspect we should find our nurses responsible for most of the dark corners we are forced to go back to, against our wills' ('Nurse's Stories', UCT, p. 173).

⁶¹ Dickens, 'All the Year Round', p. 601.

⁶² Ella Kusnetz, 'Gone Astray: Dickens as Journalist, Part One', *Dickens Quarterly*, 12:2 (1995), p. 109.

In 'Night Walks' he encourages a psychological reading of the text when he writes 'the wild moon and clouds were as restless as an evil conscience in a tumbled bed' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 151). 'Night Walks' follows the Uncommercial's travels by foot around London in the middle of the night. The preface for the essay and for these walks is the disturbed mental state of the narrator: 'Some years ago, a temporary inability to sleep, referable to a distressing impression, caused me to walk about the streets all night, for a series of several nights' ('Night Walks', UCT, pp. 149-150). The narrator's principle object in these walks as he admits was 'to get through the night' but 'the pursuit of it brought me into sympathetic relations with people who have no other object every night in the year' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 150). The public narrative regarding homelessness and poverty contained within the essay is depicted as arising from the private story of the narrator's own inner turmoil. This is significant as it signposts the two different levels of discourse that are interwoven in the article, the private/imaginative tale of the narrator's turmoil on these night walks and the public/objective reportage of the realities of homelessness. At times the public/objective story is at the forefront, at others it is the narrator's own mental state, as when his nocturnal wanderings take him by Bethlehem Hospital and he ponders the difference between himself and the inmates.

Are not the sane and the insane equal at night as the sane lie a dreaming?

Are not all of us outside this hospital, who dream, more or less in the condition of those inside it, every night of our lives? Are we not nightly persuaded, as they daily are, that we associate preposterously with kings and queens, emperors and empresses, and notabilities of all sorts? Do we not nightly jumble events and personages and times and places, as these do daily? [...] Said an afflicted man to me, when I was last in a hospital like

this, 'Sir, I can frequently fly.' I was half ashamed to reflect that so could I
— by night ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 153).

These questions have added significance for the Uncommercial as such flights of fancy are not in his case restricted to the night, but as with the inmates of the asylum preoccupy his days as well. Like Thackeray, he wonders if writers are all 'madmen' ('De Finibus', RP, p. 179).

What is more, with this passage Dickens emphasizes the centrality of his own subjectivity to the essay. 'Night Walks' is as a text particularly rich in scenes, encounters and striking metaphors that seem to beg for psychological interpretations. There is the Uncommercial's visit to an empty theatre in which the narrator feels like a 'a diver might, at the bottom of the sea' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 152) and views the orchestra pit as 'a great grave dug for the time of pestilence' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 151). There are his recurring comparisons of night-time London to a desert in which he finds himself a lonely wanderer. There is his encounter with a ragged young man of twenty who resembled a 'worried dog [...] as it whined and snapped' and views Dickens as a 'persecutor, devil, ghost' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 155). There is also his description of Dry Rot in men, when the 'likely man to look at, in the prime of life, well to do, as clever as he needed to be' begins 'to lurk and lounge; to be at street-corners without intelligible reason; to be going anywhere when met; to be about many places rather than at any; to do nothing tangible', then comes 'a certain slovenliness and deterioration [...] a smell as of strong waters [...] a looseness respecting money' and then eventually 'a trembling of the limbs, somnolency, misery, and crumbling to pieces' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 153).

In his description of Dry Rot in men, Dickens's allusions to himself are fairly obvious — both well-to-do and respectable, and yet with a tendency to lurk and idle, his occupation as an agent for the house of Human Interest Brothers is portrayed as in opposition to tangible duties and 'intelligible' reason, and results in him frequently 'going anywhere', and being 'about' places than 'at' them. Of his encounter with the youth that he sees alternatively as a 'worried dog' and an 'ugly object' ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 155), Gordon Spence writes that this moment is something akin to that of the storm on the heath in *King Lear*, in which comforting illusions are exposed and the king is revealed as a naked madman, as the youth's fear of the Uncommercial strips away his pretensions on a number of different levels, such as his belief in their unlikeness and his idea of himself as acting in the role of benefactor and friend to the less fortunate in his investigations as a journalist.⁶³

Other examples of Dickens pointing to a private narrative at work can be seen in his meeting 'the youngest son of his filthy old father, Thames' in 'Wapping Workhouse' (UCT, p. 44), an apparition who could have been the twin of the dog-like youth of 'Night Walks' and who vanishes into thin air in a supernatural fashion. It can also be remarked in his journey to his boyhood home in 'Dullborough Town', and his conclusion on leaving again:

Ah! who was I that I should quarrel with the town for being changed to me, when I myself had come back, so changed, to it! All my early readings and early imaginations dated from this place, and I took them away so full of innocent construction and guileless belief, and I brought them back so worn and torn, so much the wiser and so much the worse! ('Dullborough Town', UCT, p. 148).

⁶³ Gordon Spence, *Charles Dickens as a Familiar Essayist* (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1977), pp. 111-112.

He criticizes Dullborough's Mechanics' Institution and its library for feeling 'that it was necessary for the members to be knocked on the head with Gas, Air, Water, Food, the Solar System, the Geological periods, Criticism on Milton, the Steam-engine, John Bunyan, and Arrow-Headed Inscriptions, before they might be tickled' ('Dullborough Town', UCT, p. 144). He censures them for making 'bright examples' of those 'who had had down Euclid after the day's occupation and confinement' and treating as 'offenders' those who read 'mere Fiction descriptive of aspirations of the hearts and souls of mere human creatures like themselves' ('Dullborough Town', UCT, p. 145). But, in the light of his conclusion, these criticisms become a comment on himself as much as on the Utilitarian mindset of the town.

Another key method through which Dickens establishes a sense of the personal in the texts is the meandering route which the essays often take. This adds to their subjective feel, frequently giving the texts a dream-like quality, in which reality and fancy are hard to distinguish, and in which chronology and continuity often take a back seat. Prime examples of this are 'Travelling Abroad', 'Arcadian London' and 'Night Walks'. In other essays, the manner in which the narrative saunters and wanders along its course gives it a thoughtful and reflective air, like a more regulated stream of consciousness, in which one thought or memory evokes another by association. In many essays, the vagabond course of the narrative simply arises from the fact that it follows the Uncommercial's course as he winds his vagabond way through the streets of London. Nonetheless, this gives rise to a less obviously structured narrative, one which works for the most part by association and juxtaposition and other relatively loose forms of connection, rather than by argument, logic or plot.

Again, however, Dickens's means of establishing intimacy simultaneously works to keep the reader at a distance. While the Uncommercial's compulsive wandering in the series can be taken as a metaphor for self-discovery or exploration, as pointed out by Philip Drew,⁶⁴ by emphasizing the personal aspects of the various narratives at work in the series, the reflection of this wandering in the structure of the essays allows for an element of elusiveness to creep in. Although there is a starting point and a finishing point for most of the Uncommercial's journeys, at least geographically, there is not a beginning, a middle and an end to the narrative in traditional terms. In many of the more overtly personal papers, readers find themselves following a series of apparently unrelated encounters the meaning of which is never categorically established, rather the reader is left to ponder these events and their significance within the context of the essay and the series as a whole—plots do not develop, conflicts are not resolved, villains are not vanquished, arguments are not won or defeated.

Sometimes an investigation is instigated and results emerge as in 'The Great Tasmania's Cargo' or 'Bound for the Great Salt Lake', but notably it is not the Uncommercial's journey which is the focus of these essays, rather he reports on the voyages of others. The personal is most significant in these stories by its absence. In 'Bound for the Great Salt Lake', the Uncommercial interviews a Mormon agent regarding a group of 800 Mormon emigrants he has come to see. He writes 'I believe he was wholly ignorant of my Uncommercial individuality, and consequently of my immense Uncommercial importance' (UCT, p. 254). The article at this point takes on the format of a transcription of the Uncommercial's interview of the man, as if to emphasize the picking apart of the Uncommercial's individuality as his personal distinctiveness becomes subsumed in his role as a reporter. Despite the article's clear purpose then, 'I went on board their ship to bear

⁶⁴ Philip Drew, 'Dickens and the Real World', p. 67.

testimony against them if they deserved it' ('Bound for the Great Salt Lake', UCT, p. 259), apparently straightforward structure, and its focus on the objects of the Uncommercial's investigations rather than the Uncommercial himself, a certain elusive personal element can be observed in the text, throwing up a number of possible readings. The investigation is prefaced by a highly stylized passage regarding the nature of life in the East End, in which the phrase, 'Down by the Docks', is heavily repeated, and the significance of which to the rest of the narrative remains open to interpretation ('Bound for the Great Salt Lake', UCT, pp. 249-250). Furthermore, on a related but slightly divergent note, within the series Dickens links the propensity to wander to a sense of himself as a vagabond, and all that that entails. His tendency to digress and to elude proper definitions can thus be seen as potentially going outwith the respectable and therefore as a less than reputable activity.

In 'The Uncommercial Traveller' then Dickens uses many of the same techniques as Thackeray to establish a personal voice but also to question that voice. Despite Dickens's infamous intrusion of his personal affairs onto the public stage, and although Dickens's aspirations as a journalist and the editor of a magazine involved ideas regarding of the interpenetration of the public and private realms, like Thackeray, he had very particular beliefs about how far that interpenetration should go. For example, while he held that 'the editor of a public journal is a public man, and consequently becomes public property',⁶⁵ he also believed that there were limits to this, as evidenced by Dickens's response to William Holman Hunt's request for his recollections of Augustus Egg for the memoir that Hunt was writing of Egg's life. 'I should have immediately complied with your request but for the sufficient reason that I really have nothing to tell, which the public has any claim to know [...] I look back upon his ways and words, in that half-gipsy life of our

⁶⁵ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, X, p. 418.

Theatricals, as sanctified by his Death and as not belonging to the public at all'.⁶⁶ Or, by his explanation of his decision to make a bonfire in the garden at Gad's Hill and burn all of his past correspondence: 'The extraordinary abuse of confidence in the posting about of private letters which I have of late years constantly observed, has moved me to two courses; firstly, to destroy all the letters I receive from private friends, as soon as I have read them, and secondly to write as short letters as I possibly can'.⁶⁷ Dickens's contempt for the American newspaper press and its preoccupation with 'personality' exceeded that of Thackeray. He was very exacting as to the manner in which the personal should be exhibited in journalism in general but in *All the Year Round* in particular. While he advised potential contributors to 'only fancy throughout that you are doing your utmost to tell some man something in the pleasantest and most intelligent way that is natural to you',⁶⁸ he also warned them of having 'too much in it, *about* the subject and too little *of* the subject'.⁶⁹

Although he felt that he had a special relationship with the public, a peculiarly intimate one for a writer, as his 1859 eruption shows, it was important to him that he was in control of this relationship, that he decided where the line was to be drawn between public and private. This is evidenced by 'A Fly-Leaf in a Life', part of Dickens's third series as the *Uncommercial*, published as 'New Uncommercial Samples'. In 1869 Dickens was forced to break off his series of public readings on the advice of his doctor, and there were widespread rumours about his ill-health. 'A Fly-Leaf' documents the various letters he received on this occasion from members of the public giving him advice, asking for help and recommending themselves to his will in case of his demise. Once more Dickens found himself helpless to control the flow of information between the private and the public and

⁶⁶ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, X, p. 256.

⁶⁷ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, X, p. 363.

⁶⁸ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 395.

⁶⁹ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 370.

he responded with self-righteous indignation to the letters he received. He was particularly annoyed that

It was specially observable that every prescriber, whether in a moral physical direction, knew me thoroughly — knew me from head to heel, in and out, through and through, upside down. I was a glass piece of general property, and everybody was on the most surprisingly intimate terms with me' ('A Fly-Leaf' UCT, p. 390).

His disbelief is abundant, his sarcasm unmistakable. He objects vehemently to the assumption of intimacy by people he has never met. The idea that he could be known via his writings appears to be repugnant to him. 'He was in the secrets of my heart, and in the lowest soundings of my soul — he! — and could read the depths of my nature better than his A B C, and could turn me inside out, like his own clammy glove' (p. 389).

'A Fly-Leaf' presents an almost hysterical reaction at the idea of his private life being exposed to the public, as he compares himself to a transparent piece of glass, everything visible and open to public perusal with nothing hidden. Or his statement in a speech in 1858 that 'I have long held the opinion, and have long acted on the opinion, that in these times whatever brings a public man and his public face to face, on terms of mutual confidence and respect, is a good thing'.⁷⁰ Arthur Waugh writes of 'The Uncommercial Traveller' that it 'showed once more its author's insatiable passion for keeping up a close personal hold upon his public, chatting, as it were, with his readers over the fire, and

⁷⁰ Charles Dickens, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. by R. H. Shepherd (London: M. Joseph, Ltd., 1937), p. 264.

giving them, with every fresh conversation, more and more opportunities for intimate and confidential understanding of himself'.⁷¹

Part of this seems to be a question of control. As writer and editor of *All the Year Round*, Dickens could control how much he revealed and the manner in which he revealed it. He could not control the rumours regarding his marriage or his illness. But there is more to it than this. There is a contradictoriness to the tone of 'A Fly-Leaf' that cannot easily be explained away, an uneasiness regarding the use of the personal in journalism that was inextricably intertwined with his promotion of this mode of discourse. While 'The Uncommercial Traveller' does invoke the idea of intimate hearthside revelations, this sense of discomfort is very much a part of the texts as well.

'Being accustomed to observe myself as curiously as if I were another man' — as the Uncommercial writes in 'A Fly-Leaf', there are various points in the text when the focus is as much on the observer as it is on the observed ('A Fly-Leaf in Life', UCT, p. 388). The Uncommercial's own position in the scene is very much part of the narrative, particularly his standpoint as a witness and reporter, and his sense of the lines that this placement forces him to cross. As Michael Hollington writes, in 'The Uncommercial Traveller', 'neither the angle of vision nor the status of the observer is in any way privileged', instead we find the Uncommercial 'peeping in at the door from the muddy streets'.⁷² Often quite literally — 'Through a screen of wood and glass, I peep' ('City of London Churches', UCT, p.109). While in 'The Great Tasmania's Cargo' and other stories we see that there is a distinct purpose in the revelation of what would seem like private miseries, 'I had an instinctive feeling that it was not well to turn away, merely to spare myself' ('The Great

⁷¹ Arthur Waugh, *A Hundred Years of Publishing: Being the Story of Chapman and Hall Ltd* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930), p. 121.

⁷² Michael Hollington, *Dickens and the Grotesque* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 164.

Tasmania's Cargo, UCT, p 102), Dickens still exhibits a sense of anxiety about stripping back the curtain in this fashion. This anxiety is integral to the character of the Uncommercial, and the various journeys he makes in the series, both imaginary and actual. This we can see if we explore three of the main roles that he adopts in the series: the bachelor; the reporter; and cannibal/consumer. For, as we shall see, in all of these we can read that discomfort, which in essence is portrayed as a discomfort with the self, with who he is in the world when he adopts these roles.

The Uncommercial as a Bachelor

As both a narrator and a character, the Uncommercial's relationship to the domestic ideal is far from straightforward. The Uncommercial neither embodies the domestic ideal nor a 'grotesque failure' of that ideal. Though temporary abodes and a brief state of voluntary houselessness are described, his own home is never properly depicted, at least not from the interior. On the one hand, this could be seen as Dickens holding true to the boundaries he set alight in his 'Personal' statement on the break-up of his marriage. That statement sought to defend the 'sacredly private nature' of Dickens's family life by publicly discussing it.⁷³ It was a somewhat contradictory approach to say the least, notwithstanding the oblique manner in which his statement was written. In 'The Uncommercial Traveller', it could be argued that Dickens had learnt his lesson, and upheld the boundary in a respectable manner by keeping his family life in the shadows. On the other hand, in keeping with his own life, this absence of family constructs the Uncommercial in the figure of a bachelor.

The bachelor persona is a traditional one in periodical journalism of this kind. The bachelor motif was common among the eighteenth-century periodical essayists and their

⁷³ Charles Dickens, 'Personal', *Household Words*, 17:429 (June 12 1858), p. 601.

Romantic descendents. These bachelors were frequently idle figures, the most obvious example of which would be Samuel Johnson's *The Idler*. Loungers and dandies, they were disengaged from the business of normal society. They too adopted an ironic stance and 'roundabout' style, and Dickens's utilization of these features, in part in response to Thackeray's editorial stylings, is also a tribute to narrator-characters such as Charles Lamb's Elia, as in fact is Mr Roundabout. As Drew and Slater point out Dickens's location of the Uncommercial in Covent Garden related the character to aspects of his own public image as the offices of *All the Year Round* were located in Covent Garden while maintaining the conventional essayistic persona of the nomadic bachelor residing in the city.⁷⁴ But the essays of the eighteenth-century essayists were not written with a family-oriented market in mind, nor was an idealized idea of secluded private sphere so intrinsic to the identity of the publications in which their essays appeared.

However, as Katherine Snyder has shown, the bachelor was an important figure in Victorian domestic discourse in the mid to late nineteenth century, and it is this discourse as much as journalistic tradition against which we must view Dickens's Uncommercial series. At his core, Dickens's narrator is a lone figure, detached and isolated, outwith the bonds of family. Yet as Snyder demonstrates the bachelor is not necessarily an anti-domestic figure and cannot simply be seen as a 'grotesque failure' of the domestic, such as many of those that the Uncommercial encounters. (In fact, it is frequently the Uncommercial who appears as representative of the domestic ideal in such scenes by way of his social status, the values of his relatively leisured bachelor life being in closer accord to the Victorian domestic ideal than that of many of the impoverished workers whose homes he enters). For Snyder, the bachelor is 'a threshold figure, one who both demarcates and subtly alters the placement and permeability of the boundaries of

⁷⁴ John Drew and Michael Slater, p. xix.

domesticity and domestic selfhood'. She points out that throughout the nineteenth century bachelors were 'imagined as embracing but also rejecting, adapting to but also transforming conventional domestic ideologies and practices'. Like the periodical, they had a 'liminal relation to domestic life, and also to the public, marketplace world that is the private realm's supposed antithesis and complement', therefore their presence indicated 'the ambiguity that confounds the status of the private within bourgeois domestic ideology, especially for bourgeois men whose inner selves were contradictorily defined as both intrinsic and extraneous to this sphere'.⁷⁵

During this period Dickens maintained a family home at Gad's Hill and bachelor-style quarters attached to the *All the Year Round* offices in Covent Garden, both of which abodes are referenced in the series in such a way as to mark their significance to the Uncommercial's construction of self. As has been mentioned, the allusion to Covent Garden recalls the journalistic tradition in which the figure of the Uncommercial is moulded, while Gad's Hill is the subject of the Uncommercial's fantasy encounter with his younger self, when it is revealed that the Uncommercial has desired Gad's Hill since he was a young child. In this encounter, Gad's Hill is symbolic of the Uncommercial's position in life, how much he has achieved, and how far he has come since he was a small boy. It is also symbolic of his childhood and the idealized family life he dreamed of as a child. As Snyder states of the typical bachelor figure, in relation to the home and the typical Victorian ideal of domesticity, the Uncommercial as a narrator is 'looking in from the outside and also looking out from within'.⁷⁶ The Uncommercial is the small boy looking in from outside imagining the domestic idyll of living in such a house and the owner of the house dreaming of travels abroad, just as in 'Night Walks' he is the homeless man looking in windows 'for any sign of company, any lighted place, any movement, anything

⁷⁵ Snyder, p. 15, 35, 53.

⁷⁶ Snyder, p. 17.

suggestive of anyone being up', and the gentleman looking at the experience of houselessness from without ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 150).

Besides, given the number of thresholds that the Uncommercial crosses in the series, and his ambiguous relationship to the households he visits, Snyder's description seems apt. His presence in these scenes and perhaps more importantly his narration of them upsets the boundaries between public and private supposed by what Phegley calls the common critical binaries that proliferated in this period.⁷⁷ He brings the outside world into the private realm by his intrusion into it and through his narration brings the private realm into the public, exposing it to the sight of anyone who chose to read the magazine. The fact that the magazine is a family magazine only serves to muddy the waters to an even greater extent, further obscuring the line between the public and the domestic. That many of the thresholds he crosses are rather indistinct in the first place only emphasizes the interpenetration of the public and the private that he himself embodies, and although the mainstay of his literary philosophy is built upon similar intermingling, the Uncommercial's own musings on his threshold status show that like other Victorian writers who figured bachelors in their work, Dickens found this blurring of the boundaries between the public and private troubling, as well as liberating.

One particularly striking example of this is an article entitled 'The City of the Absent'. Here once again the Uncommercial is found 'peeping' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 262). On this occasion, his object of study is churchyards, but not just churchyards, rather various peculiarly private scenes played out within them, first between an older couple 'making hay' (The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 263) and then between two charity children 'making love' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 265). Of this latter couple he remarks, 'I

⁷⁷ Phegley, p. 28.

first saw them on a Saturday evening, and, perceiving from their occupation that Saturday evening was their trysting-time, I returned that evening se'nnight, and renewed the contemplation of them [...] I returned a second time, and a third' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 265). There is a disturbing quality to the Uncommercial's observation of these two couples that is not dispelled by the humour cast over the scene.

