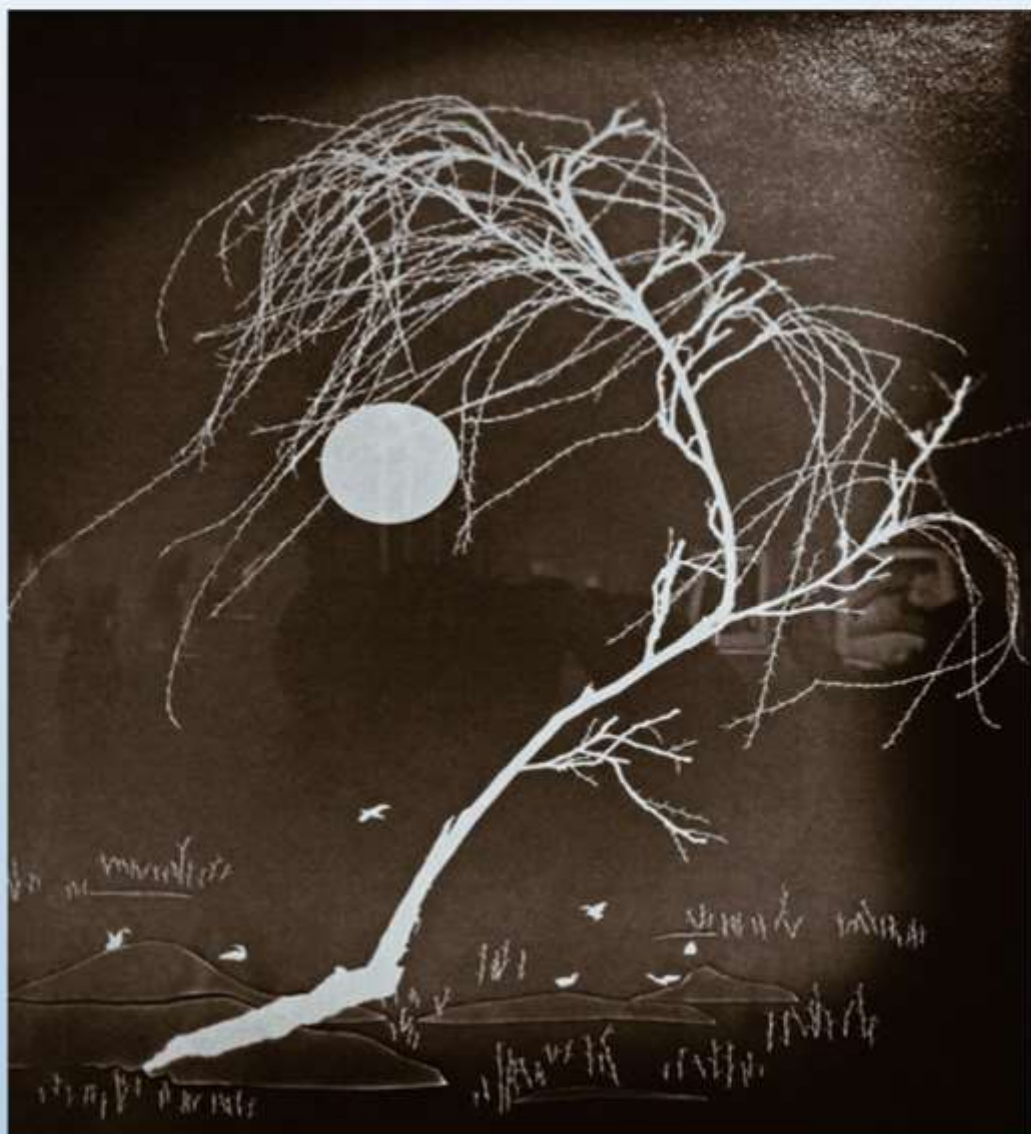


# The ESSE Messenger



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- Journal Articles on Sensation, Mystery and Detection in the Victorian Novel
- Echoes: Anne Bradstreet
- Book Review



# The ESSE Messenger

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“Make ‘em cry, make ‘em laugh, make ‘em wait”

## Sensation, mystery, and detection in the Victorian novel

The phrase “Make ‘em laugh; make ‘em cry; make ‘em wait” usually ascribed to Charles Reade – an English novelist and dramatist active in the second half of the 19th century – was to become famous after William Wilkie Collins rearranged it as “Make ‘em cry, make ‘em laugh, make ‘em wait” and used it as a sort of manifesto of the Victorian sensation novel.

The term “sensation” had sometimes an unjust pejorative connotation but that did not hinder its popularity. In the time of its highest fame, it was considered a low genre and the main accusations of the critique were that the novels of the sensation tradition were written mainly to produce thrilling sensations in readers without almost any concern of the moral, philosophical, social or religious features of the traditional literature. The reproach is not entirely lacking substance because the sensational novels are indeed characterized by the presence of secrets and mysteries, scandals and crimes, which disrupt the peaceful domestic lives of the middle class so dear to realist paradigm.

This new kind of literature developed in the particular social and economic environment of the Victorian era. It can be considered part of popular fiction as it was generally intended to fill ‘the needs of escapism and relaxation’ (Flint 20) of the working class. In fact, a clear distinction between readers starts being observed. At one end, there is the average reader of the working class with his or her needs of being entertained and, at the other, a more educated public able to taste elaborated concepts, such as art for art’s sake. *The Saturday Review* describes this average reader in 1887 as not being a critical person or as a person with quite reduced artistic demands. Definitely, according to the commentators employed by this magazine, the average reader of sensation novels is not a sophisticated person because ‘all he asks is that he may be *amused and interested without taxing his own brains*’ (Flint 20, my italics).

The sensation novels were the first truly popular bestsellers, they were products of Victorian mass culture, soon to become a commodity, produced as they were in accordance with “the market-law of demand and supply” so as to lead to immediate sales. One of the reasons that generated such products was the high-interest in the serialised fiction to maintain a stable readership, which forced the writers to write in such a way as to keep their readers’ interest awake and determine them to buy the next instalments.

Sensation literature was not totally opposed to Realism which, in its nineteenth-century context, tried to present the reality as it actually was. Practically, sensation literature combines ‘romance and realism’ in a way that ‘strains both modes to the limit.’ The sensationalists construct characters and

stories that might be found in the daily reality of every rich or poor, educated or less educated person and associate them with another side or dimension of reality, the side that is not part of ordinary experience. If we analyse the characters that take part in this out-of-the-ordinary experience, we discover that they are the common people of the middle class till the moment when something comes up and trouble their ordinary life. There is a specific feature in the sensational novel that could be named trigger, a special event, a hidden (guilty) secret that transforms the most common, sometimes idle life of a character into an uncommon experience and existence and the most boring and unreadable story into a palpitating novel.

Sensation fiction may be seen as a romantic (melodramatic) and suspenseful form of fiction, a kind of civilized melodrama, modernized and domesticated – a sort of everyday Gothic, minus the supernatural and aristocratic accessories, but also a middle-class Newgate, featuring spectacular crime unconnected with the usual criminal classes.

Sensation fiction domesticated crime, secrets, and illicit sexuality and located them within the ordinary middle-class home and family, where the most apparently respectable neighbour might turn out to be a serial poisoner; the most angelic of women, at least a bigamist and potentially a cold-blooded killer, every spouse could play the role of spy, every servant, the role of blackmailer.

In criminalizing the Victorian home, the sensation novels succeeded in defamiliarizing it and refamiliarizing it according to other dimensions. This went in parallel with the fact that suspense was heightened to the intense point, and crisis became narrative routine; plots went up and down, exploding in multiple climaxes or 'sensation scenes'; plot took precedence over narrative voice as well, i.e. the primacy of plot, went with the accompanying 'diminution' of the character treatment and the narrator. The sensational narrator had to withhold secrets from his readers while the sensation novels eroded narrative authority – the narrator was no longer trustworthy, perhaps no longer omniscient. Like the reader, he became an accomplice in crime or even criminal himself.

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## **Adrian Radu**

The ESSE Messenger Editor



# The Mask of Sensation

## Echoes of Sensation Novel Female Characters in *Gone Full Havisham*

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**Abstract.** During the last decades, social networking sites have become our main of socializing. We create online self-representations in order to participate and the way we modify our lives to make them fit virtual stereotypes can alter our identity. Almost two centuries ago identity loss was a recurrent issue in sensation novels reflecting common social anxiety. Irene Kelleher's play *Gone Full Havisham* (2019) recovers Dickens's Miss Havisham to portray this craze and its side effects. By means of Bakhtin's theories of Carnival and dialogism and Foucault's concept of discourse I will try to unravel how sensation masks, used in the 21st century as identities, are equally built, manipulated and lost.

**Keywords:** identity, masks, discourse, monological voices, polyphony

### Victorian constraintment on 21st century characters

Despite Victorian middle-class high standards of self-repression, decorum and moral continence, scandals and sensational events were as valued as they are nowadays. This love for sensation is something inherent to human nature, as Michael Diamond states: "Curiosity, the inclination to idolize and demonize prominent figures, the tendency to wallow in emotion – the Victorians suffered from these weaknesses just as we do" (Diamond 2003,6). According to Diamond these different Victorian sensations can be split up into different broad categories – royalty, politics, religion and morality, sex scandals, murder mysteries, and to a lesser extent, sports and disasters. Wilkie Collins, Ellen Wood and Elizabeth Braddon were the first novelists to respond to the public's demand, each of them publishing at the beginning of the 1860's respectively *The Woman in White* (1859), *East Lynne* (1861) and *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), which would settle the genre foundations. Apart from its elements of blackmail, fraud and murder, the sensation novel is also the embodiment of a specific nervousness, prompted by the rapidly modernizing world, and a thematization of multiple Victorian fears that are also familiar with the current ones. Especially they paid attention to anxieties concerning the family. This can be clearly seen, as most sensation novels reveal that the "ideal" Victorian family has some dark secret tucked away (Pykett,1999, 10). The biggest concern among the Victorian middle-class, however, was that of the nature of the feminine and gender roles (Pykett, 1999, 10) which prompted women to start to rebel against their inferior position within society. Female characters were portrayed as strong, taking matters into their own hands (Diamond 2003, 5) and being central in almost every sensation novel.