'The City of the Absent' is an interesting piece for a number of reasons, most significantly for the way in which it unites the Uncommercial's bachelor status with the series' other thematic concerns. It begins with the Uncommercial's comment that when he feels he deserves a treat, he walks to the City to 'roam about its deserted nooks and corners', particularly 'in summer-time, for then the retired spots that I love to haunt, are at their idlest and dullest' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 262). This strange and rather melancholy declaration is followed by a description of the churchyards that are his favourite amongst the nooks and corners of the City. 'Such strange churchyards hide in the City of London; churchyards sometimes so entirely detached from churches, always so pressed upon by houses; so small, so rank, so silent, so forgotten, except by the few people who ever look down into them from their smoky windows' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 262). His description of the loneliness and decay of these churchyards is magnificent in its gothic urbanity. It is striking that he compares this decay to a disease, 'contagion of slow ruin overhangs the place', and as Harry Stones points out, gives it cannibalistic overtones when he writes that 'there is a rusty pump somewhere near, and, as I look in at the rails and meditate, I hear it working under an unknown hand with a creaking protest: as though the departed in the churchyard urged, "Let us lie here in peace; don't suck us up and drink us!"' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 262).⁷⁸ This idea of the living consuming the dead, even without being aware of it, is a theme that recurs

⁷⁸ Stone, pp. 243-245.

throughout the series, but particularly in connection with the commercial hub of the City. It is also noteworthy that he describes his favourite churchyard as 'like a jail' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 263). 'There is attraction of repulsion' for the Uncommercial about this place, which he ponders. 'I once felt drawn towards it in a thunderstorm at midnight. 'Why not?' I said, in self-excuse. 'I have been to see the Colosseum by the light of the moon; is it worse to go to see Saint Ghastly Grim by the light of the lightning?' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 263). Yet the essay makes clear that there is a difference, one which is registered by the name that the Uncommercial gives the graveyard, 'Saint Ghastly Grim'.

It is in such graveyards that the Uncommercial spies upon the two couples named above, his fascination with which is in part related to the contrast between these couples and their activities and the decaying setting in which he encounters them. Of the older couple, he writes

Gravely among the graves, they made hay, all alone by themselves. They looked like Time and his wife. There was but the one rake between them, and they both had hold of it in a pastorally-loving manner, and there was hay on the old woman's black bonnet, as if the old man had recently been playful [...] On an old tombstone in the foreground between me and them, were two cherubim; but for those celestial embellishments being represented as having no possible use for knee-breeches, stockings, or mittens, I should have compared them with the hay-makers, and sought a likeness ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 264).

As in 'Arcadian London', the idea of the pastoral embodied in the activity of making hay, as well as the great age of the couple, calls forth an idealized image of the simple, agricultural existence of times past, which stands in direct contrast to the couple's urban surroundings in the rotting heart of commercial London. Inherent to this image is the idea of a different set of values, further emphasized by phrases such as 'pastorally-loving' and in the identification of the couple with the cherubim on the gravestone. Similarly, there is something very innocent and life-affirming in the image of the two charity children making love in the graveyard. Amidst the dust and decay, they 'gave and received a chaste salute', writes the Uncommercial, and 'it was so refreshing to find one of my faded churchyards blooming into flower' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 265). Life blooms within the decay, but the Uncommercial remains an outsider, shut out from it, spying stealthily on the couples through the railings. There is a suggestion that this life is nothing but a figment of his overworked imagination. 'Perhaps they were Spectres, and I wanted a Medium', he writes ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 265). Dream or not, 'any tokens of vitality, are rare indeed' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 265). There is 'no more sign of life than the graves below — not so much, for *they* tell of what once upon a time was life undoubtedly' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 263).

From his description of these churchyards, the Uncommercial widens his gaze to the neighbourhoods in which he finds them, their 'hushed resorts of business' closed and empty on the summer Sundays during which the Uncommercial wanders the City. He considers the Banks that he passes, the money that lies within them and the people that usually work there. He marvels at the emptiness of the district, so busy during the week: 'the wonder is, that every working-day pervader of these scenes goes clean away' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 268). The Uncommercial has the 'Sunday sensation in it of being the Last Man' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 269). In the City of London there is

no life except that of its week-day business. Commerce flourishes, and everything else is left to rot and decay. Knowing of Dickens's opposition to the hard forces of Utilitarianism, and given the sharp contrast between the golden light in which the two couples are portrayed and the barren landscape of the City in which they are featured, the underlying message of the essay is not difficult to decode.

But there is an added personal element to the narrative in the Uncommercial's strange attraction to this deserted region, his compulsion to visit and revisit these sites of death and loneliness as well as the visions of life and happiness and, significantly, romantic union that he witnesses there. If in the larger public narrative of the essay, these couples represent the retail values of a bygone age and of the familial feeling that Dickens sets so much store by, in the secondary more personal narrative they represent an unattainable dream from which the Uncommercial is shut out. Of course, for Dickens these narratives are not separate but as one. The melancholy of the Uncommercial's bachelor status is linked to the gloom of the City's commercialism. The Uncommercial is oddly at home amongst 'the quiet bricks and stones' ('The City of the Absent', UCT, p. 269). It is his favourite retreat. This speaks to the Uncommercial's ambiguity as a character and narrator as suggested by his name. He is supposed to be the antithesis of commercialism, and this fits with his love of the City on its day of rest when it is idle. But, though idle, it is still the City, and the effects of its commercialism are ever present in its seeping decay and its absence of life. There are many antonyms of 'commercial' from which Dickens could have chosen the name of his narrator, but by choosing 'Uncommercial' he made commercialism an inescapable part of his narrator's identity. His introduction to the character plays upon this, suggesting a possible irony within the title that follows the narrator throughout his travels. Apparently the embodiment of the personal, he is a strange figure that confounds the two realms in traditional bachelor fashion, making him

either a rather odd choice or the perfect choice for the editor's representative voice in a family-oriented magazine such as *All the Year Round*.

'The City of the Absent' also hints at other aspects of the Uncommercial's bachelor identity, which are equally vexed, particularly the image of the bachelor as an idler and a dreamer. Reverie plays an important part in 'The Uncommercial Traveller', linked as it is to Dickens's formulation of his own literary style. For Snyder, the liminal quality of reverie between sleeping and waking recalls the bachelor's threshold status but more importantly it brings up similar questions about male identity, questions that resonate with the ambiguities that surround the Uncommercial's character. For Snyder, the idleness of reverie, its lack of productivity, its wastage of the individual's mental energies on the self alone raised fundamental questions about changing concepts of masculinity at the time, which were increasingly coming to be defined in relation to labour and activity.⁷⁹

The very concept of the 'Uncommercial Traveller', opposed to and aligned with his commercial counterpart, speaks to the 'deeply contradictory associations' that Tosh argues that work held for men in this period. 'On the one hand, pride in climbing the ladder of success, providing for his family, acquiring the esteem of his peers; on the other, [...] the revulsion from the morals of the business world'.⁸⁰ It also suggests questions about the relationship of masculinity to the writer and specifically the journalist at this time, for as Fraser, Green and Johnston comment 'whereas journalism was gendered masculine by those who regarded it as having a lofty status in the modern profession of letters, it was just as insistently feminised by those who denigrated periodical writing'.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Snyder, p. 53.

⁸⁰ Tosh, p. 34.

⁸¹ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 6.

In 'The Uncommercial Traveller', idleness and the narrator's tendency towards dreaminess are taut issues. Idleness must always be justified in the Uncommercial series, as the narrator writes 'even my idlest walk must always have its appointed destination' ('On an Amateur Beat', UCT, p. 380). Reverie is a paradoxically active occupation for the Uncommercial. Describing one of his favourite spots for 'summer idling', he writes in detail of the river scene before him, but notes that

Watching these objects, I still am under no obligation to think about them, or even so much as to see them, unless it perfectly suits my humour. As little am I obliged to hear the splash and flop of the tide, the ripple at my feet, the clinking windlass afar off, or the humming steam-ship paddles further away yet ('Chatham Dockyard', UCT, p. 289).

Clearly, however, in the act of narration, he not only sees these objects but records them. 'Everything within the range of the senses will, by the aid of the running water, lend itself to everything beyond that range, and work into a drowsy whole, not unlike a kind of tune, but for which there is no exact definition', continues the Uncommercial, likening daydreaming to the creation of art ('Chatham Dockyard', UCT, p. 289). For the Uncommercial, reverie is therefore simultaneously idleness and occupation, business and what the Uncommercial refers to as 'no business' ('An Old Stage-Coaching House, UCT, p. 271).

Looking specifically at Donald Grant Mitchell's *Reveries of a Bachelor, or a Book of the Heart* (1850), Snyder argues that Mitchell re-imagines masculine identity through the figure of his bachelor, casting reverie and other typical bachelor activities not as selfish but as 'affording not only a virtuous communion with oneself, but a vitalizing community

of feeling with others'.⁸² In the same vein, by linking his summer idling to his imaginative labour as a writer, Dickens casts what initially might seem like a self-indulgent and unproductive activity into an act that serves to unite him with others, namely the periodical-reading public. He seeks to establish a friendly feeling amongst those readers, which as Snyder suggests 'while this community of feeling is non-domestic, it strikingly resembles the quasi-familial'.⁸³ In 'Aboard Ship', the Uncommercial's state of reverie allows him to lose himself, 'What did it signify to me if it were I?' ('Aboard Ship', UCT, p. 345), and forget the distinction between himself and others, so that all the passengers of the ship become part of one interchangeable 'we'. Imagination for Dickens has always been a way of bringing people together. This is clear from his various prefaces and prospectuses. 'To bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding' is the main purpose of Dickens's tendency to dwell 'upon the romantic side of familiar things'.⁸⁴ In 'The Uncommercial Traveller', the narrator's moments of reverie or tendency towards idling are related to the working of his imagination, and therefore to his role as narrator and a Human Interest Agent. Given the nature of the series and its exploration of various social ills, this assigns a social role to what would otherwise be simply the indulgence of a wealthy, single man. Here Dickens depicts the dreaminess of the bachelor as a positive, an alternative source of the personal feeling that is usually associated with the family.

At other points, the Uncommercial's tendency to live within his own mind is seen in a more negative light, as when he ponders the difference between the man who is insane and the man who is a dreamer in 'Night Walks'.

⁸² Snyder, p. 32, 58.

⁸³ Snyder, p. 61.

⁸⁴ Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', p. 2; Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 43.

Said an afflicted man to me, when I was last in a hospital like this, 'Sir, I can frequently fly.' I was half ashamed to reflect that so could I — by night. Said a woman to me on the same occasion, 'Queen Victoria frequently comes to dine with me [...] Could I refrain from reddening with consciousness when I remembered the amazing royal parties I myself had given (at night) [...] I wonder that the great master who knew everything, when he called Sleep the death of each day's life, did not call Dreams the insanity of each day's sanity ('Night Walks', UCT, pp. 153-154).

Reverie blurs the boundaries of masculine identity but also the line between sanity and insanity, healthy and unhealthy. Either way that one looks at it then, Dickens, in the person of the Uncommercial, provides a challenge to the domestic ideology that he is supposed to espouse. On the one hand, his imagination casts the Uncommercial in a positive light, as a source of communal feeling equal to that of the family despite his bachelor status. On the other, he undermines his own image as the ultimate celebrant of the hearth and his philosophy of the binding together of fact and fancy by playing upon the more dubious characteristics associated with the bachelor in Victorian culture.

Ambiguity, however, is the series' life blood, and as Snyder has shown the central characteristic of the bachelor in Victorian literature. For Snyder, the figure of the bachelor at once reveals the tensions within the Victorian construction of the domestic ideal and reinforces the normative nature of that ideology. Then again Snyder's discussion is focused primarily on the bachelor as a character utilized in novels of the period, most frequently in connection to a marriage plot. The Uncommercial does not participate in such a storyline, except in one instance. In 'Dullborough Town', the Uncommercial travels

back to the town he lived in as a child, only to be disappointed by how much it seems to have changed and the Utilitarian spirit that seems to have spread over the town. But his sense of disappointment and loss are relieved when he calls on his old friend Joe Specks and is invited to dinner with his family. Here the Uncommercial finds the warmth, love and value for something other than hard facts and money that he associates with his childhood remembrances of the town, and he finds it in the shape of the Specks family. This family 'illuminated Dullborough with the rays of interest that I wanted and should otherwise have missed in it, and linked its present to its past, with a highly agreeable chain' ('Dullborough Town', UCT, p. 147). Although both Specks and his wife are greatly changed from the children that the Uncommercial remembers, in their youngest child 'I saw again, in that little daughter, the little face of the hayfield, unchanged, and it quite touched my foolish heart' ('Dullborough Town', UCT, p. 147). Leaving Dullborough that evening, the Uncommercial is in a more 'charitable' mood with the town than previously, but his melancholy is not entirely vanished, for he realizes that if the town was changed, so too was he. The effect of which is to throw an even sharper light on the scene of domestic bliss which he has just left.

Dickens's bachelor, like the bachelors that Snyder discusses in her monograph, is a liminal figure. He is a traveller after all, and the journey motif is one that Dickens makes use of in the series and in relation to *All the Year Round* as a magazine as well. As a transitional figure, his own ambiguous status in relation to concepts of masculinity, of family and of community, reflects those self-same ambiguities within the private sphere with which he has such a conflicted relationship. Both part of it and not part of it, opposed and not opposed, he reflects its lack of a solid, fixed identity. Published as it is within the context of a family magazine, the fractures that the Uncommercial as a figure reflects on popular domestic ideology also act as a comment upon both *All the Year Round's* construction of

itself as a family-oriented publication and the propensity for idealized pictures of the domestic sphere in the magazine culture of the period in general. For example, just as the bachelor's predilection for reverie reveals the tension between leisure and labour in notions of male identity during this period, and the *Uncommercial's* need to justify his 'idleness' shows the relevance of this dichotomy for the male author, so also can this tension be related to the concept of family reading, which could be seen as constructing a picture of the male based solely within the bounds of the private sphere of leisure, an image which might be taken as 'feminized' by some. Dickens's justification thereby could be seen as related to the activity of reading such texts as much as it could be to creating them.

The bachelor also highlighted the issue of the place of the male, associated with the public, in the private realm, in terms of the masculinization of that sphere. As we have seen in relation to the *Cornhill*, and equally in the social concerns of the *All the Year Round*, the family magazines of the 1860s were keen to provide subject matter that they considered to be of interest to the males of the household as well as the female, and this meant touching on issues pertaining to the public realm, albeit in the guise of familial discourse. This was a fine balancing act to maintain, and in walking this line these magazines were frequently in danger of overstepping it. Thackeray found this out with his depiction of ballet dancers in *Lovel the Widower* in the *Cornhill*, the complaints about which form much of the subject of the Roundabout article 'Thorns in the Cushion'. Meanwhile, Dickens was criticized by the *Saturday Review* for not showing the 'vigorous mind' of 'man' in his discussion of public issues in the series, the implication being that he

should steer clear of such commentary and keep to the subjects which a mind 'concerned only with superficialities of things' is suited.⁸⁵

As the liminal figure of the bachelor then, Dickens inhabits a midway ground between the public and the private, registering both his discomfort with the journalist as an overly personal figure and his concern at existing at too far of a remove from such intimacy. In casting himself in the role of the bachelor, he broaches a variety of questions about the nature of the Victorian domestic ideal, its exclusivity as a model for personal happiness, and the manner in which it can be seen as potentially emasculating in relation to contemporary concepts of masculinity. While still clearly holding a high regard for the values he believed to be enshrined in the family and the personal mode, in a certain respect they are held at a remove in Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller', as Dickens explores the potential of a life led in their absence.

The Uncommercial as Observer

As has been hinted at earlier in this chapter, the personal aspect of this series, and the idea of the hearthside, frequently sits at odds with not just his bachelor guise but the other side of the Uncommercial's persona, that of the roving reporter. There is a definite purpose behind Dickens's journalistic essays, which is sometimes missing in Thackeray's, and which is usually grounded in the journal's social conscience. The Uncommercial is an inspector, such as in 'Wapping Workhouse' or 'A Small Star in the East'. Or a special constable in the police force such as in 'Poor Mercantile Jack' and 'On an Amateur Beat'. Or an 'honest witness', such as in 'Bound for the Great Salt Lake' in which he writes 'I, Uncommercial Traveller for the firm of Human Interest Brothers, had come aboard this Emigrant Ship to see what Eight hundred Latter-day Saints were like, and I found them (to

⁸⁵ Anonymous, 'The Uncommercial Traveller and The Pickwick Papers', *Saturday Review*, 11:278 (February 23 1861), p.195.

the rout and overthrow of all my expectations) like what I now describe with scrupulous exactness' ('Bound for the Great Salt Lake', UCT, p. 260, 254). The idea of standing witness is an important one for Dickens in this series and at the heart of the texts' social purpose. Recounting a visit to a children's hospital, the Uncommercial recalls that

I felt as though the child implored me to tell the story of the little hospital in which it was sheltered to any gentle heart I could address. Laying my world-worn hand upon the little unmarked clasped hand at the chin, I gave it a silent promise that I would do so ('A Small Star in the East', UCT, p. 361).

But in standing witness, Dickens must stand aside from the action. Earlier in this same essay, he notes that, 'Knowing that I could compensate myself thereafter for my self-denial, if I saw fit, I had resolved that I would give nothing in the course of these visits. I did this to try the people' ('A Small Star in the East', UCT, p. 356). As the Uncommercial, Dickens combines the role of the familiar essayist with that of the investigator, discovering truths and bringing them to light. This, however, requires a level of detachment.

The Uncommercial's function as an investigative reporter results in a natural degree of separation between him and those he meets, for he is not simply interacting with them but observing them and recording the details of his observation. 'As I stood opposite the woman boiling the children's clothes, — she had not even a piece of soap to wash them with — and apologising for her occupation, I could take in all these things without appearing to notice them, and could even correct my inventory' ('A Small Star in the East', p. 358). The use of the word 'inventory' is notable, with its business-like overtones, as is

Dickens's use of the phrase 'uncommercial transaction' to describe his investigation of the living conditions of the merchant seamen ('Poor Mercantile Jack, UCT, p. 65). In 'Wapping Workhouse', the narrator marks this detachment by referring to himself in the third person, using phrases such as 'The Uncommercial Traveller ventured to remark' or 'The Uncommercial took the liberty of hinting' ('Wapping Workhouse', UCT, p. 48).

In 'Some Recollection of Mortality', there are moments when this separation seems to be cast aside but at such moments the Uncommercial's physical proximity to those he is writing about is offset by his mental detachment. In this essay the Uncommercial finds himself as part of a crowd outside of the Paris morgue waiting to view a newly acquired corpse. He becomes one with the mob, both physically and imaginatively. But at the same time, Dickens underlines the character's segregation from the crowd, a detachment linked to his role as observer, which follows him throughout his travels. He does this through a series of synecdoches. First the Uncommercial is represented as his eyes, 'these uncommercial eyes' ('Some Recollection of Mortality', UCT, p. 221). He is then depicted through the act of observing: 'The uncommercial interest, sated at a glance, directed itself upon the striving crowd on either side or behind', or when he remarks that 'The uncommercial notice had established this as very remarkable' ('Some Recollection of Mortality', UCT p. 223). Rather than a fully fleshed out character he is reduced to his function as narrator and reporter. He becomes a thing rather than a person, as at the end of this passage when he refers to himself as 'the uncommercial unit' ('Some Recollection of Mortality', UCT, p. 223).

A number of the articles in the series are written with the specific purpose of bringing a certain ill to light or investigating the truth of a particular claim made about a public institution or situation. Beyond this, Dickens's overarching purpose is to bring people

together. He seeks to foster a sense of community in society as a whole. He makes this clear in the prospectuses to *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, and it is apparent at various points throughout the series. It is evident in his praise for 'Arcadian London' as an oasis of open and blameless love, and his censure of the coldness with which travellers are treated at inns and hotels in 'Refreshments for Travellers'. It is clear in his commendation of the Britannia theatre for bringing together 'mechanics, dock-labourers, costermongers, petty tradesmen, small clerks, milliners, stay-makers, shoe-binders, slop workers [...] to an enjoy an evening's entertainment in common' ('Two Views of a Cheap Theatre', UCT, p. 56), and his criticism of a minister speaking in the same venue for alienating a large part of the audience that had gather previously. It is made plain in his aim to stand as the public's witness. Travel allows him to encounter face-to-face those who he would otherwise only encounter second-hand via the newspaper. In the first essay he writes: 'It was the kind and wholesome face I have made mention of as being then beside me, that I had purposed to myself to see [...] I had said to myself, "In the Christmas season of the year, I should like to see that man!"' ('The Shipwreck', p. 31). In this statement, as in other comments he makes in the course of the series, Dickens seems to privilege one kind of discourse over another, namely that of the family magazine over that of the newspapers such as the *Times*. As commented upon in the introduction, Jean Ferguson Carr has postulated that in *Household Words*, Dickens privileged the intimate, private, and authoritative powers usually associated with women and the home over the social, public, and authoritative power usually associated with men.⁸⁶ Similarly, in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' he seems to suggest that the kind of personal discourse found in magazines such as *All the Year Round* provides a more immediate connection with the subject it treats of, as though with the Uncommercial as their witness the readers of *All the Year Round* might as well being seeing these things for themselves.

⁸⁶ Carr, p. 163.

Yet despite this, as often as not, the Uncommercial notes that he finds it difficult to recognize the people that he meets on a human level. Striving for the personal and the immediate, he is frequently troubled by the distance between himself and the world around him. When he sets out to gain an amateur experience of homelessness, he can only do so at the remove of a secondary persona, that of 'Houselessness', which he refers to in the third person. 'Houselessness even observed that intoxicated people appeared to be magnetically attracted towards each other', or 'Houselessness would walk and walk and walk, seeing nothing but the interminable tangle of streets' or 'Houselessness would become aware of a furtive head peering out of a doorway a few yards before him' ('Night Walks', UCT, pp. 150-151). Those persons that he meets on his travels frequently appear to him as things or creatures rather than people. Further, this dehumanization seems to be a reflection of his own sense of thingification. Dickens of course is well known for anthropomorphism, blurring the line between subject and object, thing and person. The Gothic twist that Dickens frequently adds to this in the series, serves to heighten this confusion while underlining the horror of this reduction of human to thing.

Two instances of this have been mentioned already in his encounters with the son of the Thames in 'Wapping Workhouse' and the youth that resembled a worried dog in 'Night Walks'. In each case the Uncommercial describes these impoverished young men as something other than human. In the 'Calais Nightmail', he refers to the other passengers as 'skating shadows' ('Calais Nightmail', UCT, p. 213). The people that inhabit Liverpool's underworld are witches, jokers, and Jacks. The child that he takes into his arms is likened to a 'Bottle' ('Poor Mercantile Jack', UCT, p. 71). In 'On an Amateur Beat' he compares the children he meets to wolves (UCT, p. 381). In 'The Great Tasmania's Cargo', the victims he encounters in their hospital beds are skeletons and spectres (UCT, p. 103). Such

descriptions are at times accompanied by a kind of black humour and a rather grim sense of irony, which like the fanciful nature of these characterizations adds to the romantic and the personal feel of the texts and thereby feeds into the persona of the fireside companion and the mode of familiar conversation in keeping with this style of journalism, and with Dickens's aims as an editor and as a writer. On another level, the Uncommercial's propensity to see people as things and the natural as supernatural, within the context of this first-person singular narrative with its emphasis on dreaming and reflection, adds to the sense of the Uncommercial as a psychologically-rounded character, seeming as it does to almost demand that the reader view this propensity as a manifestation of something at work within the character's subconscious. The reader gets the sense that through these descriptions Dickens is trying to convey a personal sense of struggle attached to the role of the journalist. The particular nature of this struggle, however, is one that questions the intimacy established by the sharing of these difficulties with the reader, centred as it is upon the narrator's trouble connecting to his subjects on a human level. It is a challenge that is echoed by the ever-present irony that Dickens couples with his melancholy and his horror at the distance, and ironically the similarity that he imagines between himself and those he meets and observes in his role as an uncommercial traveller.

It is here that the dualism between the commercial and uncommercial established at the beginning of the series is really brought out. This dualism is made evident in a myriad of different ways in the texts. It weaves its way through the discussion and depiction of both obviously connected subjects and seemingly unrelated topics. It seems to become part of the landscape, particularly of London—it is in connection to this troubled relation of the journalist to his subjects that the paradox at the heart of the character or the figure of the Uncommercial properly emerges. If as John Drew and Michael Slater posit, the

Uncommercial series can be seen as Dickens's attempt to imitate the familiar relationship that Thackeray established with *Cornhill* readers through the guise of Mr Roundabout, and if *All the Year Round* can be seen as a magazine to be equally intent on painting a picture of warm and intimate relations between writers and readers, producers and consumers, then this idea of the Uncommercial as detached observer seems to sit somewhat askew with Dickens's proclaimed aims as a writer and an editor, for it seems to suggest an alternative picture of 'media relations' that is less in keeping with the ideals of community and familial feeling that Dickens was so keen to promote. After all, while Dickens sought to establish his vision of a more personal ideal of journalistic relations in his magazines, he also led the field when it came to the commercialization of those relations.

In terms of format and market placement, Dickens was a pioneer. 'I have struck out a rather original and bold idea', writes Dickens in 1859, 'That is, at the end of each month to publish the monthly part in the green cover, with the two illustrations, at the old shilling. This will give *All the Year Round* always the interest and precedence of a fresh weekly portion during the month; and will give me my old standing with my old public'.⁸⁷ While the massive advertising campaign that was held on *All the Year Round's* launch (240 000 handbills distributed nationally by WH Smith, 6ft placards in all the major railway terminals and the London stations, smaller posters in railway carriages and omnibuses) was perhaps not any more extensive or eye-catching than that of the *Cornhill* or *Good Words*, the placement of adverts within the magazine was innovative, as noted previously.⁸⁸ Dickens not only participated in the consumer culture of the 1860s but propagated it. He provided advertising space within his journal and presented the literature contained therein in a highly commercial form. The most important feature of

⁸⁷ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 35.

⁸⁸ John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist*, p. 141.

both *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* was their fanciful treatment of serious subjects. Dickens held up this fanciful treatment as an opposing force to the Utilitarian creeds which he railed against. However, its humanistic treatment of dry subject matter also added to the journal's marketability in its emphasis on entertainment over didacticism.

This marriage of humanism and commercialism raised uneasy questions for Dickens. For example, at what point does fancy transform social problems into entertainment? At what point does the imagination make documentation into spectacle? There is an inherent ambivalence in the project of making money by putting human interest into circulation, one of which, as Audrey Jaffe suggests, the persona of the *Uncommercial registers*.⁸⁹ Through this persona, Dickens explored not just the alienating effects of commercialism and Utilitarianism, but his own complicity in those movements, as a businessman, an editor and as a writer. This becomes evident when we look not just at his propensity to view people as things and the cold representation of the journalistic gaze that this represents, but at the preoccupation of the texts with images of death, particularly with corpses, and the rather striking association of these images with those of consumption and cannibalism.

The Uncommercial as Cannibal

It is notable that in Dickens's first *Uncommercial* essay, 'The Shipwreck', his focus is split between 'the kind and wholesome face' of a Welsh clergyman and the corpses of the 'forty-four shipwrecked men and women' under that clergyman's charge ('The Shipwreck', UCT, p. 31, 32). It is also worthy of remark that the ship that was wrecked was an Australian ship carrying a cargo of three hundred and fifty thousand pounds' worth of

⁸⁹ Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991), p. 27.

gold, and that while five hundred lives were lost, almost all the gold was recovered. Most significant, however, is the depiction of the corpses, the clergyman's struggle to identify them, and the contrast between loved ones' descriptions of those that they lost, "My dearest brother had bright grey eyes and a pleasant smile", and the corpses that are left behind, identifiable only by differences in dress, and this in itself 'rendered extremely difficult, in consequence of a large proportion of them being dressed alike — in clothes of one kind, that is to say, supplied by slopsellers and outfitters, and not made by single garments but by hundreds' ('The Shipwreck', UCT, p. 33).

Such images haunt the Uncommercial. In 'A Small Star in the East', a skeleton dances before him as he makes his way through Ratcliffe and Stepney: 'The weird skeleton rattled along the streets before me, and struck fiercely' (UCT, p. 354). In 'Travelling Abroad', he visits the morgue and sees a corpse, the sight of which follows him wherever he goes. He goes bathing and sees a dead body floating towards him in the water. He goes to dinner and his food resembles pieces of the corpse. He goes to a boxing match and is overwhelmed by the resemblance between the corpse and one of the fighters. He goes to the theatre and sees a corpse. His vision is clouded by images of a thing that's defining characteristic appears to be that it is at once human and thing.

With 'eyes that could not see [...] and by lips that could not speak' ('The Shipwreck', UCT, p. 32), there can be few more powerful images of alienation than the corpse, which fixes the human irrevocably as object. As Michael Hollington has pointed out, this is the position of observer and observed taken to extremes, for to look at a corpse is '*looking at something that could not return a look*' ('Some Recollections of Mortality', UCT, p. 223).⁹⁰ Furthermore, in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' the corpse is not just object, but spectacle.

⁹⁰ Hollington, p. 165.

In 'Some Recollections of Morality' the corpses are not just looked upon but presented from behind a glass wall and stared at by a mass of eager people. Similarly, in 'Travelling Abroad' the Uncommercial sees the image of a corpse in a shop dummy (UCT, p. 91). Corpses are time and again linked to images of consumption, commercialism and even cannibalism.

In 'Travelling Abroad', the Uncommercial imagines himself eating a corpse, rolling together consumption and complicity into one luxuriantly cannibalistic moment. Similarly, in 'Night Walks', Dickens seems to link the two together through the figure of a man who eats his pudding with murderous intent, 'instead of cutting it, stabbed it, overhand, with the knife, like a mortal enemy; then took the knife out, wiped it on his sleeve, tore the pudding asunder with his fingers, and ate it all up' ('Night Walks', UCT, pp. 155-156), and who wears the face of his mother's corpse, "'My mother," said the spectre, 'was a red-faced woman that liked drink, and I looked at her hard when she laid in her coffin, and I took the complexion"'. 'Somehow, the pudding seemed an unwholesome pudding after that', writes the Uncommercial ('Night Walks', UCT, p. 156). In 'City of London Churches', churchgoers, the Uncommercial among them, are depicted as inhaling the dead as a type of snuff: 'I then find, to my astonishment, that I have been, and still am, taking a strong kind of invisible snuff [...] The snuff seems to be made of the decay of matting, wood, cloth, stone, iron, earth, and something else. Is the something else, the decay of dead citizens in the vaults below? As sure as Death it is!' ('City of London Churches', UCT, p. 110).

These are images of greed and hunger but also of responsibility, both acknowledged and involuntary. For Stone, who has explored the implications of these moments in detail, the man and his pudding in 'Night Walks' represents a nightly ritual of murder and

consumption, 'Travelling Abroad' reveals the Uncommercial's preoccupation by the idea of his participation in cannibalistic foraging, while 'City of London Churches' depicts cannibalism as 'an electable process [...] the shadowy background to daily living and breathing' in which everyone is locked together in 'universal complicity'.⁹¹ The image of the corpse works on two levels, it represents an extreme form of the confusion between human and thing that can be seen in his dehumanization of those he encounters on his travels, and represents the Uncommercial's fears regarding consumption and commercialism, and particularly his own participation in those forces. He is haunted by the image of unknowingly eating the human. In the country's commercial centre, this is unavoidable. But even abroad on an apparently leisurely trip for the firm of the Human Interest brothers, this fear stalks him.

There is an irony to this, because it is in relation to the subject of corpses that contemporary reviewers felt that Dickens did cross the line that these images highlight with such trepidation, that he had made what should have remained private public and commercial in what was condemned as extremely bad taste. A contributor for the *Saturday Review* describes the series as 'pleasant, witty, shrewd and unhackneyed'. 'It is also interesting as showing how Mr. Dickens has come to write the stories that have made him famous, and as illustrating the mode in which his observations are recorded and his style worked out'. The reviewer praises the fact that in his opinion, 'Many passages in this new volume appear to us in a better, or at least in a less imitable, style than anything Mr. Dickens ever wrote'. However, the reviewer notes, 'Every now and then we come upon a piece of questionable taste in the volume — as, for instance, where the virtues of a Welsh clergyman are placarded for helping the sufferers in the wreck of

⁹¹ Stone, p. 112, 100, 259, 261

the *Royal Charter*'.⁹² The use of 'placarded' here is significant, for it is a word used by numerous critics in the 1860s and 1870s regarding the new fetish for advertising and in particular the advertising of the names of contributors. It was a word used frequently by the critics of New Journalism. Ironies aside, the question of the balance between public and private, the commercial and the human, was one that concerned many cultural commentators in this period. Dickens's policy of combining observation and imagination, fact with fancy, the public with the private, was in an effort to humanize the cold, hard forces of Utilitarianism, to bring a discourse that privileged private realm and its values, familial feeling to the public realm. But he also believed that such a discourse would be more appealing to the general population and as such was in part a commercial manoeuvre. What if then rather than the personal element humanizing the public, the opposite happened? What if he was merely commercializing the private realm? In writing of the bodies of the victims of *Royal Charter* wreck was Dickens making them into a spectacle akin the dead babies laid out like 'pigs' feet as they are usually displayed at a neat tripe-shop' in 'Dullborough Town' (UCT, p. 142) or to the corpses in the morgue in 'Some Recollections of Mortality'? These are the questions that haunt the Uncommercial Traveller in this series.

It is, however, not just his own complicity with which he is concerned or his own role as producer but by the entire dynamic of periodical consumption. In 'Some Recollections of Mortality' Dickens questions his own philosophy and role in the growing consumerism of society and that of his audience. In this essay we find the Uncommercial caught up in a crowd waiting to see the latest corpse at the Paris morgue. For the Uncommercial, this hunger is satiated with one glance at the corpse. For the rest of the crowd, this glance seems only to whet their appetite. While a distinction is drawn between the

⁹² 'The Uncommercial Traveller and The Pickwick Papers', *Saturday Review*, pp. 195-196.

Uncommercial and the mob, he is not without their baser instincts. In Stone's words, he is simultaneously compelled and hungry and compelled and revolted.⁹³

Interestingly, Britta Marten has argued that the crowd here acts as a metaphor for the reading public.⁹⁴ Referencing Wilkie Collins's 'The Unknown Public' has become a critical commonplace when discussing the development of a mass reading public in the nineteenth century, but the relevance here is instantly recognizable. As Lorna Huett has persuasively demonstrated, Collins's article reveals a deep-seated anxiety regarding the proximity of *Household Words* to the format of cheaper journals, a proximity which if anything was increased in *All the Year Round* by its emphasis on serial fiction. In his letters and other personal writings, Dickens maintained his faith in the reading public, or at least the public that read his journals. To contributing author Charles Lever he wrote 'Do not be afraid to trust the audience with any thing that is good. Though a very large one, it is a fine one'.⁹⁵ To Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, he declared of *All the Year Round*, 'It has the largest Audience to be got that comprehends intelligence and cultivation'.⁹⁶ Yet as Britta Marten amply demonstrates Dickens's texts on the Paris morgue present a graphic picture of the sensationalism that also lies at the heart of middle-class culture.⁹⁷

As an author and an editor Dickens found himself at the centre of a new sensational culture, one to which, as Catherine Waters has shown, his journal contributed by offering up London itself as a Gothic feast ready for consumption.⁹⁸ The anxiety which Huett

⁹³ Stone, p. 95.

⁹⁴ Britta Marten, 'Death as Spectacle: The Paris Morgue in Dickens and Browning', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 39 (2008), p. 223.

⁹⁵ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 219.

⁹⁶ House, Storey and Tillotson, *Letters*, IX, p. 281.

⁹⁷ Marten, p. 224.

⁹⁸ Waters, p. 12.

detects in Collins regarding the proximity of middle-class culture to the sensationalism of the lower orders is thus equally apparent in 'The Uncommercial Traveller'.

Shut out in the muddy street, we now became quite ravenous to know all about it. Was it river, pistol, knife, love, gambling, robbery, hatred, how many stabs, how many bullets, fresh or decomposed, suicide or murder? All wedged together, and all staring at one another with our heads thrust forward, we propounded these inquiries and a hundred more such ('Some Recollections of Mortality', UCT, p. 221).

As John Drew suggests the crowd awaits the corpse with 'a curiosity more akin to that of the typical Victorian reader of sensation novels who waits impatiently outside the bookseller's for the latest number to be issued'.⁹⁹ It is not just the crowd that is curious, however, but the Uncommercial as well, as is shown by the use of 'we' and 'our'. At the same time, the Uncommercial clearly marks his distance from this crowd, which as he observes either stares at the corpse with 'a wolfish stare' or with a 'general, purposeless, vacant staring' ('Some Recollections of Mortality', UCT, p. 223), both of which seem equally appalling to the Uncommercial's more refined sensibilities, which are signified by his contrastingly brief 'glance'. If like Marten we take the crowd as representative of the reading public then the image of the reader Dickens presents us with is far from the idealized figure imagined in his prospectuses. Indeed, the crowd acts as a nightmarish mirror image of the family audience pictured by magazines of the period, as Dickens describes 'a pretty young mother, pretending to bite the forefinger of her baby-boy, kept it between her rosy lips that it might be handy for guiding to point at the show', and 'two

⁹⁹ John Drew, 'Voyages Extraordinaires: Dickens's "Travelling Essays" and *The Uncommercial Traveller*, Part Two', *Dickens Quarterly* 13:3 (September 1996), p. 129.

little girls (one showing them to a doll)' gazing hungrily at a trio of corpses ('Some Recollections of Mortality', UCT, p. 221, 222).

Then again, by describing these corpses in the series, Dickens is participating in their transformation from human to thing to spectacle. The text can perhaps be taken as a warning about how not to read it and similar texts, but it can also be seen as feeding the appetite that it castigates. Ultimately, Dickens's criticism of the reading public only leads him back to his doubts about himself, for as Wynne has pointed out, 'The *Uncommercial Traveller* essays often encroached into sensationalism'.¹⁰⁰

In the recurring images of consumption and death in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' then, the impersonality of modern commercialism is writ large. Appetite and alienation are linked. As in the 'Roundabout Papers' though, it is not simply the impersonal nature of society or journalism that is implicated in Dickens's critique, but also that which was once considered personal. Nowhere is thus better represented than in the figure of the corpse, once human, now thing, and in image after image in this series of this once-human thing not just being consumed but devoured by ghoulish inhabitants of late-night London, the lifeless Sunday dwellers of the City of London, the dehumanized masses or by the Agent of the firm of the Human Interest Brothers.

Conclusion

In conclusion then, while when we read statements about 'better acquaintance', 'kinder understanding', the vitality of the 'community' and 'airy delights' enjoyed at the hearth in the prospectuses for magazines such as *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, the

¹⁰⁰ Wynne, p. 27.

reality is much more complex. 'The Uncommercial Traveller' might have been designed to establish a more personal relationship between the editor and his readers, and Dickens may have genuinely believed that a peculiar connection existed between himself and his audience, but as can be witnessed from its introduction, in the actual writing of the series Dickens painted a much more ambiguous and multifaceted picture of his own 'Uncommercial' discourse, which asks questions about both his own journalistic practices and the rhetoric of family pervasive among magazines of this kind in this period. The following chapter on Trollope's series of short stories in *St Paul's Magazine* will show a similar concern with the nature of its own discourse and that of the magazine in which the series was published, as well as what Polhemus describes as 'the subtlety in him, not to be missed, and the contradictory nature of life, so much a part of his vision'.¹⁰¹ For Trollope, although he too saw the value of the personal in journalism, there was something insincere and low in the manner in which magazines in the period pandered to what he saw as a false ideal of the family predicated on an equally fictitious notion of the separation of the spheres.

¹⁰¹ Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex', p. 26.

CHAPTER 3: TROLLOPE'S 'AN EDITOR'S TALES' AND SAINT PAULS MAGAZINE

In Trollope's fictions of journalism, we are less likely to see the writer of press discourse at all, and much more likely to see careful tracings of just the kind of generic interplay modern book historians are increasingly interested in reconstructing: how journalistic discourses interact and ramify within society as they are read and shared, begetting still other discourse and changing the lives of people they touch.¹

Saint Pauls makes for rather a different case than the *Cornhill* or *All the Year Round*, both of which set out to establish themselves as family literature. With *Saint Pauls*, Trollope set out to do something different. He was not exactly successful. Attempting what one might call a more 'masculine' approach to the mix of entertainment and edification that the 1860s family magazine sought to provide, what Trollope in fact produced was an unsatisfactory mish-mash with low circulation figures. Soon, in an effort to win an audience that might sustain the magazine, *Saint Pauls* was forced to conform, like so many others, to the blueprint set out by the *Cornhill*. With their warm, intimate tone and domestic feel, Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' can be seen as part of this effort. In a familiar style Trollope humorously recounts stories about the life of an editor of a popular magazine as if he were telling the story to a confidential friend. The reader is his fellow and the editorial office in which they meet is cosy and comfortable, with an armchair by the fire, and a distinctly private air. However, although more rounded and self-contained than Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' or Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller', this series is written very much in the same vein, questioning and qualifying the assumptions inherent in the rhetoric of intimacy and domesticity that it seeks to adopt. Given

¹ Dallas Liddle, *The Dynamics of Genre: Journalism and the Practice of Literature in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 10.