Stage and Screen actress Irene Kelleher<sup>1</sup> brings Dickens into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century by means of her play *Gone Full Havisham*<sup>2</sup> (2019) where she offers a rewriting of *Great Expectations* (1861) set up in Ireland during the 80's and focused on the figure of a modernized Miss Havisham. Leaving aside Pip's story, Kelleher puts her heart into giving voice to the jilted bride who lacks the capacity of love. The author aims at breaking the characterization Miss Havisham has been victim of by making the audience accompany her in her journey of acceptance and refusal of her assigned role. Emily Halloran, *Gone Full Havisham*'s protagonist is introduced to us while live streaming her break down from her penthouse honeymoon suite where she has been dwelling for five months. In a reflection of today's co-dependent society, she lets her followers take decisions for her as she seems to look for validation in social networks. The daughter of a late businessman who owned the hotel where she is broadcasting from, Emily is the archetype of a poor rich girl who has never been too popular. Brought up to become a brain and a bookworm her only true connection is Elise -her best friend- who leaves her to make a life of her own. Having to cope with the early loss of her mother, Emily's father becomes the main pillar of her life, substituted at his death by her fiancé Jack who has already abandoned her by the time the play starts. We only learn about Emily's story through her own voice, by means of her internet broadcast and her internal monologues. #Gonefullhavisham -the hashtag Emily is trending on- does not only reference Charles Dickens's character in *Great Expectations* (1861) but it is also an indicator of the level of implication between Emily's 21<sup>st</sup> century self and Victorian novel characters. Even if it might seem two centuries is too big a gap, digital society fixates over daily stories echoing literary sensationalism of the 1860s and diverging from it only in the way they are consumed. Posts and shares on Instagram, YouTube or Twitter mirror the nineteenth century magazines where authors published monthly episodes trying to give their public what they demanded.

Irene Kelleher, as sensation writers did back in the day, pushes the limits of psychological and sexual constructs of female characters, unravelling the contradictions on which society based and still bases the notions of normality and stability, revealing the lies behind gender construction and thereby putting in

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<sup>1</sup> Irene is an Irish playwright and performer. Her first play, *Mary and Me*, published by Oberon, toured extensively nationally and internationally to critical acclaim and is also an RTÉ produced radio play. The play was nominated for the Argus Angel Award from the Brighton Fringe and a Bobby Award at the Edinburgh Fringe 2017. It had its US Premiere in October 2020 at the Players Ring and is currently running at the Hat Box Theatre, New Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup> *Gone Full Havisham* is Irene's second play. It enjoyed a sell-out run on its premiere at the Cork Midsummer Festival 2019 and was staged site-specifically in a penthouse suite of the Clayton Hotel. The play also had a critically acclaimed run at the Gilded Balloon as part of the Edinburgh Fringe in August and in Bewleys Theatre, Dublin in January 2020. Nominated for a Bobby Award as part of Ed Fringe, it was named by both *The Irish Examiner* and *The Irish Times* as a Theatre Highlight of 2019. The play is published on the Irish Theatre Institute (ITI) Website as an E-script. It began a national tour in February 2020 and other venues included: Scripts Festival in Offaly, Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo, Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford and The Garage Theatre, Monaghan. The play was in the middle of a national tour that had to be postponed due to the outbreak of Covid19

question role models and stereotypes. What Kelleher and sensation writers share is their concern with identity and its loss; Laura Fairlie's identity is taken away from her in *The Woman in White* while in *Lady Audley's Secret* Hellen Talboys assumes different identities to climb up the social ladder; Anne Catherick's (TWIW) and Miss Havisham's (GE) identities change after a traumatic experience and they are labelled as insane, one of them confined in an asylum and the other on her own mansion where she is locked for the rest of her life. Kelleher shows a twenty-first century character whose identity has suffered so many attempts to be constructed, taken away from her and reshaped that it is slipping through her fingers. Therefore, she decides to create her own mask by means of social media and one of her beloved characters from *Great Expectations*: Miss Havisham, to show her followers that today's expectations are cages that do not differ much from those used to imprison Victorian female characters.

### Victorian symbols

Emily Halloran struggles against different sorts of imprisonment, both physical and social. Since her first appearance on stage, she is portrayed as someone who needs to obtain validation. Thus, she represents perfectly the role she believes she is expected to play. The ideal role of the female in nineteenth century was one of total submission, managing the entire household alone. The woman was to be passive, dependent, and obedient to her husband or father and could never enjoy any autonomy neither in thought nor action. Victorian women should internalize the image of "the angel in the house" that had been idealized by Coventry Patmore in the mid 1850's character of Honoria. It was an ideal that women should be drawn as the necessary opposite to men and largely identified with goodness but also with weakness and childish behaviour, constantly in need of male supervision and protection. In *Gone Full Havisham* Emily Halloran, a 21<sup>st</sup> century character, is exposed to constraining powers that construct a role as binding as "the angel in the house" was for Victorian women. The pressure of these powers will have a constant symbolic presence thanks to two elements that will haunt her theatre play: The China doll and The Wedding Dress.

#### A. The China Doll: The Surveillance Gaze

Lucy is the name of Emily's mother's China Doll, and one of her most cherished possessions. From her privileged position on top of the China cabinet she watches Emily's every move. Not being allowed to play with Lucy, Emily can see neither her worth nor her use. Nevertheless, she is constantly compared with her mother's favourite whenever something is required from her "Eat up your crusts now and you'll have lovely curls like Lucy." (GFH, I,6) This comparison triggers a need to compete with the doll as it is considered "an object of perfection". The doll shares names with Lucy Graham. Hellen Talboys takes on this identity in *Lady Audley's Secret* in order to prosper in life. Choosing to perform the ideal of the angel in the house she manages an image of innocence and naivety. As a result, everyone who meets Lucy Graham sees her as "light-hearted, happy, and contented under any circumstances" (LAS,1862,8) These traits are highly desirable and the reason for Lucy's success as she is said to be "blessed with that magic power of fascination

by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. Everyone loved, admired, and praised her" (LAS 1862,12). They grant Lucy her dreamed position for Sir Michael is so struck by her beauty and demeanour that he marries her almost instantly. Lucy-the-doll is the container of this Victorian representation of female gender, Emily's mother idea of the perfect girl.

Should Emily rise to those expectations she would be turning into something she knows she is not. In order to get her mother's validation, she would have to assume a fake identity. Lucy-the-doll is also the manifestation of identity construction and identity masks women are forced to wear and that only sometimes are worn willingly. The very same Helen Talboys / Lucy Graham / Lady Audley hides herself behind these three personae and will be compared to a wax-doll herself to imply that her beauty (as well as her identity) is artificially constructed to match society's standards as Lucy- the - doll preacher in *Gone Full Havisham*.

Emily does not perceive the doll as a totally passive figure, she feels judged by it. 'I hated Lucy. Her eyes followed me around the room in judgement. (*Emily as Lucy*) "Why can't you just be a good little girl like me?" (GFH, 7) Not only does Lucy represent the standards Emily should comply with, but her gaze is the surveillance gaze of Foucault's Panopticon. It objectifies Emily, making her a text, formed by a collection of her father's orders expectations and aphorisms. The Panopticon no longer exists as a large watchtower in the center of a circular prison, it has been recast as the crystal eyes of a doll which is a reminder of all the cages society puts us in nowadays as well as the constraints Victorian women had to battle daily. The fragility of the china doll is a reminder of the fragility of the fake construction of such characters. Once it is broken there is no way it can be fixed because a simple a crack on the china makes the truth visible and the mask falls. That is the case with Lady Audley, whose true character and identity are discovered at the end of the novel and, much to her dismay, her wax-doll-self shatters.

The lead character of *Gone Full Havisham* (2019), Emily, willingly tries to do away with the doll by breaking her. In order to oppose the angelic view of Victorian women Braddon and Collins used powerful femme fatale figures as their protagonists to challenge the patriarchal law of the mid-nineteenth century. In *Gone Full Havisham* there are also such characters: Dana International<sup>1</sup>- the figure Emily would rather resemble – challenges parental /patriarchal discourse just with her looks "And when she comes on... you can't help but stare... She is a glistening queen, tall, dark, commanding, mesmerising. I had to dance along, host my own Eurovision in the good room, but a little shuffle on the couch isn't enough. I need the full room here as my stage" (GFH, 7) This role is much more attractive for Emily than Lucy- the -china-doll. Dana made her appearance in the contest as a tall, thin and glamorous woman dressed in a floor-length glitter gown with luscious brown curls. With her presence she signalled the importance of a fun liberated gregarious LGBT culture that saw the Eurovision contest as an open

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<sup>1</sup> Sharon Cohen a.k.a Dana International is an Israeli pop Singer who achieved worldwide fame when becoming the first transwinner ever of Eurovision Song Contest in its 1998 edition.

window to diversity. Therefore, little Emily feels represented, and impersonates her by dancing crazily around the room.

Little Emily shares with Dana a strong desire to transcend class, social barriers and constraints despite the risk of being judged on the basis of the departure from the feminine ideal represented by Lucy-the-doll. Notwithstanding Emily's Dana International-like-dance constitutes a failed attempt to break the bonds that hold Emily down and do away with the discourses that are trying to shape her. In the middle of the dance, Emily feels observed by Lucy's judging eyes imposing once more her values. This feeling makes Emily "morph" into Lucy's character. She abandons her free movements to start dancing on her tiptoes like a proper ballerina, regaining her ordinary "proper" self. This "possession" indicates how deeply society's definitions and gender roles can be engraved in our consciousness. While dancing, quite accidentally, Emily throws the doll to the floor but this accident does not allow her to break free. Trying to escape from her influence and scared for the consequences her actions might have Emily hides her in the laundry room for sometime, but Lucy-the-doll makes a come-back when found by one of Emily's aunts and placed again in 'The Good Room' so that Emily can feel her gaze every day. The doll is not totally broken, part of her face is damaged and one of her eyes gets lost. This fact makes her look more terrifying, symbolizing her everlasting influence despite her blemishes. The incident takes place after Emily loses her mother. Consequently, if the doll represents the expectations both parents have for Emily and the control exercised over her, the loss of the doll's eye stands for the vanishing of her mother's influence. From now onwards she will only represent her father's values. Turned into a reminder that diverting from the norm is a mistake that will always leave a mark and a trace, Lucy-the-doll states there is no place for subversive behaviour in Mr. Halloran's world, as there was no happy ending for sensation female characters either. All their freedom, power and possible success ended with them being punished: enclosed in asylums and unwanted marriages, either physically or socially dead, after losing everything their ruthless behaviour might have helped them to get.

## B. The Wedding Dress: Prison

In *The Woman in White* Marian makes a statement about marriage "Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship – they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel" (TWIW, 162) Man and marriage constituted the ultimate cage for women in Victorian Britain. An extraordinary focus was put on matrimony and domesticity as driving forces and markers of morality and empire. But much of Victorian literature depicts unhappy marriage as an imprisoning institution that renders women as victims. The ideal marriage in the nineteenth century obeyed the patriarchal model centred on the companionship of husband and wife, giving them defined roles within the marriage that – as Marian claims – denied wives'

their own identity and relegated them to the domestic sphere -where man was still the authority figure to the subordinated female<sup>1</sup>- and locked them from the world.