Trollope's views on the topic and the context in which the series was produced, this is unsurprising.

Trollope did not believe in the notion that family literature must exclude certain topics, and while he respected the need for delicacy, he believed that in the current literary climate, this had been taken too far. In 'An Editor's Tales', he adopted the personalized approach of this literature, one that he was at home with from his novel-writing, and focused on such everyday details and domestic affairs as were considered to be suitable within the pages of the family magazine, but he also made reference to male nudity, prostitution, and sexual fantasies, alcoholism, and the poverty and degradation that go with it, mental illness, the penny-dreadful press, and various other unseemly and possibly sensational topics. The images of family life that he presents are unconventional, as are his individual delineations of men and women. Powerful individuals for the most part, and writers themselves, these are not women that need shielded from the world in the manner that the family literature of the day sometimes suggested. In 'An Editor's Tales', the image of the woman as child is a male fantasy, as is the idea of male dominance over the female. As Turner has shown, Trollope's works are 'complex and nuanced texts in which the role of women can never be taken for granted'.² And, nor, strikingly, can the role of men.

Adopting a confidential manner, he complicates matters by presenting a picture of language and communication as intrinsically untrustworthy, depicting deceit as a pervasive part of human intercourse. He picks apart his own narrative voice, positing an element of fictionality as inherent to all communication, and pointing particularly to instances of this within journalistic discourse. In relation to others, he shows time and

² Mark W. Turner, 'Trollope Studies: 1987-2004', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 37 (2006), p. 226.

again the distinction between the author as a person and the author as created by the words that they use and as represented in the texts that they have written, placing weight on the distance between language and reality.

Semi-autobiographical then, familiar, humorous, and with an air of domesticity, 'An Editor's Tales' nonetheless presents something of a challenge to the family-oriented literature it is ostensibly imitating. At the same time, as we have seen with Dickens and Thackeray, this subtle sensationalism and ironic take on one's own mode of discourse was very much a part of the family discourse of the period. This chapter then will look at the manner in which this series unpicks the conventional discourse of the family magazine in this period, questioning the sanctified ideal of family life and the private sphere that this discourse propagates, and the dichotomies it is based on, e.g., public/private, male/female, respectable/unrespectable. It will also look at how this questioning functions itself as family discourse, succeeding where *Saint Pauls* failed, allowing for the intimacy and respectability of the family mode while still including a more adult subtext. In order to fully appreciate these negotiations within the texts, however, we will need to examine in greater detail the nature and form of these texts as well as Trollope's views regarding contemporary magazine culture and how he sought to place *Saint Pauls* within that culture.

***Saints Pauls Magazine* in the Family Market in the 1860s**

Throughout the 1860s Trollope's literary production revolved around the monthly magazines. *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson*, *The Small House at Allington*, *The Claverings*, *Nina Balatka* and *Linda Tressel* were all published in the pages of monthly magazines. A series of short stories later collected as *Tales of All Countries: Second Series*

were published in various periodicals throughout 1861. On more than one occasion, Trollope considered bringing out a magazine of his own. In 1863 Trollope and the publisher Frederic Chapman drew up plans for establishing a new weekly magazine, although their plans came to nothing.³ In 1865 the *Fortnightly Review* was set up with Trollope as the chairman of the board of proprietors and G. H. Lewes as editor. Trollope had experience enough in the magazine world and if his experience had taught him anything, it was the realities of the magazine market.

Trollope's introduction to *Saint Pauls* is mired in a sober appreciation of these realities, uncharacteristic of the prospectuses and introductions circulated by periodicals in this period. Trollope gives a brief history of the changes that have occurred in periodical literature since the days of Steele and Addison, stating that 'it is all but fruitless now to inquire whether such literary food as is conveyed to the world in these publications is as strengthening, as serviceable, and as wholesome as would be a diet of stronger kind'.⁴ Ostensibly he is arguing in favour of the periodical literature of the day, but it is a rather 'back-handed' argument. Take the following passage:

But this at any rate is certain, — that whether the reading of magazines and reviews be or be not as salutary as would be a closer attention to literature of a graver kind, the public will have what it demands, and it is the duty of those who provide for that demand to see that the article produced is as good of its kind as it can be made.⁵

³ Hall, *Trollope*, p. 269.

⁴ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁵ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 2.

Trollope's argument is not based upon the intrinsic merits of the literature but rather on the necessity of accepting what one cannot change. It seems to amount to little more than making the best of a bad situation. The following statement is more positive:

None but they who have observed very clearly what has been going on can be aware how many subjects in art, in social life, in politics, in public conduct, in criticism, in law, in morals, in religion, and in science, have been discussed, ventilated, and turned into public property in the pages of magazines, — which never would have been so discussed, which could not possibly have reached so wide a public, had they who wrote upon them been too proud to descend into the arena of a monthly periodical.⁶

But this grand proclamation of the magazine's democratic and educative potential is followed by the observation that very few readers will in fact read all this varied matter: 'A novel will be padding with one reader, dissertations on Geist to a second, and inquiries into the utility and justice of a trades' unions to a third'.⁷ Trollope's argument is not based upon the intrinsic merit of the literature but rather the value in the discussion of such a wide range of topics and the dissemination of that discussion. Magazine literature is to be favoured because of its ability to reach and instruct a wide audience.

Two threads thus run through Trollope's introduction. On the one hand, there is a definite statement of agenda, a desire to be different from other magazines, to aim for loftier goals, and by bringing the 'masculine' into the magazine elevate periodical literature to be worthy of the position it occupies in the literature of the day, so that it can truly live up to the magazine's motto, 'He has gained every point who has mixed the useful and the

⁶ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 3.

⁷ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 3.

agreeable'. On the other hand, there is a disavowal of any agenda at all. The second sentence of the introduction runs:

He begs to assure such of the public as will kindly interest themselves in the matter, that the SAINT PAULS MAGAZINE is not established, on and from this present 1st of October, 1867, on any rooted and matured conviction that such a periodical is the great and pressing want of the age'.

The public demands, and the public is catered to: 'The SAINT PAULS MAGAZINE is not started because another special publication is needed to satisfy the requirements of the reading world, but because the requirements of the reading world demand that there shall be many such publications to satisfy its needs'.⁸ In these two contrasting threads, we can see Trollope's cynicism regarding the public and the way that the demands of the public, the commercial nature of literature, shaped what was being written. The shift between the idea of *Saint Pauls* occupying a specific space in the magazine market and simply being one of many, not to be differentiated, can be seen to be fundamentally a concern with his sense of individuality as an author and as an editor, as the 'responsible name' attached to the project. He presents individuality as a goal but assures the reader that he knows the realities of the situation and would not presume to think that such a goal is achievable.

This apparent modesty contrasts quite sharply with the advertising campaign that publisher James Virtue waged in order to promote the magazine. The name 'Anthony Trollope' appeared three times in one advertisement in large letters.⁹ Though Trollope had no desire to be simply a symbolic sham editor, one of the reasons for his turning down the editorship of *Temple Bar*, he nonetheless acted as the symbolic celebrity editor

⁸ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 1.

⁹ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 233.

for the magazine in much the same way as Thackeray and Dickens did in relation to the *Cornhill*, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. This was Virtue's plan from the beginning, suggesting originally that the journal be called 'Trollope's Monthly'.¹⁰ Trollope objected to this plan on the grounds that if he stepped down as editor the title would become meaningless. It seems likely however that Trollope objected to this in part because he viewed it as a symptom of the self-conscious egotism that he complained about in Thackeray and Dickens. Certainly Trollope's presence as editor is far less notable in the pages of *Saint Pauls* in comparison to his fellow 'star' editors. Despite his article 'On Anonymous Literature' in the *Fortnightly*, which critiqued the continuation of this long-standing journalistic tradition, *Saint Pauls* maintained an almost universal policy of anonymity, at least within its own pages. Trollope contributed a large number of articles but these were rarely indicated. Critics have excused this as due to the exception Trollope makes in relation to politics in 'On Anonymous Literature', but this exception was made specifically in relation to newspapers, and does not fully explain Trollope's policy of anonymity here. Neither can we say that his experience on the board of the *Fortnightly* changed his mind, for in his autobiography he maintains that 'I am not a recreant from the doctrine I then preached'.¹¹

Within the magazine Trollope showed a reticence to put himself forward as editor. He established his public persona as follows: 'It may perhaps be allowed to the Editor of a new magazine to address himself personally to his wished-for readers from the rostrum of his first page, and to say a few words on his own behalf and on that of his fellow-labourers, in justification of the enterprise which he and they are commencing'.¹² These are Trollope's very first words as editor and they consist of an apology, half-joking or not,

¹⁰ Hall and Burgis, *Letters*, I, p. 361.

¹¹ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 192.

¹² Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 1.

for foisting himself upon his readers. His policy of anonymity seems to fit with this, if not with his previously stated beliefs. It is notable as well that 'An Editor's Tales' only appears towards the end of Trollope's editorship, when it was clear that the magazine was not a success and Trollope was facing increasing pressure to mould the magazine into a more conventional 'family' style. From January 1870 in fact Trollope was aware that after July he would no longer be editing the magazine, and the majority of the series was published, if not written, with this knowledge in mind. The series was published under the realization that it was the public with its demands that had won out, and that Trollope's attempt to raise magazine literature to the 'first and finest' of studies had failed.

Trollope's claim that he saw the magazine as simply one of many also contrasts strikingly with his statement that 'We will be political if we are anything', suggesting that Anthony Trollope was aiming for a very specific audience with *Saint Pauls Magazine*.¹³ What the magazine's publisher, James Virtue, thought of this, has been the subject of speculation.¹⁴ Virtue wanted to emulate the *Cornhill*, and most particularly, its famed circulation. Trollope had other ideas. Unlike Thackeray, Trollope clearly did not 'suppose the ladies and children always present'.¹⁵ As Mark Turner has shown, *Saint Pauls* was a predominantly 'masculine' affair.¹⁶ More particularly, it was aimed at gentlemen. It was a political magazine primarily, and its secondary interests were similarly geared towards the manly and the gentlemanly. As John Sutherland has commented, the magazine had 'a strong aroma of the club smoking room about it'.¹⁷ It lacked the *Cornhill's* lightness of tone, that element of fancy which Thackeray and Dickens prized so highly, and while it did

¹³ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 4.

¹⁴ See Patricia Thomas Srebrnik, 'Trollope, James Virtue and *Saint Pauls Magazine*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37 :3 (December 1982), pp. 443-463; John Sutherland, 'Trollope and *St. Paul's* 1866-70' in *Anthony Trollope*, ed. by Tony Bareham (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1980), pp. 116-137; Michael Sadlier, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London: Constable & Co, Ltd., 1927), pp. 268-273.

¹⁵ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

¹⁶ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 238.

¹⁷ Sutherland, p. 119.

carry both fiction and poetry, these offerings almost seemed in disjunction with the rest of the magazine. Trollope's own novels for the magazine, *Phineas Finn* and *Ralph the Heir*, were both concerned with the social world of the political classes. This is not to class *Saint Pauls* with weightier offerings, such as the quarterlies or the reviews, but to note its distinction from magazines such as the *Cornhill* or *All the Year Round*, which it was apparently aping.¹⁸

The audience that Trollope was aiming at with *Saint Pauls* both overlapped with and was distinct from the family market that other shilling monthlies of the period targeted. Trollope had always been uncomfortable with pandering to Mrs Grundy, as can be seen in his response to Thackeray's rejection of his story 'Mrs. General Talboys' for the *Cornhill*. To Thackeray, he acknowledged, 'An impartial editor must do his duty. Pure morals must be supplied', but asked, 'Are you not magnanimous enough to feel that you write urbi et orbi [From the Pope's blessing]; — for the best and the wisest of English readers; and not mainly for the weakest?' He added, 'I of course look forward to bringing out my own story in a magazine of my own. It will be called "The Marble Arch", and I trust to confound you by the popularity of Mrs. Talboys'.¹⁹ In a similar incident, Trollope supplied *Good Words*, an evangelical magazine, although admittedly a moderate one, with a novel in which as its editor Norman Macleod notes, 'The shadow over the Church is broad and deep, and over every other spot sunshine reigns'.²⁰ The novel, *Rachel Ray*, was rejected reluctantly by Macleod, and Trollope, still gaining £500 from the transaction, accepted this amicably

¹⁸ The idea of *Saint Pauls* aping the *Cornhill* in particular is a common one, see Sutherland, p. 118; Srebrnik, p. 454; Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: A Bibliography. An Analysis of the History and Structure of the Works of Anthony Trollope, and A General Survey of the Effect of Original Publishing Conditions on a Book's Subsequent Rarity* (Folkestone: W.M. Dawson & Sons, Ltd., 1928), p. 235; N. John Hall, *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 306.

¹⁹ Ray, *Letters*, IV, pp. 206-207.

²⁰ Donald Macleod, *Memoir of Norman Macleod, D.D.*, 2 vols (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1876), II, p. 151.

enough. However, years later in his autobiography, his opinion as to this rejection was made clear:

It has not only come to pass that a special provision of them [books] has to be made for the godly, but that the provision so made must now include books which a few years since the godly would have thought to be profane. It was this necessity, which, a few years since, induced the editor of Good Words to apply to me for a novel, — which, indeed, when supplied was rejected, but which now, probably, owing to further change in the same direction, would have been accepted.²¹

As Trollope makes clear here and in his letter to Thackeray, he does not believe in catering to false standards of purity. He did not subscribe to the idea of the family as propagated by magazines such as the *Cornhill*. He sought to get round this in *Saint Pauls* by catering to a different audience, shifting his focus from the family to paterfamilias, and to more masculine subjects such as politics, the military and sports.

Tosh argues that Victorian domestic ideology held that ‘only at home could a man be truly and authentically himself. While the workplace and the city crippled his moral sense and distorted his human relationships, home gave play to feelings of nurture, love and companionship, as well as “natural” forms of authority and deference; it nourished the whole man’.²² For Trollope, this could only be the case if the home was not imagined as an exclusionary realm. Trollope wished to create a magazine in which, as Sutherland

²¹ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, pp. 219-220.

²² Tosh, p. 33.

writes, powerful men of the Liberal persuasion might express their view incognito.²³ He wished to fight against

an idea that as politics are by consent banished from certain meetings — committee-rooms, dinner-parties, and other gatherings of men which are assembled for purposes especially non-political, — therefore should the subject also be banished from the pages of all periodical literature which is not produced with the express and primary object of disseminating political feelings.²⁴

It is significant that Trollope here is discussing ‘gatherings of men’. But more to the point, he is clear in his belief that periodical literature, and magazines specifically, should be open to adult and serious discussion. In a way we can see *Saint Pauls* as Trollope’s attempt to breach the gap between the ‘worthy’ literature of the reviews and quarterlies and the ‘light’ literature of the magazines. Certainly his attempt to cast his inclusion of novels in the magazine in a more serious light would suggest this: ‘The preaching of the day is done by the novelist, and the lessons which he teaches are those to which men and women will listen’.²⁵

Then again, if we are to use Trollope’s introduction to the magazine as a guide, we cannot allow for any idea so harmonious regarding the chosen path of the magazine. Trollope’s introduction is singularly ambivalent. Alongside Trollope’s claim to the noble intention of preaching to the masses through the mode of fiction, is the practical and somewhat cynical acknowledgement ‘that no magazine could live at present that refused to regale

²³ Sutherland, p. 118.

²⁴ Trollope, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

²⁵ Trollope, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

its friends from month to month with at least one serial tale'.²⁶ Passages resounding with Trollope's conviction that serious subjects should not be shied away from are contrasted with statements such as: 'The Editor, however, who would enter successfully for the public, whatever may be his own taste and judgement in such matters, must provide that for his readers which his readers demand and will certainly obtain, whether he provides it, or whether others do so'.²⁷

Contradictions can also be seen, as Mark Turner has noted, in the discrepancy between Trollope's mild and understated introduction and the massive scale of the advertising campaign that heralded the *Saint Pauls* entrance into the literary marketplace.²⁸ They can be seen in the constitution of the magazine itself, in which Madame Blaze de Bury's serialized novel *All for Greed* sits rather oddly beside anonymous articles on 'The Ethics of Trades' Unions' or 'The Present Condition and Prospects of the Turf', rather dry material by anyone's standards. While *Saint Pauls* did include articles on science, the arts, history, biography and travel, most of its articles fell into one of three categories: political articles, military articles and sporting articles.²⁹ These, alongside two serialized novels and the poetry of Austin Dobson, were its regular features. The reader of *Saint Pauls* was not so much presented with a well-rounded meal as a particularly sharp mixture of sweet and sour. It is hard to imagine the reader to which it would have bene ideally suited. And while Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' and Dickens' 'Uncommercial Traveller' are in keeping with the tone of the magazines which they inhabit, Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' are distinctly out of place.

²⁶ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 5.

²⁷ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 5.

²⁸ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 235.

²⁹ For a detailed summary of the contents of *Saint Pauls*, see Judith Wittosch Malcolm, 'Trollope's "Saint Pauls" Magazine' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1984).

'An Editor's Tales' began its run in the magazine in October 1869. In January 1870 Alexander Strahan, the new publisher of the magazine, wrote to Trollope that 'the Magazine not being a remunerative property, and you having kindly expressed your willingness to do whatever might be thought best in its interest — we have been thinking that perhaps "Saint Pauls" might be allowed to follow the example of "Blackwood" and "edit itself"'.³⁰ In May 1870 the last part of 'An Editor's Tales' appeared and in July 1870 Trollope edited his last issue. Unlike Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' then, or Dickens's 'Uncommercial Traveller', Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales' acted as a swansong to Trollope's career as an editor. For the majority of its run it was published by Trollope, if not written, with the knowledge that Trollope would soon no longer be an editor and that his experiment with a more 'masculine' mode of magazine was a failure. The irony of this, which would have been appreciated by few at the time, is in keeping with the work itself, which is riddled with the ironies of a literary career. A series written for a magazine that had initially rebelled against the conventions of the typical family fare of the period but which was in the midst of a transition into the very form of literature which it had set itself against, written moreover by the outgoing editor, it is thus that 'An Editor's Tales' makes such an interesting subject of study in regards to the rhetoric of personal journalism and family reading in the 1860s.

Trollope had a specific agenda in the establishment of *Saint Pauls*, which is outlined in his letters to Virtue and in his introduction to the magazine. He wished to get away from the idea of family reading as propagated by the other shilling monthlies of the period. He wished to establish a magazine for educated adults that could discuss seriously the questions of the day, specifically politics, and he wished to do this from a particular angle, his own conservative Liberalism. It was probably this as much as his dislike of Edmund

³⁰ Anthony Trollope, *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, 2 vols, ed. by N. John Hall and Nina Burgis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), I, p. 495.

Yates that led him to turn down the editorship of *Temple Bar* in 1863. *Temple Bar* was an example of the kind of magazine Trollope claimed that he was trying to get away from in his introduction to *Saint Pauls*.

It has been already said that the SAINT PAULS, if it be anything will be political. There has of late apparently come up an idea that as politics are by consent banished from certain meetings [...] therefore should the subject also be banished from the pages of all periodical literature which is not produced with the express and primary object of disseminating political feelings [...] The Editor here, who is attempting to describe and not to puff the magazine which he hopes to make acceptable to a portion of the public, by no means intends to censure those of his brethren who have been actuated by this idea. He simply states that such is not his idea in reference to this new venture. He and his friends who will work with him intend to be political, — thinking that all the studies to which men and women can attach themselves, that of politics is the first and the finest, — and remembering also that in former days politics were not avoided by those periodical publications which found most favour in the estimation the public.³¹

The prospectus for *Temple Bar* in contrast reads:

A poet will sound his lyre, and the social essayist, the biographer, the philosopher, the traveller, and the pleasant talker on the engrossing topic of the day, shall each find his allotted space. As for politics, there will not be

³¹ Trollope, 'Introduction', p. 4.

any.³²

Mark Turner has read this as an attempt by Trollope to foster a distinctly masculine tone in the magazine.³³ I would argue, however, that what Trollope was trying to get away from here was not so much the female audience which magazines were required to play to in order to survive, but rather a particular construction of that audience. In the passage above, although the gatherings which Trollope speaks of are all 'gatherings of men', he later modifies this statement by writing that politics is the finest of studies which 'men and women can attach themselves'. We can also see in Trollope's letter to Thackeray regarding 'Mrs. General Talboys' that Trollope viewed the idea of the female reader propagated by contemporary culture as hypocritical.

But a few words I must say also in defence of my own muse. I will not allow that I am indecent, and profess that squeamishness — in so far as it is squeamishness and not delicacy — should be disregarded by the writer. I of course look back for examples to justify myself [...] I could think of no pure English novelist, pure up the Cornhill standard, except Dickens; but then I remembered *Oliver Twist* and blushed for what my mother & sisters read in that very fie-fie story. I have mentioned our five greatest names & feel that I do not approach them in naughtiness any more than I do in genius. But in such cases, you will say, the impurities rest on the heads of the individual authors, — and that you must especially guard the Cornhill. But how have we stood there? History perhaps should be told

³² Anonymous, '*Temple Bar*', *Bookseller* (27 October 1860), p. 614.