Even though in *Gone Full Havisham* marriage as such does not take place, the presence of this institution is still strong and its transformational power is symbolized by the wedding dress. The notion of socially constructed identity implies that it can suffer transformations by means of clothing, as dressing is a means of expression and representation. In *Gone Full Havisham* the Wedding Gown is both a shaping instrument and a cage, the natural successor to the corset, the ultimate Victorian symbol and instrument of oppression which enslaved its wearer with the purpose of obtaining a look of delicate femininity which was becoming an imperative signifier of fashionableness for middle and upper middle-class women whose bodies originally configured as reproductive sources and were then, thanks to it, reconfigured in the erotic field.

### 1. *The Shaping Instrument*

Regardless of the fact that the wedding dress is to be worn just one day it is given vital importance as it might define the whole wedding or even the marriage. One of the best kept secrets of the "Big Day" is that its selection usually takes time and concerns the bride and her bridesmaids unless it is inherited from some family member. Tradition says it must be kept away from the groom until the ceremony or, otherwise, it casts misery over the newlyweds. Nevertheless, it is Jack – Emily's husband-to-be – the one who is in charge of finding the perfect wedding dress. Entwistle in her essay, "The Dressed Body," (2007) highlights that our bodies are intimately related to our way of dressing "a part of our epidermis—it lies on the boundary between self and other" (2007:93). Therefore, we shape ourselves and are shaped by the way we choose to dress. The fact that Emily relies on Jack to purchase the dress is proof of her dependency as she does not have a say in the matter. "Honestly babe, wait till you see it. It's that perfect combination of flattery and flash, elegant but sexy, classy yet edgy, pure but deadly, innocence with a touch of dominatrix" (GFH, 13). Jack's choice shares the binary nature- the capacity to restrict female movements and abilities and yet enhance feminine sexuality- with the corset which as pointed out in *Bound to Please: A History on the Victorian Corset* had a crucial role 'in the process of constructing as well as articulating and appropriating Victorian femininity.'(2001:5) The chosen dress symbolises how Jack will articulate and rearticulate Emily's identity altering both body and mind as his reshaping and imprisonment discourse is exercised in two different levels: the physical and the mental.

The wedding dress comes to symbolize the discursive conditions under which Emily lives her corporeality. Its silhouette and structure will modify her body until it provides her with the features that Jack - who stands for the normative speaking subject – wishes her to have, defining Emily's beauty. She is shaped as an attractive woman who feels desired for the first time. But this desire is deeply related to sacrifice due to his fetishization of an extreme thinness that Emily

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<sup>1</sup> Concept found in A. James Hammerton article "Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty" published on *Victorian Studies* vol.33, n2 (Winter).

maintains by not eating. She also starts wearing make-up every day and dressing in a specific way. These restrictions imposed on Emily make her refrain from performing her assigned role as Little Girl Genius / Father's Little Warrior and she falls into that of The Rescued Princess<sup>1</sup> that Jack has in mind and which he constantly verbalizes when addressing Emily.

Participation in a society requires that the body suits itself to a specularization, a speculation that transforms it into a value-bearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a likeness with reference to an authoritative model [the masculine] (Irigaray 1977/1985b)

Jack, as Irigaray's masculine subject, master of discourse turns Emily into a commodity<sup>2</sup> designed to confirm his status denying her specificity and the possibility to participate in society's system of exchange constructing her as a dependent woman: 'you need to relax, to be looked after, let me take care of everything' (GFH, 12) These definitions are aimed at controlling the other and reducing the other's meaning to the one the subject wants to project on the other. For him Emily's worth lies in her fortune and her condition of sex provider and thus he erases all traces of any other feature in her, like the intelligence her father took great pains to assure. He uses a game called 'My Silly Billy' that is re-enacted by Emily throughout the play as an instrument of construction.

"What is the square root of 144?"

*Emily shrugs shoulders.*

"How many calories are in that chocolate muffin?"

*Emily shrugs shoulders and giggles.*

"What is the capital of Cameroon?"

*Emily shrugs shoulders*

"You're such a silly billy. What you are? Say it?"

Your silly billy.

The princess realises she's actually thick (FGH, 12)

Through his enunciations, Jack actualizes his vision of the world and specifically of Emily and that vision is accepted, internalized and reflected back. The game they play is called Silly Billy which is a common nickname for someone who behaves not very brightly and originated in nineteenth century as a type of clown. This highlights the dependent, girlish, thick vision Jack wants to impose on her and he defines Emily as his property. Not in vain he makes use of the personal pronoun "my" in "my silly Billy" and Emily validates that sense of property by using "your Silly Billy" as well because she acknowledges her condition of commodity.

In *Gone With the Wind* the bridal gown is understood as a second skin the bride/Emily has to wear designed and chosen by the groom/Jack as the physical representation of the specularization Emily is trapped. Established as the bearer of these damaging regulations and stereotyping, its symbolic meaning is

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<sup>1</sup> The alluring fairy tale of "princess myth" runs deep in many women as an underlying desire to look and feel like a princess most of the times becomes real by being a bride. Emily is living a twisted version of the princess myth and the dress helps enacting it.

<sup>2</sup> This concept of commodity appears in Claude Lévi- Strauss's Alliance Theory, also known as The General Theory of Exchanges and developed in *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949)

strengthened and supported by the opinion of the girl in the Bridal Shop and the constant presence along the play of the Bride Magazine Emily constantly checks. The wedding dress has to be tight until it fits Emily's body perfectly and both merge into one, in perfect union, defining her. No matter how tight or how much pain Emily is undergoing the shop assistant goes on tightening it even more. The woman subscribes the oppressive nature of the dress and sees it as something natural: a bride has to comply with social expectations of thinness and beauty. While the ribbons of the dress are fixed, Emily is revealed some truths about it: "A wedding dress is no ordinary dress. A wedding dress is a woman's statement to the world, her essence." When a woman crosses over the threshold into marriage she is leaving behind her attachments to a past identity and embracing a new one as a married woman. Consequently, there is a big number of archetypes attached to each personal choice of dress: the colour, the material, the size, the shape etc. An essence clearly manipulated by man and whose "statement to the world", as an utterance would be void, as Jack is the puppeteer manipulating the strings of the puppet Emily has become.

## 2. *The cage*

In the B.B.C 2018 adaptation of Wilkie Collins *The Woman in White* physical violence is used to exemplify the lack of freedom the old institution supposed for women. Compelled to obey her late father's dying wish, Laura accepts to embark on a marriage without love. Not only does Laura's marriage to Sir Percival Glyde threaten her identity and her fortune, but also her life, for being a wealthy woman, Laura has had little say in the distribution of her inheritance; with her death her fortune will go to her husband and to her aunt, Madame Fosco, conveniently married to Sir Percival's co-conspirator, Count Fosco. The house – as a physical representation of the marriage- becomes a prison for Laura as soon as Glyde starts locking her in against her will each time he meets with her reluctance when trying to obtain something from her. He turns her body into a flesh cage by means of repeated rape and it can be seen how every time Laura tries to take a step towards individuality, Sir Perceval Glyde uses his own body to prevent her from acting freely, incarcerating her with her own presence. In *Gone with the Wind* physical imprisonment is represented by the gown.

Not only is the wedding dress a symbol of the construction of Emily's identity but also of the appropriation of her body. If the wedding dress represents the norms and regulations that will enclose and imprison Emily, Jack becomes her jailer. He gets a say on her way of dressing, what she eats and who she sees: "So Jack decides that it would be good for me to get rid of all negative people in my life." (GFH, 13) Cutting down on her social activities can only emphasise the controlling and restrictive nature of their union. A nature that is highlighted when we discover that the hotel where the celebration is going to take place had been a mental hospital where, owing to the medical discourse about women's self-control and self-preservation, many of the heroines of sensation novels were kept under false pretences.

To some extent Emily is aware of its implications as she is reluctant to put the dress on, as a wild animal would be when seeing a leash. "It's time...for the dress.



CLOSE THE CURTAINS.” Why am I shaking? Calm down Emily. It’s just a dress. Fabric.” (GFH, 14) She is able to foresee the effects the dress is going to have on her. Wearing it will change her forever, as it will mean accepting and assuming the new created identity. On the wedding day the very same Jack makes it fit on her once more exercising the same imprisoning power as Glyde by different means “Jack undresses me. The coldness of the silk slithers around my skin like ice or was it me? My insides finally frozen?” (GFH, 14). Emily’s wedding dress is a straitjacket holding her back, as it was for Miss Havisham, the marker of her alienation and disordered sense of time. The only thing Emily recognizes is the alienated version of her femininity based on Jack’s desire for her. It stops her from feeling anything in her own right, she is just allowed to experience life when man’s desire permits it<sup>1</sup>.

Miss Havisham’s idea of romantic ideals made her believe in a passionate love between her and her fiancé. However, being left at the altar shattered all her expectations. Seducing Miss Havisham had only been part of a business agreement. Her reclusion is not the result of a fruitful marriage- as it is the case with different Victorian novels- but an aborted one that left her hurt, angered and vengeful for many years. These feelings constitute a prison for her forcing her to be away from society “I had been shut up in these rooms a long time (I don’t know how long; you know what time the clocks keep here [...])” (GE 357). An imprisonment which Miss Havisham and Emily share and which once more is represented by wearing the rotten wedding dress for days on end representing how both the bride- to - be and the jilted one are equally oppressed by social constructions, ashamed of being abandoned and considered damaged as a result. Due to its effects Emily does not recognize herself in the mirror on the wedding morning. She realizes the image it is reflecting does not belong to her true self “Is it? Is this it? My whole life flashes before me. Four-year old Emily discussing septic tanks, eight- year- old Emily tackling Killian Desmond to the ground, quoting Dickens at birthday parties, rolling my eyes at baby-borns, Dad’s great expectations. And smashing Lucy’s face” (GFH, 14) She is well aware that her original identity is incarcerated somewhere within her but decides to still refuse it because she has reached the final step and she has become the total woman fetishized reflecting the image that has been projected on her. Her loss of identity equals that of *The White Woman* when Laura Farlie remains traumatized by her experience in the asylum and the total loss of her identity as she was inscribed as Anne Catherick and no one but Marian and Walter believed she was the real Laura.

### The construction of the Expectations discourse: The monological voice

Kelleher permeates the play with the ghost of the discourse of Expectations that is driven to construct women as unidimensional. It refers to both the meta-history with Dickens’s novel and to the expectations the men in Emily’s life have for her. Mr. Halloran states quite early that he pretends to raise Emily in the same fashion Miss Havisham brought up Estella.