³³ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 232.

even to the squeamish, and therefore the improprieties of the improper Georges must be endured.³⁴

Mothers and sisters, Trollope maintains, have read and do read about so-called impurities all the time. All great literature contains such 'naughtiness'. Moreover, in his invocation of history, he says quite clearly, so also does life.

As Fraser, Green and Johnston remark, 'Trollope's apparent inclusivity is interesting [...] because of the contrast with some of his anti-feminist novels from the same period', but perhaps also because of the possible feminist interpretations that can be read into novels such as *Phineas Finn*, which ran in *Saint Pauls* from October 1867 to May 1868.³⁵ As Morse and Markwick have shown, Trollope is best viewed 'both as a man of his time in seeing marriage and children as a woman's best career, and as a man ahead of his time in admiring egalitarian marriage and portraying the disastrous effect on real men and women of conventional Victorian gender roles'.³⁶

In fact, all of the characteristics generally associated with family discourse, as well as the idea of the family as a self-contained idyll of domesticity, are treated ambivalently in 'An Editor's Tales'. The first-person singular, the anecdote, the construction of a persona are built up and picked apart. On various occasions, apparently friendly and personal communication between two individuals is shown to be a façade constructed for a specific purpose, most commonly career advancement or monetary gain. The numerous women depicted rarely conform to the common gender stereotypes of the period, particularly in relation to literature. Families are depicted in numerous broken and absurd

³⁴ Hall and Burgis, *Letters*, I, pp. 128-129.

³⁵ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 88.

³⁶ Markwick and Morse, p. 4.

states that deviate from the ideal of Victorian family life delineated by Tosh, but which nonetheless seem happy. The idea of a divide between the public and the private is rarely adhered to in the domestic spaces pictured, but once again this is generally treated as a positive.

At the same time, in recollecting his career as an editor in 1884, James Payn wrote, 'I could tell stories without end of my editorial experience, some humorous, some pathetic; but the impersonality of the mysterious 'We' ought, I feel to be respected. If the reader wishes more revelations of this description, I refer him to the 'Editor's Tales' of Anthony Trollope'.³⁷ Trollope takes apart such contemporary myths as the impersonal nature of the 'we', of periodicals as representing organic totalities, and exposes the personal jealousies and petty animosities that reside beneath that mysterious 'we'. On a much smaller and more fragmented scale, 'An Editor's Tales' does for the magazine office what his *Barsetshire* series does for provincial clergy of the period, or his *Palliser* series does for the political classes — it provides a personal glimpse behind the scenes at the social world of people usually defined by their public roles. As his *Palliser* series reduces political figures 'from the heights of statesmanship to levels that are comprehensible only in personal and domestic terms', 'An Editor's Tales' reduces the abstract and unknown literary world to the personal and the domestic.³⁸ Despite his use of the plural, the tales are first-person narratives, and Trollope provides the reader with an identifiable character-narrator who tells his stories in the familiar style. Although the tales do not have the same meandering quality as the previous two series, they present an insight into the thinking of their narrator, and there is an openness to the narrator's communication that far supersedes that of either Dickens or Thackeray's texts. Even Trollope's adoption

³⁷ Michael Sadlier, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London: Constable & Co Ltd., 1927), p. 294.

³⁸ Andrew Wright, *Anthony Trollope: Dream and Art* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 83.

of the editorial 'we' can be seen to be part of a cultivation of the personal that was a defining characteristic of family reading in this period.

Trollope was a writer whose main draw was 'the special sympathy that is the unique pleasure to be derived from the short works and one of the most fundamental in his best novels as well'.³⁹ And for all that he objected to the *Cornhill's* squeamishness, he claimed in his autobiography that he was the single largest contributor to that particular magazine.⁴⁰ But Trollope was also a realist and ironist. As Ruth apRoberts writes, 'Trollope's art may be best characterised as the art of the ironic perspective'. What this means for apRoberts is that

[Trollope] destroys unity, or the absolute, and sets up multiplicity, or the relative. By destroying simplistic illusions he inculcates newer, less simple ideas that are more answerable to "the ways things are." He insists on paradox, and deflates monisms [...] He deflates our pretensions to rationality and insists on the perverse and the absurd. He deflates our pride in institutions, playing upon the discrepancy between the man and his office.

Importantly, this perspective relies upon 'a certain free play of mind', for 'if he denies himself the right to consider some facet of life that is known to him, his work is invalidated by that denial. It is his business to make convention serve his sense of the truth'.⁴¹ Or as he notes ironically in 'An Editor's Tales', 'When one thinks of it, the reality of it all is appalling. What need is there of a sister or a friend in the flesh, — when by a

³⁹ Navakas, p. 178.

⁴⁰ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 121.

⁴¹ Ruth apRoberts, *Trollope: Artist and Moralist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), pp. 190-192.

little exercise of the mind they may be there at your elbow, faultless?’⁴² Writing to Thackeray regarding the rejection of her poem from the *Cornhill* and the subject of magazine literature in general, Elizabeth Barrett Browning expressed the opinion that ‘the corruption of our society requires, not shut doors and windows, but light and air — and that it is exactly because pure & prosperous women choose to *ignore* vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere’.⁴³ Trollope too believed this. The tendency in family literature to shy away from truth, as he saw it, meant that he viewed the entire enterprise with a level of scepticism. Furthermore, such literature for him lacked interest. It was for the weakest among the nation and as such could not hold the attention of the best and brightest, or even the ordinary man and woman.

This did not mean that Trollope believed in throwing convention absolutely to the wind as demonstrated by his experience on the board of the *Fortnightly Review*. The *Fortnightly* was a little bit too ‘free’ for Trollope, as demonstrated by John Morley’s anecdote regarding his interview for the position of editor. “‘Now, do you,” he asked, glaring as if in fury through his spectacles, and roaring like a bull of Bashan, “do you believe in the divinity of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?”’.⁴⁴ Moreover, as shown in ‘Josephine de Montmorenci’ and Mr Brown’s interest in both that lady and her sister’s ‘veiled face’ (‘Josephine de Montmorenci’, AET, p. 125), Trollope understood the appeal of the veil, and of the less direct approach, the piquancy that could be added to the text through hints and allusions that nevertheless respected the conventions of the literature of the period.

⁴² Anthony Trollope, ‘The Panjandrum’ in *An Editor’s Tales* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 213. Further references to this work will be made in the text.

⁴³ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 228.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, ‘Anthony Trollope’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 49:289 (November 1883), pp. 55-56.

David Skilton writes, 'The Victorian novelist had to tread a tight-rope of moral and social acceptability. On the one hand he risked offending against very strict but often imprecisely formulated canons of behaviour; on the other hand he might be overcautious, and fall into dullness and consequent popular failure'.⁴⁵ Like Thackeray and Dickens before him, Trollope drew his own line, but this did not make walking it any less of a tight-rope act. Sometimes his contemporaries approved of this, and sometimes they did not. This applied to his novels as well as his journalism. As Skilton points out, Trollope came under heavy fire from contemporary critics regarding what was viewed as the moral irresponsibility of a number of his novels.⁴⁶ Skilton quotes a reviewer from the *Athenaeum* who held that Trollope 'disclaims any moral purpose beyond the photographic delineation of human meanness'.⁴⁷ He was criticized both for his realism and his neutral manner of portraying that realism.⁴⁸ Ironically, it is in his most unstinting depiction of the potential horrors of family life in the series that Trollope won most praise from that most difficult-to-please critical organ, the *Saturday Review*. 'The Spotted Dog' 'exemplifies the legitimate use of a good realistic description'.⁴⁹ This, however, may say more about the *Saturday's* oscillating views on realism than it does about 'The Spotted Dog'.

Approved of or not, Trollope was firm in his beliefs in this regard, and though he failed to make those beliefs popular through *Saint Pauls*, he did not abandon them in writing 'An Editor's Tales', in many ways a conventionally family-oriented piece of journalism. Like the 'Roundabout Papers' and 'The Uncommercial Traveller' then, 'An Editor's Tales' is both an example of the domesticated, personal journalism associated with the family

⁴⁵ David Skilton, *Anthony Trollope and his Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 79.

⁴⁶ Skilton, p. 58.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, 'Review of *Eustace Diamonds*', *Athenaeum*, 2348 (26 October 1872), p. 527.

⁴⁸ Skilton, p. 78.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, 'Review of *An Editor's Tales*', *Saturday Review*, 30:772 (13 August 1870), p. 211.

magazine, and a reworking of the principles of that journalism. It represents Trollope's concession to the laws of the market and also his attempt to push beyond these while maintaining his appeal to a popular magazine.

'An Editor's Tales'

Traditionally, 'An Editor's Tales' have been categorized with Trollope's other short fiction and separated from their context. In Betty Breyer's 1983 collection of Trollope's complete short stories, the tales were not even given together, nor was any indication given that the stories were printed as part of a series.⁵⁰ In Julian Thompson's 1992 collection, the tales are given together, and each story was preceded by a note of the story's publication history. But even in this improved format, all that Thompson writes is that the stories originally appeared in *Saint Pauls* and were later reprinted as part of a 'collection' entitled 'An Editor's Tales'.⁵¹ Critical opinion on the series has been divided, with Donald D. Stone viewing 'An Editor's Tales' as his best 'collection', and Francine Navakas commenting upon the weakness of 'The Spotted Dog', 'Mary Gresley' and 'The Turkish Bath', three of the stories in the series, although the majority are united in viewing the tales predominantly in relation to what additional light they can bring to bear on Trollope as a novelist.⁵² Mark Turner is one of the few critics to have looked at the tales in their original context as part of the magazine culture of the late 1860s, as part of *Saint Pauls Magazine*, and as a series written by the editor of that magazine, all of which are integral to our

⁵⁰ Anthony Trollope, *Anthony Trollope: The Complete Short Stories*, 5 vols, ed. by Betty Breyer (London: W. Pickering, 1991).

⁵¹ Anthony Trollope, *Anthony Trollope: The Collected Shorter Fiction*, ed. by Julian Thompson (London: Robinson Publishing, 1992).

⁵² Francine G. Navakas, 'The Case for Trollope's Short Stories', *Modern Philology* 83: 2 (November 1985), p. 178.

understanding of the tales. As Tim Killick puts it, 'Magazine tales have their own history and deserve to be criticized as such'.⁵³

The short story was intrinsically linked to the periodical press for much of the nineteenth century. While bound collections of short stories appeared throughout the century, it was the periodical press that made the short story a financially viable form.⁵⁴ In Harold Orel's words, 'It is vaguely appreciated that short stories matured as a genre during the Victorian Age. Their growing popularity was related to the development of general-interest periodicals and a substantial need to fill columns of white space with agreeable reading-matter'.⁵⁵

The short story in the Victorian era, however, was not the short story as it is understood in modern terms. As Orel points out, pre-Stevenson, and pre-James, writers in Victorian Britain had little concept of the short story as a genre. Edgar Allan Poe's stringent views were paid little attention in Britain. 'Distinctions among such terms as "sketch", "tale", "story", or even "novel" mean more to us in this century than they ever did in Victorian England' — which is to say that their conception of the form was fluid.⁵⁶ Orel's contention that 'writers handled any idea in any way that pleased them' might be an oversimplification, especially given the nature of the periodical market and the variety of different influences and pressures that the writer was subject to, all of key importance in relation to 'An Editor's Tales'. But it is clear that they were not working within clearly marked boundaries or sharply delineated rules in terms of genre.

⁵³ Tim Killick, *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the Tale* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 37.

⁵⁴ Killick, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Harold Orel, *The Victorian Short Story: Development and Triumph of a Literary Genre* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁶ Orel, p. 3.

Modern ideas of the short story as embodying a 'comparative totality' seem inappropriate in the context in which these tales were first produced.⁵⁷ They were part of the larger whole of the periodical and, as Killick writes, were often used to reinforce editorial commentary, to enhance the relationship between a periodical and its readers, or to challenge and subvert aspects of the periodical.⁵⁸ 'An Editor's Tales' attempted to do all three. In this context the short story can be seen to be part of a larger net as well, that of the periodical press in toto, as writers reacted against each other and competed with each other. In the case of 'An Editor's Tales', the stories must be viewed in the context of one another, because they form not simply a 'collection' bound together later by a common theme, but a series, printed in *Saint Pauls*, the heading 'An Editor's Tales' over each instalment.

Ideas of unity of tone or effect now commonly associated with the short story are equally out of place here.⁵⁹ On examination of the series, Donald Stone's view of these tales as 'daring experiments' of a more 'explosive' nature than Trollope's novels seems more apt than Orel's depiction of the series as 'unadventurous', 'wholesomely moral', 'disinclined to venture on experimental ground' and marked by a consistency of perspective and tone.⁶⁰ 'The Spotted Dog', Trollope's favourite of the tales,⁶¹ despite Navakas' criticism of its flaws, is quite abrupt in its shifts between light comedy and 'quiet despair more than a little reminiscent of Gissing'.⁶² Similarly, 'Mary Gresley' moves between gentle humour

⁵⁷ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 9.

⁵⁸ Killick, p. 24.

⁵⁹ *The English Short Story, 1880-1945: A Critical History*, ed. by Joseph M. Flora (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), p. xiv.

⁶⁰ Donald D. Stone, 'Trollope as a Short Story Writer', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 31:1 (June 1976), p. 30; Orel, pp. 89-92.

⁶¹ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 337.

⁶² Thompson, p. xiii.

and 'tender sadness'.⁶³ In 'The Panjandrum' the narrator alternates between two quite different perspectives as he recounts the early literary adventures of his younger self. 'Josephine de Montmorenci' is in large part an epistolary tale, and involves yet another shift in perspective as the narrator adopts the persona of 'Mr Brown'. Both 'The Spotted Dog' and 'The Panjandrum' are told in two parts. The interest of these stories or this series, as a form, is not its unity of effect but rather the relationship between the various unities that link the stories and the disjunctions that work in tandem with those unities.

In comparison, of course, to Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers', these disjunctions are minor. There is nothing in 'An Editor's Tales' to compare to the eclectic variety that the 'Roundabout Papers' provide: a mock gothic tale, a travel diary, a dissertation on the hypocrisy of human nature. Trollope does appear to have had Thackeray firmly in mind when writing these tales, however, and these tales must also be firmly placed within the traditions of personal journalism so instrumental in shaping both Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' and Dickens's 'The Uncommercial Traveller'.

Sarah Gilead has written of the important place that Thackeray occupied in Trollope's mental landscape. Though he criticized both Thackeray and Dickens for their self-consciousness and paraded egotism, Trollope viewed himself as Thackeray's literary heir. As Gilead writes, Thackeray functions for Trollope as a substitute for his real father, who in literary terms was predominantly an anti-model. Thackeray is the literary mentor in relation to whom Trollope casts himself as son and heir, and then later brother and equal. Finally outliving him, he writes the monograph *Thackeray*, thus authoring and

⁶³ Arthur Pollard, *Anthony Trollope* (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 176.

appropriating the paternal model that he has chosen for himself.⁶⁴ In 'An Editor's Tales' Trollope appropriates the role that Thackeray played as editor of the *Cornhill* and makes it his own, he even references the 'Roundabout Papers' in 'An Editor's Tales'. But Trollope's version of the editor is as distinct from Thackeray's as *Saint Pauls* is from the *Cornhill*. The tensions that make the 'Roundabout Papers' such interesting reading are also present in 'An Editor's Tales', but Trollope approaches them from a different angle from his predecessor.

Criticism has traditionally seen Trollope as the most conventional of the three, 'accepting all the common restrictions' that Thackeray and Dickens rejected.⁶⁵ Modern critics such as Robin Gilmour, Stephen Gill and John Sutherland, however, have argued that Trollope was 'a far from complacent and conventional novelist', who showed 'an honesty and clarity of vision that places Trollope with the greatest social novelists of the nineteenth century'.⁶⁶ While in this series, Trollope, like Thackeray and Dickens, is clearly attempting to establish the semblance of a personal bond between himself and his readers, likewise there is an overarching sense of irony that rivals that of Thackeray and Dickens. The adoption of the first-person singular, the use of a persona, the blurring of boundaries between fiction and autobiography, as well as public and private, and the use of story-telling forms such as the anecdote are features of the series and become subjects of discussion within the texts, as they do in the 'Roundabout Papers' and 'The Uncommercial Traveller'. As with those series, while utilizing techniques such as the first-person, dream sequences and reminiscences to establish a sense of intimacy which includes the reader

⁶⁴ Sarah Gilead, 'Trollope's Autobiography: The Strategies of Self-Production', *Modern Language Quarterly: A Journal of Literary History*, 47:3 (September 1986), p. 289.

⁶⁵ G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1913), p. 130.

⁶⁶ Robin Gilmour, 'A Lesser Thackeray? Trollope and the Victorian Novel' in *Anthony Trollope*, ed. by Tony Bareham (London: Vision Press, 1980), p. 186; *Anthony Trollope, Eustace Diamonds*, ed. by Stephen Gill and John Sutherland (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 30.

in a bond of fellowship with the writer, he also registers a deep-set ambivalence regarding the use of those techniques and the picture they set out to create.

The Personal in 'An Editor's Tales'

The First-Person Plural

In 1872 the *Dublin Review* wrote of Trollope that 'he is absolutely and pleasantly opposed to Mr. Thackeray. He never talks about having played out a play and shutting up the puppets [...] he would not on any account acknowledge them to be puppets [...] He avoids all exaggerations, in either good or evil'.⁶⁷ 'An Editor's Tales' challenges that statement. In its exploration of the London literary world in the mid-nineteenth century, 'An Editor's Tales' calls attention to all manner of myths and conventions, performances and disguises. Its main joke is a play upon the convention of the editorial 'we'. This joke, along with the tales' treatment of their main figure and narrator, the various portrayals of literary partnership exhibited and the assortment of veils, pseudonyms and disguises adopted by the characters, suggest a fundamentally ironic view of authorship, and the relationship between a writer and his audience, one that is at odds with the tales' apparently confessional ethos.

Rachel Sagner Buurma has convincingly set forth the proposition that non-individualistic modes of thinking were in fact widespread in the nineteenth century, and it is our 'under-theorized' ideas about Victorian culture and our twenty-first-century ideas about authorship that prevent us from recognizing them.⁶⁸ However, much as Buurma objects to the view of anonymity and 'textual and paratextual pseudonymity as a double dynamic

⁶⁷ Anonymous, 'Article VI. The Novels of Mr. Anthony Trollope', *Dublin Review*, 19:38 (October 1872), p. 395.

⁶⁸ Rachel Sagner Buurma, 'Anonymity, Corporate Authority, and the Archive: The Production of Authorship in Late-Victorian England', *Victorian Studies* (Autumn 2007), pp. 16-19.

of secrecy and disclosure [...] a ploy designed to heighten the effect of the ultimate disclosure of an author's name and identity,⁶⁹ it is hard to deny that this double dynamic did exist. While magazines such as *Saint Pauls* may have maintained a policy of anonymity within their pages, it was common practice to advertise the names of contributors for forthcoming issues in the pages of other journals.

The double dynamic of secrecy and disclosure was an integral part of the marketing of the magazine, although more often than not it appeared to be more of a case of disclosure and secrecy rather than secrecy and disclosure. Disclosure often came first, which made the use of the editorial 'we' fundamentally ironic, based on a double perspective, which either allows for both the individual author named and the journal as an entity to retain separate but simultaneous centres of authority, or posits the editorial 'we' as a fiction which the reader knowingly indulges in. It perhaps would be going too far to take either one of these possibilities as definitive. Different readers have different reactions to different texts and while some might have treated the editorial 'we' as an amusing artifice, others may well have treated it seriously, allowing for the possibility that both the individual author and the journal could simultaneously enjoy ownership and authority over a single text. Some readers may even have seen it as an amusing artifice while still allowing for the possibility of divided authority. Yet others must have seen the journal as the overriding authority, for the number of articles written on the subject, the attention paid to this question by writers of a serious stamp, and the level of determination shown by some in their desire to 'debunk' such ideas, suggests that it cannot have wholly been conceived of as a mere game or marketing ploy.

⁶⁹ Buurma, p. 16.

In 'An Editor's Tales', Trollope is one of those who sets out to debunk the myth, while also enjoying the use of the 'we' as a game between writer and reader. There is a definite concern regarding the use and abuse of the 'we', as shown in the Thackerayan style side-swipe at the *Saturday Review* he makes in 'The Spotted Dog', when he writes of the drunkard Julius Mackenzie: 'What a terrible man he would have been could he have got upon the staff of the Saturday Review, instead of going to the Spotted Dog' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 242). Trollope's use of the 'we' and his comments upon its use are knowing. Aware of the ironies of the situation, he plays upon them and invites his readers to join in on the joke, and a joke it is. Trollope's 'we' represents not the collective power of the journal but the assumed authority of the editor, his self-aggrandisement based upon his position. In this way, the debunking of the editorial 'we' seems to champion the cause of the personal in journalism, for not only does his revelation of the fictional nature of the 'we' seem to suggest the first-person singular as a more truthful mode of discourse, but also in order to properly expose this he attaches his 'we' to what is clearly a narrative told from the perspective of one particular individual.