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<sup>1</sup> The analyses of Emily’s reaction to the dress follow Luce Irigaray’s concept of Masquerade found in *-This Sex is not one* (1977:220)

But we'll start you off with the books. The most important thing anyone can have, is an education. My little genius. One tough little nut. I'll read it to you now but soon you'll read it yourself. 'Great Expectations.' That's what I have for you Emily. (GFH, 4)

The female protagonists of the Sensation Novel behaved in ways that were not deemed as "feminine" by the culture of the time and neither do Estella nor Emily. Raised as a tool to avenge Miss Havisham broken heart, Estella is objectified into a beautiful manipulative doll. Emily's education seems to challenge the gender norms of the eighties in Irish society as a brainy tomboy. The "secularization" and "degeneracy" in terms of gender roles of sensation novels turns into a sort of "masculinization" here. None of them stands a chance to forge their own identity as their whole lives are totally orchestrated. Even in their early childhood they are not allowed to play freely as their games are monitored and always have a hidden aim. This leads them to claim to have no agency over their lives. Estella confronts Miss Havisham to tell her she is her creation "I am what you made me I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together make me." (GE, 304-306) While Emily never faces her father her constant remembrance of his aphorisms and warnings makes it clear that she is a direct result of it.

As a Foucauldian subject Emily is inscribed in discourse twice: first by her father and later on by her fiancé although both have different expectations for her and the results will be total opposites. Mr. Halloran's heart is set on raising up a strong child, resilient and with a high level of endurance: A Knight or a Brain, while her fiancé wishes to turn her into a princess. Both of them want to render Emily into a docile body to obtain benefit from. Foucault describes the body "as object and target of power" (1977:136). The notion of 'docility'—the point at which "the analysable body and the manipulable body" are joined—is employed to illustrate how individuals within their bodies are subjected to institutional regulation (1977:136) – in this case the discourse of the father. Foucault states that "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (1977:136). Mr. Halloran illustrates perfectly the discourse of discipline spatially enclosing, ranking and manipulating Emily's body to maintain "order and discipline" until it becomes "My Warrior/ Little Genius". In order to do so he creates the "Hero Myth discourse" and exposes little Emily to it daily. He will narrate different stories of well-known heroes for Emily to absorb while performing everyday chores: "I love watching him. But it's our chats I love the most. Shaving time means story time, everything from the ancient myths, the story of Beowulf, Cu Chulainn and Gunga Din, Mad Carew" (GFH, 3)

All the myths Emily is exposed to have something in common: they constitute character features Mr. Havisham wants his daughter to have. Published in 1890 as a set of martial poems under the name of *Barrack Room Ballads*, Rudyard Kipling's poem *Gunga Din* praises the bravery of an Indian water boy who - despite being mistreated by the British soldiers he serves - risks and loses his life to save the narrator. It teaches Emily to always do what is expected from her without minding the risks or the reception her actions might have. J. Milton Hayes poem *The Green Eye of the Yellow God* (1911), written as a monologue and to be performed, tells the tale of a wild young officer known as "Mad Carew", who

steals the “green eye” of a “yellow god” to win the heart of his beloved. He sadly ends up wounded in the robbery, and murdered later in retaliation for having mocked the God. This poem works as a mirror that Emily will look up to. She will become Mad Carew willing to do anything for the love of her father first and later for Jack's. Beowulf, the Old English poem narrates the deeds of a man through three separate and increasingly difficult conflicts showing Beowulf's youthful heroism, his bravery as a warrior and his reliability as a king. It will also influence Emily's life as there are also three different conflicts she has to deal with (her monsters to fight): her parents' death, Elise abandonment and Jack's betrayal. The Sensation Novel heroines that permeate Kelleher's play - Laura Fairlie, Helen Talboys and Miss Havisham - share this triple stage road to trade in their identity construction: They are naive ladies, that are later said to be mad, and end up as fallen women with tragic destinies or triumphant ones.

All of the heroes represent different models of virtue, and are characterized by strength and courage, loyalty, courtesy, and pride. But most importantly they all sacrifice themselves for the sake of what is believed to be a greater Good. As heroes they can be analysed according to Joseph Campbell's stages of the hero's journey, as the structural elements of stages are found universally in myths, tales, novels etc. In all these stories the audience or reading public relates to the hero and his everyday ordinary world, discovering his drives and expectations until the call of adventure sets the action when discomfort disrupts the Hero's Ordinary World and he is presented with a quest that has to be undertaken. Emily, Laura, Hellen and Miss Havisham are also presented with a quest. Their quests are never the same but all our heroines meet the challenge. Helen Talboys's wish is to make her life better at whatever cost, Anne Catherick sets her heart on helping Laura and uncovering the truth, and even Miss Havisham has revenge as her quest. Emily shall become her father's knight having to face different tests.

When a child is born, it inherits several distinctive discursive features such as belonging to a community, being male or female, and having distinctive racial or ethnic features. All of these inherited qualities have closely related discursive features (consolidated as the child grows up) ranging from living in a speech community to particular sex- or race related features. As well as the inherited qualities there are also the constructed ones, that lay underneath the stories Mr. Halloran tells her daughter and his constant advice. Emily's father teaches her in strict routine and ritual as a little spartan warrior as the ones we have just mentioned. She clearly says “No time for tears. I'm strong. So strong -I don't notice Mum getting weaker and weaker” (GFH, 15) the little warrior in the making cannot show feelings that will make her weak and this isolates her from the world. Mr. Halloran wants to keep her away from anything remotely related to girly stuff he despises.

This created discourse that does not admit the collaboration of another voice, it is not looking for a dialogue but for assimilation that can be catalogued as Bakhtin's monologism. Monologism emerges where universal truth statements do not allow any other sort of truth and the identity of the person is shaped and modified by daily and ordinary conversational interactions with the self being a social construction, not a fixed feature in our lives, but continuously under negotiation and transformation, as we engage in communication with others. Emily - subjected to Foucault's disciplinary power - is exposed to monologic

utterances that render her into a docile body. The Hero Myth discourse is her source of identity. She is the product of her father's monological voice, who writes her down as a text where social or cultural aspects are continuously brought in and become attached to her identity. Even though she does not recognize herself in that discourse she feels compelled to obey and which constitutes a cage for her.