At first glance Trollope's use of the first-person plural seems to favour a more personal type of journalism, if only in that his adoption of the 'we' mocks the use of those particular modes, ridiculing the idea that 'self-abstraction' in journalism in the form of the editorial 'we' protects against 'the infiltration of private or particular interests'.⁷⁰ But on second glance, it does not seem so straightforward. In the first story in the series, the narrator justifies his mode of address as follows: 'this little story records the experience of one individual man; but our readers, we hope, will without a grudge, allow us the use of the editorial we. We doubt whether the story could be told at all in any other form'. When reading these lines one is immediately taken back to the moment in the

⁷⁰ Salmon, "'A Simulacrum of Power'", p. 46.

'Roundabout Papers' when Thackeray declares, 'That right line "I" is the very shortest, simplest, straightforwardest means of communication between us, and stands for what it is worth and no more' ('On Two Children in Black', RP, p. 13). Such elliptical statements are typical of both Thackeray's 'Roundabout Papers' and Trollope's 'An Editor's Tales', in neither of which are the choice of address and use of voice simple or straightforward. For Trollope and Thackeray, as for Salmon, intimacy as a journalistic discourse is a form of abstraction.⁷¹ Thackeray holds that 'I' is the natural form of address: simple, sincere, truthful. 'It stands for what is worth and no more', he writes, implying that the signifier 'I' and the signified 'Thackeray' are one and the same — the signifier is worth the signified and no more. Correspondingly, Trollope holds that his use of 'we' is just as natural and straightforward. In fact, he says, it isn't a question of choice, rather there is no choice. There is only 'we' or no story at all. And yet neither of these statements strikes the reader as simple, straightforward or natural. As ever with both Thackeray and Trollope, there is an element of trickery, another possible perspective hinted at, although not fully spelled out. In Thackeray this other perspective makes itself known through the statement 'what it is worth', which begs the question, what is it worth? Thackeray gives us no answer.

Similarly, despite his insistence upon the 'we', Trollope outlines two distinct narrative possibilities, drawing a firm contrast between the 'use of the editorial we' and the 'experience of one individual man'. The narrative is clearly the story of an individual, so why does Trollope imply that there is no alternative to telling the story in the first-person plural? Perhaps to point to the artifice of both modes, to show up the fact that the adoption of either the 'we' or the 'I' is a choice, that neither approach is natural or inherent, and that both are roles chosen by the writer for one reason or another, in order to portray a particular representation of themselves.

⁷¹ Salmon, "'A Simulacrum of Power'", p. 43.

Every method of asserting and establishing the editorial 'we' simultaneously confirms the vulnerability of that 'we', but at the same time every method of asserting and establishing the 'I' simultaneously confirms the vulnerability of that 'I'. So while the quasi-autobiographical nature of the tales makes sure that the personal and the individual is always front and centre, by demonstrating the fact that the adoption of the 'I' is a choice similar to the adoption of the 'we', Trollope undercuts any straightforward autobiographical interpretations.

The Anecdote

'An Editor's Tales' signal their place within private, familiar discourse in a number of ways. The most obvious of which is the use of the anecdote as the base unit for structuring the series. The anecdote is both a secret, private, or hitherto unpublished narrative or detail of history and the narrative of a detached incident, or of a single event, told as being in itself interesting or striking.⁷² The anecdotal structure of the tales constructs the texts as secrets revealed, the private made public, adding to the autobiographical feel of the series and its personal tone. The anecdote puts the personal front and centre in its disclosure of the secret and the private. The manner in which the narrator introduces his tales emphasizes this aspect the anecdotal, as does the recounting of adventures of the narrator's youth and of the workings of his creative process. As we have seen with Dickens and Thackeray, the revelation of memories of young years establishes a sense of intimacy between the reader and the writer. The ironic outlook that Trollope adopts also works to suggest a bond of intimacy between the reader and the writer, much as it did in both the 'Roundabout Papers' and the 'Uncommercial Traveller', for by presenting the

⁷² 'Anecdote', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50008264?query_type=word&queryword=anecdote&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=Pcyq-Bhcwsh-6490&hilite=50008264>, accessed 1st March 2009.

reader with the ambiguities of the editorial world as he sees it, he is inviting the reader to share his double perspective, suggesting a 'common ground in superiority of knowledge'.⁷³ Equally important, however, is the manner in which Trollope plays upon the autobiographical in the series.

The Autobiographical

Like both Thackeray and Dickens, Trollope had mixed feelings about autobiographical and biographical writings. Trollope recoiled from the self-conscious assertion of self as an author. He attempted to divorce Trollope the writer from Trollope the individual, as can be readily witnessed in his autobiography. Writing to G.W. Rusden, he commented that, 'It is disgusting to see the self-consciousness and irritated craving for applause which such men as Macready & Dickens have exhibited; — & which dear old Thackeray did exhibit also'.⁷⁴ While willing to use his name to sell his works, he was uncomfortable with the practice and keen, as his experiments in anonymity in this period show, to see whether his works would sell detached from the Trollope brand.⁷⁵ He both relished and was uncomfortable with the idea of the author as celebrity, writing to Kate Field in relation to her enquiries about George Eliot 'in truth she was one whose private life should be left in privacy, — as may be said of all who have achieved fame by literary merits'.⁷⁶ Similarly, he wrote to Field,

It is always dangerous to write from the point of "I". The reader is unconsciously taught to feel that the writer is glorifying himself, and rebels

⁷³ apRoberts, p. 194.

⁷⁴ Hall and Burgis, *Letters*, II, p. 671.

⁷⁵ 'I felt that aspirants coming up below me might do work as good as mine, and probably much better work, and yet fail to have it appreciated. In order to test this, I determined to be such an aspirant myself, and to begin a course of novels anonymously, in order that I might see whether I could succeed in obtaining a second identity, — whether as I had made one mark by such literary ability as I possessed, I might succeed in doing so again', Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 204.

⁷⁶ Hall and Burgis, *Letters*, II, p. 892.

against the self-praise. Or otherwise the 'I' is pretentiously humble, and offends from exactly the other point of view. In telling a tale it is, I think, always well to sink the personal pronoun.

But with a title such as 'An Editor's Tales', Trollope invites the reader to interpret the series autobiographically. Indeed, in *An Autobiography*, he writes that although fictionalized much of the content was autobiographical.

I do not think that there is a single incident in the book which could bring back to any one concerned the memory of a past event. And yet there is not an incident in it the outline of which was not presented to my mind by the remembrance of some fact: — how an ingenious gentleman got into a conversation with me, I not knowing that he knew me to be an editor, and pressed his little article on my notice; how I was addressed by a lady with a becoming pseudonyme and with much equally becoming audacity; how I was appealed to by the dearest of little women whom here I have called Mary Gresley; how in my own early days there was a struggle over an abortive periodical which was intended to be the best thing ever done; how terrible was the tragedy of a poor drunkard, who with infinite learning at his command made one sad final effort to reclaim himself, and perished while he was making it; and lastly how a poor weak editor was driven nearly to madness by threatened litigation from a rejected contributor.⁷⁷

Nonetheless, there is more than the usual element of the autobiographical whirligig in reading these texts. As with both Dickens and Thackeray, Trollope evades

⁷⁷ Trollope, *An Autobiography*, p. 337.

autobiographical interpretation at the same that he plays up to the public's desire for just such material.

In the tradition of Montaigne and Thackeray the narrator talks continually of himself and his experiences, and yet the reader learns almost nothing of him. He is a literary gentleman and has had a degree of success in his career. He is an older gentleman with a greybeard. He is married but has a fondness for young ladies. He was once idealistic and is less so now. Not a great deal of information to go on. The sharp individualization of the character is balanced by a 'bland impersonality'.⁷⁸ No name is ever given, nor is it ever confirmed that there is only narrator, or in the original context, author. The speaker does after all use the great 'we'. In 'Josephine de Montmorenci', a second persona even emerges in the figure of Mr Brown.

The little story which we are about to relate refers to circumstances which occurred some years ago, and we desire, therefore, that all readers may avoid the fault of connecting the personages of the tale, —either the Editor who suffered so much, and who behaved, we think, so well, or the ladies with whom he was concerned, — with any editor or with any ladies known to such readers either personally or by name. For though the story as told is a true story, we who tell it have used such craft in the telling, that we defy the most astute to fix the time or to recognise the characters ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 101).

The narrator claims that he is not Mr Brown, but is he to be trusted? And while the narrator is not Mr Brown, is Trollope? In *An Autobiography*, Trollope states that the story

⁷⁸ Navakas, p. 178.

was based on his own experience of 'a lady with a becoming pseudonyme'. In 'Josephine de Montmorenci', he is not so open, invoking a sense of game-play instead. The heading 'An Editor's Tales' above each story in a magazine edited by Trollope invites the reader to interpret the experiences as belonging to Trollope, but the series as a whole suggests that names and titles and in fact language use in general can be deceptive. If it attempts to teach its readership anything, it is not to be too trusting, that unseen motivations are usually at work.

Dream sequences

In its emphasis on the instability of the divide between the real and the fictional, its use of the anecdotal and its self-conscious use of the first-person singular as well as the first-person plural, the series is similar to both the 'Roundabout Papers' and 'The Uncommercial Traveller'. However, the pervasive nostalgia of those two series is contained to a single story in 'An Editor's Tales', and if nostalgia can be said to be a fitting description for the narrator's revisiting of past times in 'The Panjandrum'. Similarly, while dreams, reverie, and the workings of the subconscious take a prominent place in Thackeray and Dickens's journalism, they occupy a far more minor place in 'An Editor's Tales'. Even so, their place within the series is significant, for as with reverie in 'The Uncommercial Traveller', in 'An Editor's Tales' dreaming provides a window into the narrator's creative process.

In 'The Panjandrum', the narrator is walking in the park when he overhears the conversation between a young girl and her nurse. He starts to wonder about the meaning of this conversation and constructs a story about it in his head as he continues his walk. It then occurs to him that this day-dream might possibly be made into a story. He then details the manner in which he fleshed out the dream to form a story.

That very morning it had seemed to me to be impossible to get anything written. Now, as I hurried up-stairs to get rid of my wet clothes, I felt that I could not take the pen quickly enough into my hand. I had a thing to say, and I would say it [...] I doubt whether any five days in my life were ever happier than those which were devoted to this piece of work [...] While I was at the task all doubt vanished from my mind [...] Each night I copied fairly what I had written in the day, and I came to love the thing with an exceeding love [...] I had strained all my means to prepare for the coming of the girl, — I am now going back for a moment to my castle in the air, — and had furnished for a little sitting-room and as pretty a white-curtained chamber as a girl ever took pleasure in calling her own [...] I had said to myself that everything should be for her, and I had sold my horse, — the horse of my imagination, the reader will understand, for I had never in truth possessed such an animal ('The Panjandrum', AET, pp. 210-211).

It is in this story that the reader is given the most intimate glimpse into the narrator's mind, as he recounts the personal significance of this story for him, how it unfurled from his semi-conscious mind as he walked round the park, and the manner in which it occupied his mind as he wrote it and cried over it.

But even in telling of this moment of inspiration, Trollope does not entirely renounce his scepticism. With the benefit of hindsight, his older self recounts the thoughts and feelings of his younger self, detaching himself and the reader from his younger's self's emotion: 'I worked myself up to such a pitch of feeling over my story, that I could hardly write it for my tears. I saw myself standing all alone in that pretty sitting-room after they were gone,

and I pitied myself with an exceeding pity' ('The Panjandrum', AET, p.212). The intimacy that is cultivated by the revelation of this episode of the narrator's past, with its emphasis on dreaming and its exploration of the creative process, is thus counterbalanced by Trollope's pervasive irony, and the distance it establishes between the reader and not only the characters but also the narrator.

This is one perspective. Alternatively, the story can be seen to utilize a similar kind rhetoric of authenticity to that which Thackeray employs, binding him and the reader together in a community of knowledge, as he points out the discrepancies in his younger's self viewpoint. By indicating the lies or fictions of others and by revealing his own tendencies in that direction as well, he establishes himself as a figure to be trusted. Thus, as with Dickens and Thackeray, Trollope's construction of intimacy and his use of the personal voice in this series are far from straightforward.

The Domestic in 'And Editor's Tales'

Images of Families and the Home

Similarly, despite the domestic ambience instilled by evocations of the 'the warmth of editorial fire' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 67), the series' representation of domestic life is somewhat removed from simple, domestic bliss imagined in the prospectuses of the kind of magazines that at this stage *Saint Pauls* was attempting to emulate. 'We regarded her first almost as a child, and then as a young woman to whom we owed that sort of protecting care which a greybeard should ever be ready to give to the weakness of feminine adolescence. Nevertheless we were in love with her, and we think such a state of love to be a wholesome and natural condition' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 6) — there is very little that is wholesome or natural about many of the relationships depicted in 'An

Editor's Tales', and little in its representations of the familial and the domestic that could be seen to conform to the ideal frequently conjured up by the Victorian family magazine. In hints and murmurs, Trollope played with the boundaries of the acceptable, of what his audience was willing to hear. This, of course, was more typical of the Victorian family magazine than some were willing to admit, as Trollope pointed out to Thackeray in reference to 'Mrs. General Talboys'.

The idea of union in general, whether familial or not, seems to be undercut in this series. In 'An Editor's Tales' literary partnerships are constantly being compared to or portrayed as sexual relationships or marriage, particularly sexual unions that are outside those conventionally acceptable in this period, such as homosexuality, paedophilia, rape, or desire for the physically or mentally ill. In each case this subversion prevents the union from producing any literary fruit or at times the violent destruction of the literary text. In comparison to this, the actual scenes of family life depicted in the series are positively idyllic, with perhaps one exception.

The most dejected picture of family life that we see in the series is that of the Mackenzie family in 'The Spotted Dog'. Julius Mackenzie in his own words has 'the education of an enlightened man, — unless it be natural philosophy', but his wife and he are drunkards and as a result he and his family live in abysmal poverty ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 236). Worse than the poverty, however, is the continual drunkenness of his wife and the behaviour it induces. 'She'd rob the food out of her husband's mouth for a drop of gin', states trusty landlady Mrs Grimes ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 254). Provided with new clothes for herself and her children, 'the very next day, she and the four children were again stripped almost naked' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 284). Trollope here provides not just a portrait of poverty but of indecency, as it would have been seen by his readers or at

least by Mrs Grundy. Julius, driven mad by his wife's behaviour and fuelled by his own intake of alcohol, talks of doing 'the truly manly thing' and putting 'an end to the lives of his wife, his children, and himself at one swoop [...] Was he fit to live, or were they? Was there any chance for his children but that of becoming thieves and prostitutes?' (*The Spotted Dog*, AET, p. 287). Such images go far beyond the sly allusions of Thackeray regarding opera girls in *Lovel the Widower*, the novella that he wrote for the *Cornhill*. It could well be said that in his depiction of the Mackenzie family in 'The Spotted Dog', Trollope does not so much play around the lines but crosses the line entirely.

In comparison, the rest of the images of family life presented in the series are rather tame, their subversions of the conventional idea of the family more subtle. Certainly, they are happier, although not necessarily less controversial — one could easily read into the Mackenzies' story that poetic justice which contemporary critics often found wanting in Trollope's works. This after all is the story that met with the approval of the *Saturday Review*, despite the side-swipe it delivered its way in allying its reviewers with the dissipated Julius. The picture Molloy originally paints of his family life is also one of hardship, one that does not accord with the Victorian ideal. And as Turner points out, the narrator first sees Molloy, not in the male-only zone of the baths, but in Jermyn Street, in an area known to be frequent by prostitutes. He also point to the similarity between the name Molloy and the slang word 'Molly' for a homosexual male or prostitute. But in actual fact Molloy's home is a picture of happy domesticity: 'in the little front parlour we found him seated with a child on each knee, while a winning little girl of about twelve was sitting in a corner of the room, mending her stockings [...] Everything no doubt was plain, — was, in a certain sense, poor; but nothing was poverty-stricken. The children were decently clothed and apparently were well fed' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 41). At the same time, this is not the typical Victorian image of the family, for Mrs Molloy is the

breadwinner and Molloy takes centre place in the home: “As for the children, he’s that good to them, there ain’t a young woman in all London that’d be better at handling ‘em” (‘The Turkish Bath’, AET, p. 44). In the end, the homosocial undertones and allusions to male prostitution say more about the narrator than they do about Molloy. For as Turner demonstrates, it is the manner in which the editor notices Molloy on the street, and the way that he continues to think of him while undressing and preparing to enter the baths, an acknowledged homosocial and potentially homosexual area, that is truly significant in this encounter.⁷⁹

The home of Mr and Mrs Grimes in ‘The Spotted Dog’, although happy, similarly breaks with conventional ideas about the domestic arena. While in the Molloy household it is the reversal of gender roles that upsets the ideal order of things, in the Grimes’ living quarters it is the blurring of the boundaries between the private and the public. Mr Grimes is the landlord of a public house, the Spotted Dog of the title, above which he and his wife reside. The Spotted Dog represents a startling blend of the public and the domestic for the narrator.

We could not help thinking of the wonderful companionship which there must have been in that parlour while the reduced man was spinning his web and Mrs. Grimes, with her needle-work lying idle in her lap, was sitting by, listening with rapt admiration. In passing by the Spotted Dog one would not imagine such a scene to have its existence within (‘The Spotted Dog’, AET, p. 256).

⁷⁹ Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines*, p. 202.

The picture of an oasis of domestic bliss within the public space of the Spotted Dog at first surprises the narrator. Getting to know Mrs Grimes, however, he comes to admire her as a paragon of wifeliness and femininity, writing in respect to Mr Grimes, 'When abroad he could talk of his "missus" with a conviction that the picture which the word would convey to all who heard him would redound to his honour' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, pp. 257-258). But, having coming to terms with this particular juxtaposition of the public and private, another surprise awaits him as he soon discovers that Mrs Grimes, his angel of the hearth, has little respect for the sanctity of the domestic space.

When Julius Mackenzie needs a space to work away from his drunken wife, Mrs Grimes suggests that they put a table in her bedroom for Julius to work at. The narrator expresses his doubts about 'the propriety of such a disarrangement of her most private domestic affairs' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 271). For the narrator, 'There is something holy about the bed-room of a married couple; and there would be a special desecration in the continued presence of Mr. Julius Mackenzie'. But then Mrs Grimes is not bothered about inviting the narrator into that same bedroom, and when they see a pair of her husband's trousers lying out, she is 'not a bit abashed' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 272). As she says

But we're different in our ways than what you are. Things to us are only just what they are. We haven't time, nor yet money, nor perhaps edication, for seemings and thinkings as you have. If you was travelling out among the wild Injeans, you'd ask any one to have a bit in your bed-room as soon as look at 'em, if you'd got a bit for 'em to eat. We're travelling among wild Injeans all our lives, and a bed-room ain't no more to us than any other room ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 273).

To the narrator there is something very awry in the notion of making a bedroom a work space and more to the point of another man occupying space in a married couple's bedroom. Yet of Mr Grimes, Trollope writes, 'In the very step with which he passed in and out of his own door you could see that there was nothing he was ashamed of about his household' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 257). The Grimes' is clearly a happy household, although it does not accord to the rules which dominate the narrator's domestic life. It is significant that after this the narrator 'could not keep myself from thinking for many an hour afterwards, whether it may not be a good thing for men, and for women also, to believe that they are always travelling among wild Indians', or to see things just as they are ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 273).

The unconventional nature of domestic dynamics in 'An Editor's Tales' can be read as Polhemus reads gender relations in Trollope's work in general, in terms of the psychological aftermath of the breakdown of the 'patriarchal structure' in his own family. 'His mother was stronger, more energetic, more joyous, and more capable than his father, and that was crucial in shaping Anthony's character and imagination. His neurotic father, though intellectually gifted, could not cope with the world, and Frances, his wife, had to take over'. The results of this 'take over' were mixed, and as Polhemus maintains 'an emotional disaster' for Trollope, who while he admired his mother, openly discussed her flaws in his autobiography. Trollope was thus left with ambivalent feelings about the Woman Question and traditional familial structures.⁸⁰ Then again, the unorthodox character of family relations in the series can also be read in relation to views on the need for more realistic portrayals of family life in magazine literature.

⁸⁰ Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex', p. 16.

Of all the family scenes that the reader bears witness to in the series, only one accords to the idyllic picture of hearth and home commonly associated with the 1860s family magazine, and that is our brief glimpse into the home of the editor. Significantly though, the main focus of this scene is Mary Gresley. Mary fits admirably into this domestic setting:

She made a little speech to the mistress of the house, praising ourselves with warm words and tearful eyes, and immediately won the heart of a new friend. She allied herself warmly to our daughters, put up with the schoolboy pleasantries of our sons, and before the evening was over was dressed up as a ghost for the amusement of some neighbouring children who were brought into play snapdragon ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 83).

However, it cannot be forgotten that this is a young lady over whom the editor has had 'heart-flutterings' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 81). Much as she might ally herself with them, she is not a daughter of the house, and the editor's attitude towards her is not entirely fatherly. As Polhemus remarks, it is 'a *locus classicus* of the evolving, benevolent Lot complex', which revolves around 'the desire of women to control the actions of men to whom they traditionally have been subject' and 'the desire of men to preserve themselves, conquer time, remain potent, and keep on wooing the future'.⁸¹ The editor's relationship with Mary may be seen in the light of Trollope's description of his feeling for Kate Field, 'semi-paternal — one third-brotherly, and as regards the remainder, as loving as you please'.⁸²

⁸¹ Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex', p. 24, 12.

⁸² Hall and Burgis, *Letters*, II, p. 438.

We can see from these depictions of family life just how important Trollope believed the domestic realm to be. As he writes in 'The Spotted Dog', 'A wife who is indifferent to being picked out of the gutter, and who will pawn her children's clothes for gin, must be a trouble than which none can be more troublesome' ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 258). P.D. Edwards wrote of Trollope's first novel in his political series, *Can You Forgive Her?*, that it was 'anti-political [...] an explicit defence of the values of private life against those of public'.⁸³ It would be wrong to suggest that 'An Editor's Tales' represents either a defence of the values of private life against those of the public, or vice versa, the defence of the values of public life against those of the private. This is not the argument that Trollope makes to Thackeray regarding suitable discourse within the private sphere, and it is not the impression given by the portraiture of family life in the series. If anything the depictions of the private sphere, and the public sphere, in these texts, work to suggest the falseness of this dichotomy. Rather Trollope redefines the values of the private sphere as he believes they are posited by the magazine-reading and producing public. This can also be seen in his depictions of women in the series.

Depictions of Women

As Jennifer Phegley has shown, the image of women and particularly women readers was integral to the construction of identity in family magazines of this period.⁸⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly in 'a magazine written by men, to men, about male discourse', and in a series displays a complex attitude to masculinity, a greater amount of attention has been paid to the portrayal of the male characters than the female in the series.⁸⁵ Men are far from conforming to the usual gender stereotypes in 'An Editor's Tales'. Take, for example, Michael Molloy. Turner compares the opening scene of 'The Turkish Bath' to a cruising

⁸³ P. D. Edwards, *Anthony Trollope: His Art and Scope* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 142.

⁸⁴ Phegley, pp. 4-9,

⁸⁵ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 246.

scene.⁸⁶ Certainly it cannot be denied that there are homosocial and homosexual undertones or even overtones in a scene in which men are described as sometimes having 'a feminine appearance' and all their interactions take place in near nakedness ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 52).

In comparison Trollope's treatment of women in the series is relatively simple. Although variously flawed, the women in 'An Editor's Tales' are powerful figures with strong individual voices. Polhemus believed that Trollope 'understood the feminine need for action, emotional outlet, and an end of intense repression'.⁸⁷ Mary Gresley has 'that power of supplicating by her eye without putting her petition into words which was absolutely irresistible' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 5). Her ability to influence and persuade is continually recurred to: 'So great was her eloquence, so excellent her suasive power either with her tongue or by that look of supplication in her face' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 17). The word 'power' crops up again and again. The narrator remarks at one point that 'she bore in her hand the power of that magnet, and we admit that the needle within our bosom was swayed by it' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 9), and at another, 'Her power over us, to a certain extent, was soon established' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 22).

Mary's power is said to reside foremost in her 'woman's weakness' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 5). Her power over the editor is the power of the weak over the strong. We can see this further in his depiction of her as a child. The editor states that 'to us the child of whom we are speaking — for she was so then — was ever a child' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 9). He recurs frequently to her youthful appearance and the smallness of her frame. In conjunction with this, he emphasizes his own age and seniority in years. He is a

⁸⁶ Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines*, p. 201.

⁸⁷ Robert Polhemus, *The Changing World of Anthony Trollope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 106.

'subsidiary old uncle' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 5), a 'graybeard' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 6), and 'past fifty' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 23). Yet for all that Trollope insists upon Mary as child-like, her adulthood is in plenty of evidence. She is after all eighteen, she is engaged, she earns and manages money, and runs her mother's household, such as it is. Moreover, there is a sexual dimension to her power over the editor. Despite his protestation that while he was in love with her, 'we think such a state of love to be a wholesome and natural condition', he goes on to affirm that 'We might, indeed, have loved her grandmother, — but the love would have been very different' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 6). He does not invite her to bring her mother with her on her visits, keen that the interview should be private. 'We loved her, in short, as we should not have loved her, but that she was young and gentle, and could smile' ('Mary Gresley', AET, p. 7).

It could be argued then that the editor attempts to contain Mary's power over him by constructing it in terms of gender stereotypes, an effort which fails, ironically, on the basis of her womanhood, which he constructs while attempting to deny it by picturing her as a child. On the social side, the editor is secure of his superiority. His invitation to Mary and her mother to join his family for Christmas is an act of both social and financial condescension. Yet Mary resists this condescension as well, at first refusing the invitation, and on several occasions, we are told, refusing offers of financial aid. In the end, she succumbs, asking the editor for money to visit her dying fiancé. This, however, is portrayed as an act of necessity, and even then Mary refuses half of what the editor offers her. Her dignity is not impinged upon by this act. The power dynamic between the two is far from straightforward, but the balance of power resides on Mary's side. As Polhemus notes, 'What shouldn't be missed is that the vocational ambition of the woman

in the story changes the narrator, changes the author, and changes the patriarchal feeling'.⁸⁸

Of Mrs Brumby the editor writes: 'Had she been a man and had circumstances favoured her, she might have been a prime minister, or an archbishop, or a chief justice' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 324). Mrs Brumby has a power borne out of sheer will-power and determination, as well the fact that she was 'utterly unscrupulous, dishonest, a liar, cruel, hard as nether mill-stone' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 324). Mrs Brumby is presented not so much as would-be contributor but as a military figure, her bonnet resembling a helmet, 'inspiring that reverence and creating that fear which Minerva's headgear is intended to produce' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 329). Minerva was the goddess of warriors, and it is in this light that Mrs Brumby sees herself, and in which the editor presents her. Her husband is a retired lieutenant, who was once in the Duke of Sussex's regiment. She uses this military connection as a source of authority, 'When Mrs. Brumby spoke of her husband's regiment being "peculiarly the Duke of Sussex's own", she used a tone which compelled from us more courtesy than we had hitherto shown her' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 337), but it is she who is the true militant.

Trollope's 'deconstruction' of typical gender stereotypes regarding women and literature and male 'constructions' of them is also notable in his depiction of Josephine de Montmorenci, her sister-in-law, and Mr Brown's reactions to them. Turner has noted that the editor in speculating about the possible adventure he might enjoy with Josephine compares her to Leda. The editor writes, 'Mr. Brown was a Jupiter, willing enough on occasions to go a little out of his way after some literary Leda, or even on behalf of a Danae desirous of a price of her compositions' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 102).

⁸⁸ Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex', p. 28.

But in a reversal of that myth in which Zeus disguises himself as a swan in order to make a conquest of Leda, in this case it is the female that disguises herself in order to make a conquest of the male. Turner focuses on Josephine and the link this draws between her and not just Leda, but Helen, 'the original femme fatale'. He characterizes Josephine as 'sadist and masochist, torturer and willing victim'.⁸⁹

But Trollope's main focus in this passage is on Mr Brown rather than Josephine. He does not directly connect Leda with Josephine, rather he indicates a general willingness of Mr Brown's part to encounter such a literary aspirant, although 'he was obliged to acknowledge to himself that the occasion had not as yet arisen' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 102). Initially, the narrator presents Mr Brown in a kindly light, urging the reader to sympathize with him. He admits certain weaknesses, but presents them as harmless, asking, 'Who is there that will think evil of him because it was so?' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 100). The narrator gently mocks Mr Brown for his love of 'the rustle of feminine apparel' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 100), for being unable to work while waiting for Josephine's visit, and for making sure that 'a new pair of gloves was in his hat' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 120). Increasingly, however, in hints and allusions the narrator makes clear that there is a darker edge to Mr Brown's interest in his lady correspondent. When Josephine proves difficult, Mr Brown is 'delighted' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 118). The narrator makes the reason for this delight clear: 'Now she was there, present to him in his own castle, at his mercy as it were, so that he might dry her tears and bid her hope, or tell her that there was no hope so that she might still weep on, just as he pleased' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 120). The language employed here is telling. The image of the castle is one of feudal power, and it is clearly in the idea of having power over the mysterious Josephine that the

⁸⁹ Turner, *Trollope and the Magazines*, pp. 213-214.

editor derives his pleasure. This is evident in the narrator's 'just as he pleased'. His desire for control over Josephine is such that he loses the power of sympathy, enjoying rather than being distressed at the idea of her tears. He is in fact pleased when he discovers that she is an invalid, admitting that 'he was doubly interested for her now when he knew her to be a cripple' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 133). And why is this? 'There is something to a man inexpressibly sweet in the power of protecting the weak; and no one had ever seemed to be weaker than Josephine' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 134). Striking here is the phrase 'to a man'. For as suggested above, Mr Brown is presented to the reader, to a degree, as a representative figure. His desire for power is the desire of men, as shown in the use of the phrase 'to a man', and perhaps even of the magazine-producing and magazine-buying community. There must be some significance to the fact that the name of the magazine that Mr Brown edits is *Olympus*, the home of the Gods. As Polehemus writes in relation to 'Mary Gresley', 'The editorial "we" and "us" used by the editor-narrator looks at first to be joky affectation to amuse readers, but rhetorically it winds up fusing the intensity of private experience into a broad public significance'.⁹⁰

Men frequently prove to be the obstacles in the path of these female aspirants. Mary Gresley burns the manuscript that she and the editor have been working on after making a promise to do so to her fiancé. In 'The Panjandrum' Churchill Smith tosses his cousin Lydia's manuscript upon the fire, an act symbolic of the destruction of their entire enterprise. Lydia's separation from her husband was due to his 'strong and, perhaps, monomaniacal objection to literary pursuits' (p. 150). Nothing is absolute, of course, in Trollope's universe, and, interestingly, in 'The Spotted Dog', it is Julius' drunken wife who destroys her husband's manuscript. Male/female relationships are complex in the series,

⁹⁰ Polehemus, (A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex', p. 25.

and just as Julius is as much an enemy to his own good as his wife is, so often do the female literary aspirants prove to be complicit in their own undoing. It should be noted that only Polly Puffle succeeds to any degree of literary success. But what is more important than the outcomes of any these stories is their general depiction of women as possessing strong and capable and mind and voices. In a magazine originally 'devoted to male subjects and a male reader', this is particularly intriguing.⁹¹

Trollope's depiction of women in the series questions the need for female reading to be censored and sanitized by portraying women quite capable of utilizing the written word to navigate both the private and public realms, and thereby questions an important tenet in the philosophy behind the family magazine. Female identity is only a fraught issue for the men of the series. Mary, Mrs Brumby, Polly Puffle and Mrs Grimes are confident about who they are and their role in life. It is the narrator who has trouble in dealing with them, not the women themselves, as their independence forces him to review his own identity. As Martin Danahay suggest, the feminine here is used a kind of mirror through which the masculine narrator represents himself as a subject.⁹² This is interesting given Tosh's contention that the ideal of the private sphere at the core of these magazines was one built around a male perspective, a view which Trollope may have come to share after the failure of his 'male' take on the Victorian family magazine.⁹³ However, this is not to say that the series is uncritical of the work of female novelists as sly allusions to Charlotte Brontë in 'Mary Gresley' and George Eliot and Harriet Martineau in 'Josephine de Montmorenci' show. Nonetheless, Trollope can be seen as 'as a man ahead of his time in

⁹¹ Turner, 'Project of Masculinity', p. 235.

⁹² Martin Danahay, *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Albany: New York State University Press, 1993), p. 2.

⁹³ Tosh, p. 50.

admiring egalitarian marriage and portraying the disastrous effect on real men and women of conventional Victorian gender roles'.⁹⁴

The private sphere as Trollope constructs it in 'An Editor's Tales' then, although a happy space, is far from the usual Victorian ideal, its domestic angels not built in quite the traditional mould. Trollope criticized the family magazine as pandering to the weakest, not the best of its audience in its segregation of the private from the public and its treatment of female readers as children in need of protection from the realities of the world. In keeping with this, the series places emphasis on strength of its female characters, portrays such realities as an unavoidable part of domestic life and shows up the segregation of the spheres as a façade of 'seemings and thinkings' that serves little real purpose in the world ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 273). He points to the fiction at the heart of family magazine discourse, while speculating at its roots.

Depictions of Men in 'An Editor's Tales'

It is noticeable that that it is the men, the narrator and Mr Grimes, that question the propriety of allowing Julius Mackenzie to work in the Grimes' home, while Mrs Grimes does not see a problem with this mingling of the public and the private. It is also notable that in both 'The Turkish Bath' and 'Mrs Brumby', that it is the men that are the domesticated figures. The home is their sanctuary more than it is their wives.

Saint Pauls has been viewed as aimed at a more 'masculine' audience. However, if Tosh is correct 'the elaboration of the idea of home answered to profound changes in the experience of men', not women.

⁹⁴ Markwick and Morse, p. 4.

Alienation from work was essentially a man's predicament. Alienation from the city affected both sexes, but when a household moved to the suburbs it was the commuting husband who was most often reminded of the dehumanizing quality of urban life. Order and love — the two vaunted principles of Victorian domesticity — were exactly those qualities which men found lacking in the public sphere. The "religion of the heart" has rightly been seen as opening a window of opportunity for women; but initially it was experienced and led by men, and men continued to be drawn to the proposition that the home is the proper place to cultivate one's spiritual and emotional well-being.⁹⁵

This also fits in with Danahay's contention that male autobiography in the nineteenth century was dominated by a 'nostalgia for the lost intimacy represented by community'.⁹⁶ The traditional view of *Saint Pauls'* poor circulation figures as being due to its failure to appeal to a female audience, may not therefore be the whole story. Equally, it could be seen to have failed to appeal to its male audience as well.

Whether or not this was case, and whether or not Trollope realized this, his depictions of men in 'An Editor's Tales' are certainly centred upon the home: Julius Mackenzie's misfortunes are rooted in his home life, behind the façade Molloy's true identity is that of family man and even nursemaid, Mr Brown's lack of home life rules his behaviour and it is when he loses himself in a domestic fantasy that the narrator's younger self finds his artistic calling. As Markwick points out, beneath the 'veneer of masculinist behaviour [...] of men relating to men in their workplaces, in their clubs, in their vestries and on their

⁹⁵ Tosh, p. 50.

⁹⁶ Danahay, p. 7.

estates [...] Trollope's masculinity is explicitly grounded in a man being in touch with his nurturing side'.⁹⁷ For all his grumbling, this is how the editor presents his own role in the majority of the tales, as the nurturer of aspirants such as Mary Gresley, Michael Molloy, Julius Mackenzie and Josephine de Montmorenci. He takes on a paternalistic role in relation to each of them, although this fatherly relationship is often complicated by sexual desire and his own insecurities regarding his ability to fulfil this role. The fiction at the heart of family magazine discourse then, and its concern with 'seemings and thinkings', may be seen as much a 'male' issue in 'An Editor's Tales' as a female one ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 273).

Lies and Façades in 'An Editor's Tales'

The fictionality of discourse is a major theme in the series. The 1860s family magazine sought to cast literary relations between the magazine and its readership in the light of familial bonds. While family relations in the series are unconventional, they are for the most part warm and convivial and the seat of genuine emotion. But, in 'An Editor's Tales', language is intrinsically deceptive and literary constructions of intimacy are not to be trusted. 'He could swear to the figure, and to the very step, although he could not as yet see the veiled face' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 120). Mrs Puffle's veiled face in this scene is but one of many veils utilized by the various characters that appear in the series. Mrs Puffle is herself a veil for the real Josephine de Montmorenci. Of course, the real Josephine de Montmorenci is not Josephine de Montmorenci at all, but rather Polly Puffle. Another veil. The cloaking of one's real self behind a false identity, a veil, a pseudonym, or rather uniquely in 'The Spotted Dog' an alternative home, is not simply a common occurrence in 'An Editor's Tales' but is in fact ubiquitous amongst all the major

⁹⁷ Margaret Markwick, *New Men in Trollope's Novels: Rewriting the Victorian Male* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 13.

characters. Rather than the usual tenets of individuality such as indivisibility, continuity and strongly-marked idiosyncrasy, we find instead displacement after displacement, a series of veils and disguises. The identities of characters are stripped back to reveal a series of disguises and veils disconnecting the individual from their literary production. Time and again the editor makes a connection with a person only to discover that it was based upon a ruse, that through the careful use of language and artifice he was fooled.

Robin Gilmour has written 'that the true measure of Trollope's relationship to his world is to be taken not by stressing the satirist's antagonism to society, for which he had only a limited capacity, but by uncovering the ambivalence in his attitude to the social and moral assumptions underlying the fictional conventions he employs'.⁹⁸ This can be seen in 'An Editor's Tales', though the conventions that he questions here relate more to magazine discourse in general rather than fiction-writing in particular.

'The Turkish Bath' sees the editor being taken in by a madman posing as an impoverished journalist posing as a well-to-do man of the world. 'Mrs. Brumby' is the story of how the lies and deceit of the title character force the editor into paying for a contribution he cannot use nor ever had any intention of using. If neither Mary Gresley nor Julius Mackenzie dupes the editor, he nevertheless finds himself blinded to the truth regarding either their character or their situation. 'Josephine de Montmorenci' sees the editor being tricked into helping a would-be novelist based upon the belief that said novelist is a beautiful and mysterious woman. Importantly, it is through their use of language, particularly familiar language, that these would-be contributors manage to practice their deceptions on the editor.

⁹⁸ Gilmour, pp. 186-187.

Let us take for example, Molloy and the first part of his two-fold pretence. The editor is sitting in the sauna of a Turkish bath-house, when a fellow patron starts to converse with him. Unable to see very well, being 'obligated by the sudorific processes and by the shampooing and washing that are to come, to leave our spectacles behind us' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 10), the editor's opinion of this fellow is based upon his motions, which exhibited 'the thorough man of the world, the traveller who has seen many climes, the cosmopolitan to whom East and West were alike' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 11), as well as the 'hint of an Irish accent in his tone [...] so nearly banished by intercourse with other tongues as to leave the matter still a suspicion' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, pp. 11-12), and the fact that 'Plato and Pope were evidently at his fingers' ends' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 14). In his recounting of this conversation, the narrator weighs heavily on Molloy's choice of words and phrasing. Even after the first discovery that 'There had doubtless been a fraud committed on us, — a palpable fraud' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 21), and that Molloy had pretended not to know him in order to trick him into agreeing to read his manuscript, the editor still does not see fully through Molloy's deceit, and in large part this is because he 'could quote Horace and talk about the "to kalon"' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 22).

It is this which the editor dwells on when Molloy comes to see him and the editor properly realizes that he is not the man that he believed him to be. 'It had been a plant from beginning to end, and the "to kalon" and the half-dozen words from Horace had all been parts of Mr. Molloy's little game!' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 25). His remarks were 'the sparkling gems of conversation in which a man shouldn't expect to find rare diamonds' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 29). Molloy, by adopting a pose of educated familiarity with the editor, convinces him that he is an equal and a friend. Whereas the editor is 'anxious' about conversing with strangers in the setting of the bath-house,

Molloy exhibits 'ease and dignity', and as the editor later admits, 'When we had been all but naked together I had taken him to be the superior of the two' ('The Turkish Bath', AET, p. 11, 29). The editor is grateful to him for conversing with him. But it all turns out to be a ploy in order to get published. Molloy uses the editor's preconceptions regarding language use against him. He establishes a conversation in the anonymous and yet private space of the baths, the rules of which seems to be similar to that of the gentleman's club, another other all-male space. He pretends to the friendly disinterest of a stranger. In fact, he establishes a relationship not dissimilar to that which exists between the periodical writer and his audience, as they partake in anonymous friendly, disinterested conversation in a public space that apes the rules and discretion of the private. It is all, however, a sham.

Mrs Brumby, who the narrator describes as 'utterly unscrupulous, dishonest, a liar, cruel, hard as a nether mill-stone to all the world' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 332), presents herself to the editor through the form of an introductory letter by a literary acquaintance of the editor's. She attempts to gain admittance through faking a degree of intimacy between herself and the editor that does not exist. When the editor attempts to turn her away even after reading her letter of introduction, the editor recounts her indignation as follows: 'Did we mean to cast doubt upon the word of our own intimate friend? For the gentleman at the office of the "Literary Curricule" had written to us as "Dear —", though as far as we could remember we have never spoken half-a-dozen words to him in our life' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 341). The editor admits, 'We did not think very much of the acquaintance by whom the strong introductory letter was written' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 339), nonetheless it did have some effect, for 'after reading it we could not speak to the lady with acerbity which we might have used had she come without it' ('Mrs Brumby', AET, p. 340). The editor is never particularly convinced by Mrs Brumby's lies, as lies they

turn out to be, but the nature of her lies and the impact she expects them to have is interesting. For Mrs Brumby, language binds. The letter proclaims a level of intimacy with the narrator, and therefore Mrs Brumby feels entitled to the rewards of that intimacy, no matter what its relation to the real state of affairs.

Similarly, it is the nature of the deception and the means by which she establishes it that is the most interesting part of the editor's dealings with Josephine de Montmorenci. Josephine de Montmorenci, as Polly Puffle and her sister-in-law Mrs Puffle present her to the editor, is the figure of the Romantic artist. The title of her novel is 'Not So Black As He's Painted' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 124). After realizing his mistake in thinking that Mrs Puffle was Josephine, the new picture that the editor creates of her in his mind is something of a female Byron:

There should be more of stature than Mrs Puffle possessed, with dark hair, and piercing eyes. The colour of the dress should be black [...] For such an adventure the appropriate colour of the skin would be, — we will not say sallow exactly, — but running a little that way. The beauty should be just toned by sadness; and the blood, as it comes and goes, should show itself, not in blushes, but in the mellow, changing lines of the brunette' ('Josephine de Montmorenci, AET, p. 124).

The editor pictures Josephine as a character from a Gothic novel. The Puffles create this impression through a careful use of language, beginning, of course, with the name 'Josephine de Montmorenci'.

Through their letters to Mr Brown, Polly and Mrs Puffe present Josephine as detaching herself from normal social etiquette. She is audacious. She is bold. They make her intentionally rude in order 'to catch' him ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 134). They portray her as an individualist in terms of language as well as social conduct. "I hate you and your compliments. That sort of communication means nothing" ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 103). They attack the editor's correspondence, which in its borrowed and conventional language, they criticize as little better than 'nonsense' suggesting in contrast that Josephine's letters are genuine and that her deviation from normal social protocols implies a sincerity that is missing from Mr Brown's letters ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 105).

But Josephine is a fiction as are her letters. Josephine is in fact two different women, the sisters Puffe. She is a collaborative creation. Behind the façade of the Romantic artist there is in fact a joint enterprise. The novel itself was not a collaborative work, although the editor digresses at length on the concerted effort that would be needed to make the work publishable. But the author presented is not the individual that wrote the novel, the author presented is the product of a team effort, created in order to sell the text to the editor. What Mr Brown believes to be a personal communication between him and Josephine de Montmorenci, is in fact the clever stylings of two sisters. Notably, there is a distinct contrast between the way in which the sisters view the correspondence and the way in which Mr Brown views it.

Our editor tried to explain to them that the sin of which he now complained did not consist in the intention, — foolish as that he been, — of putting such a name as Josephine de Montmorenci on the title-page, but in having corresponded with him, —with him who had been so

willing to be a friend, — under a false name ('Josephine de Montmorenci, AET., p. 143).

For Mr Brown, it is his personal rather than his professional curiosity that is piqued, whereas the sisters' goal is purely professional.

The picture of the writer that emerges in this series is that of the role-player. Mary Gresley plays alternatively at being Charlotte Bronte and being her creation, Jane Eyre. Michael Molloy plays at being the man of the world, then the down-on-his-luck journalist attempting to feed his family. The Doctor in 'The Spotted Dog' is playing at being a scholar. Mrs Brumby plays the part of the experienced woman of letters and then the part of the wronged victim. In 'The Panjandrum', various pretences are played out, until in the end the attempt to establish a periodical in itself is rendered little more than a charade. These pretences are part of a larger game played between the editor and the would-be contributors in an attempt by the contributors to reach their ultimate goal, the publication of their wares. Writing and publication are rendered a game, in the various meanings of the word: the element of joy and pleasure, the competitiveness, prescribed rules of behaviour and action, artificiality, even perhaps the element of prostitution carried within the idea of being 'on the game'. They pass themselves off as living beyond convention as a means of marketing their goods. Originality becomes a role to be played by the would-be contributors for the purpose of winning the game.

Thus originality for Polly Puffle is a mode of seduction. It is a means by which to lure Mr Brown. Her novel itself is not credited with any great originality. It is recognizably 'Byronic' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 111). The editor categorizes without much trouble the novel as 'feminine metaphysics' ('Josephine de Montmorenci', AET, p. 113).

As a novel-writer, she may be gifted but her writing follows established modes. It is as a letter-writer that she established her originality, but this is revealed as a trick, a deliberate act of provocation designed to pique the interest of the editor and induce him to read her manuscript. 'Josephine de Montmorenci' holds authorial identity up as a disguise, a game played, and something quite distinct from the identity of the individual, as shown by the distinction between Josephine de Montmorenci and Polly Puffle. A. L. Rowse is of the opinion that Trollope 'hated the humbug of the age far more than anyone — much more than Dickens and Thackeray, George Eliot, Carlyle or Ruskin, who in part subscribed to it'.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Although as pointed out earlier we do not know many specifics regarding Trollope's central narrator, there are certain things we do know. We know that he has never heard of King Charles Street in Camden Town, and that he finds the idea of living in Hoxton with its houses he prices at 'ten and six-pence a week, and believed them to be inhabited by pianoforte-tuners, coach-builders, firemen, and public-office messengers' to be 'very depressing to our own spirits' ('Spotted Dog', AET, pp. 87-88). We know that he has never heard of 'penny dreadfuls', though 'there they were, going forth into the hands of hundreds of thousands of readers' ('Spotted Dog', AET, p. 253) and we know that he is in need of an escort when visiting Julius Mackenzie's home in Cucumber Court. In other words, though his blandness might make him a ready everyman for the readers of *Saint Pauls* to identify with, he is a very particular type of everyman — he is an 'every-gentleman'.

⁹⁹ A. L. Rowse, 'Trollope's Autobiography' in *Trollope Centenary Essays*, ed. by John Halperin (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 138.

When the editor is mocked, it is not just him and his brother editors that Trollope is ridiculing, it is the whole shilling monthly magazine-producing and magazine-buying public. Trollope uses the 'we' against both himself and his readers, and in doing so he demonstrates both its power and its limitation. Its power is that it can be used in such a way, to include the audience, to draw the audience together, to create a semblance of unity and community. Its limitation, as Trollope shows with his editor(s) reactions to the various different parts of London he is forced to visit, is that it is in fact a very select 'we', and perchance, in some ways, an ignorant 'we'. It is not just himself that the editor is questioning when he wonders at his ignorance of the 'penny dreadfuls', which as he comments 'instructed in their modes of life and manner of thinking' hundreds of thousands of readers ('The Spotted Dog', AET, p. 253). It is not just himself he doubts when he compares himself with the dissolute and ragged Julius Mackenzie:

He had divined our thoughts, and we did not dare to contradict him. We felt that a weak, vapid, unmanly smile was creeping over our face. We were smiling as a man smiles who intends to imply some contemptuous assent with the self-depreciating comment of his companion. Such a mode of expression is in our estimation most cowardly, and most odious ('The Spotted Dog', AET, pp. 240-241).

As Skilton points out, as a mid-century realist writer Trollope was 'caught dangerously between various conflicting demands', those demands being 'the literary requirement of truth to life', 'the moral and social imperative of respectability', and 'the readers' demand for interest and stimulation'. Skilton holds that the success of the Barsetshire novels was based on the perfect balance between these demands that he managed to maintain in those works: 'safe yet racy, pricking the pomposity of individuals without threatening the

institution, and showing a calmly secluded life in tension with the forces of change of the metropolis'.¹⁰⁰ With 'An Editor's Tales', Trollope went beyond this, refusing to segregate the calmly secluded interiors of the domestic realm which he visits from the outside world of the metropolis, and pricking the pomposity of individuals and institutions alike.

¹⁰⁰ Skilton, p. 85.

AFTERWORD

We are about to introduce a new personage to the reader; or rather we are about to reveal in his true character a person with whom the reader is already slightly acquainted. Let the introduction take place with all the proper ceremony, and due formality: Reader, Mr. David Fudge — Mr. David Fudge, Reader. “Very happy,” says reader, “to make the acquaintance of a gentleman with whose works I am so familiar — remember your charming description of — hum, ha, charming indeed — ha, hum.” And then the reader turns aside to us, the introducer, and asks in an under tone, “Who is he?”¹

In the opening to the first essay of his ‘Our Eye-Witness’ series, Charles Collins attempts to efface the anonymity of the relationship between reader and writer through the semblance of a formal introduction. The formality of the ceremony is undermined by the familiarity of the reader’s ‘ha, hum’, which lends a personal touch, dramatizing the introduction to comic effect. Despite this, however, the question remains. Who is he? A name is given — but the name is both literally and figuratively a ‘Fudge’. A true character is revealed, but that character is even less particularized than his name: ‘he is simply an observant gentleman who goes about with his eyes and ears open, who notes everything that comes in his way, and who has furnished to this periodical certain results of his faculty of observation’.² He is simply ‘Our Eye-Witness’, and he is both familiar friend and anonymous journalist.

¹ Charles Collins, ‘Our Eye-Witness’, *All the Year Round*, I:IX (June 25 1859), p. 203.

² Collins, ‘Our Eye-Witness’, p. 203.

Collins' introduction reveals a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of contemporary journalism and the particular mode of personal journalism in which his series was working. Mocking the frequently exhibited desire to have journalistic relations reflect face-to-face relationships, while himself adopting their trappings, he demonstrates the manner in which they are both alike and unlike. Collins' series, like those we have studied in this thesis, was concerned with the anonymity of what was increasingly working towards becoming mass journalism.

Of course, series of this kind can be traced back to the eighteenth-century periodical, and the notable works of Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson, Henry Fielding and Oliver Goldsmith. These eighteenth-century periodical writers cultivated a sense of the eccentric in their narrative personae, thereby presenting the reader with a very individual and personal point of view upon the world but also a particularly peculiar one. Their isolation from society is one of their most striking features. Mr Spectator is 'a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species', who maintains that 'the greatest Pain I can suffer, is the being talked to, and being stared at'.³ His 'Commerce of Discourse' runs only to a few intimate friends and 'not in Publick even with them'.⁴ Similarly, Oliver Goldsmith's character-narrator describes himself as 'one of those solitary animals, that has been forced from its forest to gratify human curiosity' in 'The Citizen of the World'.⁵ This is true of the character-narrators of the Romantic essayists as well. 'Few understood' later figures such as Charles Lamb's Elia, who confessed to feeling 'the differences of mankind, national or individual, to an unhealthy excess',⁶ while William Hazlitt's essays have been

³ Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*, ed. by Angus Ross (London and New York: Penguin, 1988), pp. 199-200.

⁴ Addison and Steele, *Selections*, p. 208.

⁵ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World and The Bee* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1934), p. 5.

⁶ Charles Lamb, *Charles Lamb: Selected Prose*, ed. by Adam Phillip (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1985), p. 176, 113.

described as providing a portrait of their author as ‘a self-tormentor and a morbid egotist, a creature doomed to be a species by himself forever exiled’.⁷

A concern regarding the relationship between journalist and audience, and with the distinction between face-to-face contact and written communication then, can be traced back to the origins of the form. However, within the context of the mid-nineteenth-century family magazine, this concern took on particular dimensions. The explosion of new periodicals in the 1860s, and the rapid expansion of the reading public, as well as a general sense of the increasingly anonymous dimensions of modern society, heightened the sense of distance between author and audience. In the face of this, the family magazine nurtured an image of intimate reader-writer relations, depicting contributors and readers alike as joining together in a circle of acquaintanceship modelled upon an idealized version of the domestic sphere as a segregated realm of warmth and comfort upon which the public realm would not intrude. But the magazine as a form, like the personal journalistic series, retains the ethos of the essay, of a ‘trying-out’,⁸ despite incorporating a number of other formal elements into its mix.

Holly Furneaux has argued for ‘the queer possibilities of the serial form in which linear, teleological reading is structurally discouraged and closure is only ever a temporary cessation’.⁹ For Furneaux, ‘aspirations to closure are repeatedly exposed as mythic’ by the serial form. She reads this tendency to resist closure as queer because it means that serials ‘materially demonstrate the incompleteness of ending in the novels carried by

⁷ John Kinnaird, *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 268.

⁸ The word ‘essay’ comes from the French *essai* meaning ‘to try out’, ‘to attempt’ or ‘to experiment’, which in itself comes from the Latin *exagium* meaning to weigh an object or an idea, to examine it from different angles, cf., Graham Good, *The Observing Self: Rediscovering the Essay* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 28-29.

⁹ Furneaux, p. 67.

them, disrupting the marital denouement so associated with the genre', destabilizing their 'narrative heteroideology'. This is defined by Furneaux as narrative's dominant 'reproductive' path, the plot's drive towards 'synthesis' and the resulting (re)production of people, goods and narrative. Furneaux counters arguments that Dickens circumvents any 'counter-plotting' he has indulged in with 'a closing celebrant vision of marital hearth and home', by focusing on the 'general indeterminacy of the serial form', which resists closure, and undermines the foundations of this celebrant vision.¹⁰

Similarly, we might see the mid-century family magazine and the personal journalistic series as having 'queer' possibilities, in that the nature of their forms means that despite their celebration of a particular segregated ideal of the domestic space, they remain open to and even invite alternative visions. The *Cornhill*, *All the Year Round* and *Saint Pauls*, and the work of Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope in these magazines, are good examples of this, but there are others. As Phegley writes,

Within the pages of periodicals, editors, contributors, and readers interact to create a seemingly chaotic and open form that maintains a logical coherence. This coherence determines the periodical's genre as well as its distinct character and agenda, which is larger than the sum of its parts and permeates even the seemingly disparate and discrete sections of the collection of works in any given issue.¹¹

What is particularly interesting about the family magazine is that this openness is as integral to its character and agenda as its more closed elements. Its willingness to

¹⁰ Furneaux, pp. 82-83.

¹¹ Phegley, p. 12.

complicate its own narrative, even to the point of contradiction, is an essential part of its identity, and its appeal to a multilayered audience.

By nature, magazines are messy, heterogeneous, and multiple. Even under the strictest policy of conformity, different voices emerge. This is true of a single issue, let alone the magazine considered as a whole. Periodicals are constantly evolving from one issue to a next. The world moves forward and events cause opinions to change and perspectives to shift. Jonathan V. Farina has written of how much of the move towards the personal within magazines such as *Household Words* in fact reinforces a kind of collectivity. Documenting how articles such as G.A. Sala's 'The Secrets of Gas' and Henry Morley's 'The Catalogue's Account of Itself' use tools such as 'autobiographical form, affected informality, digressive gossip, and references to parents', Farina shows that these techniques are used not just to personify the Gas and the Catalogue respectively, but to represent them each as one 'representative part of a larger, ineffable phenomenon', each one as a character which 'exceed its individual contributors and subjects'.¹² But this is only one part of the story. As Phegley writes, all such magazines have a certain level of corporate togetherness.¹³ It is a necessary part of their serial nature. And, to a certain extent, this is reflected in the narrative style of their content, as Farina illustrates. However, as Julia Chavez says of *Temple Bar*, they also invited wandering reading practices by playing upon the fragmented nature of the text and 'its intertextual and proto-hypertext format'.¹⁴ Or in the words of Fraser, Green and Johnston, they acted 'as a space enabling individual ideas to be voiced and dialogue to take place'.¹⁵ Contradiction is a necessary corollary of that.

¹² Jonathan V. Farina, "'A Certain Shadow': Personified Abstractions and the Form of *Household Words*", *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42: 4 (Winter 2009), pp. 403-404.

¹³ Phegley, p. 12.

¹⁴ Chavez, p. 127.

¹⁵ Fraser, Green and Johnston, p. 200.

For the most part, however, contradiction is too forceful and too stark a word to be used in connection with the various shifts and evolutions of the family magazine. It incorporated collectivity with contradiction through the trope of familiar conversation. We can see this clearly when we look at the *Cornhill* and Thackeray's prospectus to that magazine. He calls for 'pleasant and instructed gentleman and ladies to contribute their share to the conversation'. He puts limits on this dialogue to be sure, 'There are points on which agreement is impossible, and on these we need not touch', but he still supposes the model for the magazine to be an exchange of different ideas and opinions.¹⁶ It also utilized, as Chavez suggests, the wandering motif as a means of understanding and containing some of its messier elements, although not always as obviously as *Temple Bar* with its motto of "'Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "let us take a walk down Fleet Street"'.¹⁷ The idea of the journey and of commencing a voyage was pervasive in the introductory materials of many magazines. We have already seen this prominently in relation to the *Argosy*, which was named after a ship, and in regards to the *Cornhill*, in which Thackeray suggests that he and his readers are 'fellow-travellers' ('On a Lazy, Idle Boy', RP, p. 5). The notion of journeying however is more purposeful than wandering. Wandering is connotative of spontaneity, freedom and multiplicity. It is also creative. For Chavez, the wandering reading practices that such magazines encourage mean that 'consuming the periodical is therefore a matter of creative and critical thinking, a matter of fashioning one's own tailor-made text by "poaching" from the available material'.¹⁸ It allows for interactions to occur and connections to be made that a planned journey would not permit.

¹⁶ Ray, *Letters*, IV, p. 161.

¹⁷ Chavez, p. 126.

¹⁸ Chavez, p. 129.

Creative and interactive — these are good words to describe the 1860s family magazine, which used the constraints and rules that defined its genre as source of inspiration as much as anything else. These series by Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope are rich and sophisticated in their dialogue with their readers. Like the magazines in which they were published, they utilize both the motif of conversation and that of wandering, although while these provide a lens through which to view their writings, they do not always serve to contain the plurality of series spread across the bounds of several months, or years even, which incorporate a number of different formal characteristics, are frequently subjective in the extreme, and which have as their dominating principle, a pervasive sense of irony.

In studying these series, and the family magazines in which they emerged, we encounter some difficulties. Diverse and heterogeneous as they are, it seems that they are sometimes too rich in material. Pulling at one thread, always brings up a dozen more, and one gets trapped in the complexity of the pattern. Moreover, although there are continuities, each issue or article is also an enclosed entity, and with each the pattern seems to shift somewhat. Thus while when we study these texts a particular image of family life repeatedly emerges, there are always other diverging and overlapping images. One view of masculinity is countered by another. The female reader appears at some points in a manner designed to horrify modern-day critics, and at others is portrayed in a way that could only be described as proto-feminist. This is within the same series or magazine. If we attempt to compare the series, things become even more complicated. As many similarities as there are between the series, there are an equal number of differences, in style, form, content and perspective, and these differences as with the similarities shift over the course of the series.

All three series employ a rhetoric of intimacy with their readers and all three present that rhetoric to their readers through a veil of irony. All three series engage with the idea of the domestic sphere as a segregated, sacrosanct and feminized space. All three explore the suitability of this idea as a paradigm for structuring magazine journalism, and all three throw up various different images of family life, masculinity, femininity, and the interaction between the public and the private in relation to this. All three tackle the idea of respectability in literature, and the alienation inherent in written communication as well as its possibilities of intimacy. But they tackle these issues in different ways, and with a different emphasis. Wandering as they are, the attempt to force them into a pattern, to circumscribe the heterogeneity, can only lead to frustration and the loss of that variety and depth which is the source of their fascination. It would also be to miss the point of such texts, and all that can be gained by study of the periodical press in general. To return to Collins's series, a concern with the anonymity of what was increasingly working towards becoming mass journalism was a common one in the periodical literature of the day, but these series nevertheless utilized both that anonymity and scale and diversity of the press as a source of creativity and a means of engaging their readers.

It would be fair to say then that this thesis only scratches the surface of a larger and more intricate dialogue that was going on, perhaps even within the bounds of the series that it studies, certainly in the magazines which it looks at, and most certainly in the periodical culture in general. This thesis has attempted to follow the convolutions of these three series as they have interacted with various prominent trends in the magazine culture of the time. It has looked at the way in which they have sought to establish a picture of intimate reader-writer relations and produced a nuanced portrait of the nature of journalistic dynamics in the period, which acknowledges both the possibilities for intimacy and for alienation. It has examined the way in which this relates to the larger

discourse of family at the time, which was a formative influence on the magazines in which they were published, and the individual ways in which they added to that discourse. But it has hopefully also demonstrated that these series were not unique in their treatment of these subjects, and that Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope were engaging with, as is a journalist's want, topics of importance in the culture of the day. Perhaps more importantly, it has attempted to show that these texts exhibit a sophistication that belies their marginal status. It is in large part their form which has relegated them to the sidelines of their author's oeuvres, but as with the magazines in which they were first published it is their form that is the foundation of their dynamism.

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