According to Judith Butler gender is produced by discourses, all bodies are gendered from their beginning of their social existence, without any freedom to choose what gender they are going to enact as it is determined by the regulatory frame. Following her ideas not only is Emily -as the subject- constituted through and dominated by the discourse of power (represented by Hero mythology discourse her father creates) but she remains tied to it as the practices and discourses of power create "subjection."

But if we understand power as forming the subject, as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are [...] Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency (Butler 1997b:2)

When her father dies, Emily needs to find somebody to perpetuate the power relation they had. For that reason, Jack comes in as a substitute so that he can construct a new category for her to fit in. She is no longer the isolated brainy tomboy her father had created but a more canonical "feminine" version of herself. She is deprived of agency and constructed as totally dependent being related for the first time with Lucy- the china doll. She is no longer the warrior of her own fairy tale but becomes a princess looking for a prince to save her.

Fairy tale tradition permeates Sensation fiction. In *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (2007) Talarach-Vielmas pointed out Wilkie Collins's use of fairy tales generally figures as a means to probe contemporary ideologies of femininity (161): Lady Audley's secret can be read as a Cinderella story in which the beauty of the fairy tale manages madness and criminal behaviour and many husbands such as Collins *The Law and the Lady* or *The Woman in White* let themselves be reinterpreted as Bluebeard. Thus, Kelleher uses Disney Snow White's movie song "My Prince will come again" playing in the background of the performance as a way to represent what Jack's figure means for Emily.

She lip-syncs to the melody of the song embodying the very same Snow White in all her passivity recognizing herself in the role<sup>1</sup>. Jack and Prince Charming merge in the same person. His construction and her acceptance of this role make Emily praise Jack's goodness and aim at the fairy tale happy ending: the wedding. Revealing, once again, its sensation novel core, Kelleher shows *Gone Full Havisham's* links with Victorian spirit as both of them – in fairy tale fashion – describe reality from a different angle, casting light on new modes of representation. Thus, sensation novel heroines are seen as versions of Cinderella,

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<sup>1</sup> In his work *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) Hugo Bettelheim stated that children needed to identify with characters of fantasy in order to work out their emotional and psychological conflicts on a level removed from their real existence and that is the process Emily goes through.

Snow White or Sleeping Beauty, all in search for the appropriate husband in order to be transformed into princesses for their rightful status to be returned. They have, as Jack Zipes<sup>1</sup> stated, the disposition to change the world-if not always in a global sense, at least their own- in order to make it more acceptable or to fit better in it. Despite the fact that Emily seems to accept willingly the transformation her life is undergoing as well as the transformational power Jack exercises on her, part of her father's creation remains deep within her making her "research" the foundations of her relationship.

But then, I researched into all the Fairy tale princess books that Dad never let me read as a child. I discovered that the first time Beauty met the Beast he had locked her up in a dungeon. Prince Charming had a go off Snow White while she slept and didn't the little mermaid's fella make her chop off a favourite body part ... So hey, I'm not doing too badly (GFH, 10)

Having the codes to break down the archetypes and stereotypes and unravel the truth on the power relation in fairy tale couples, Emily sees her own relationship mirrors them. Far from putting an end to it, she normalizes it as its oppressive core is legitimized by these tales that work as the foundations of cultural expectations and norms that make up gender, 'performance cues' that are placed upon an assigned sexed body.

### Multiplicity and Performativity: The Use of Sensation Masks: The dialogic

As Simone de Beauvoir says: "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (cited in Butler 12). "Becoming" is a constant process; women are continually performing the actions they observe around them, and so "becoming" is perpetual rehearsal. Tired of inhabiting identities that are constructed for her, Emily locks herself in one of the suites of the Halloran Hotel ready to create her own public persona using a twenty-first century tool like the internet. There, she puts in practice her wish to become part of the world of *Great Expectations*, the book her father gave her as a present before she could even read, and which not having much of a social life became her solace on her darkest hour. Through her posts she embodies Dickens's Miss Havisham as her hashtag "Gone Full Havisham" suggests.

Never considered respectable literature - for while Victorian literary establishment reinforced the dominant values of the day Sensation Fiction insisted on being disruptive- sensation writers met with the same pejorative terms that the bloggers have to face nowadays. Despite the fact that today posts could be considered character studies and aspects of "human nature" too much posting is generally deemed narcissistic and the tendency to share intimacy could be due to personality disorder.

Emily sits in front of the computer as a writer would sit in front of blank pages ready to offer something new. We enter her world in the same fashion as Pip enters Miss Havisham's in *Great Expectations*, as we are supposed to be watching

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Zipe develops his theories on how fairy tales reveal truth and falsehood un current society and mirror our world in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (1991).

her online show, we peep into her life. This online appearance as Miss Havisham is her way of writing her own body back, after being turned into both a fetishized woman and a commodity by the men in her life. Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity is understood as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (GT, 136). Emily repeats a series of acts in front of the video, each hashtag she proposes is a new episode in the story she has to tell, topics Kelleher wants to criticise or symbols of repressive discourse which are treated grotesquely. Wilkie Collins in *The Woman in White* tells Marian's story through diary entries in order to provide a close-up examination making the inner workings of that character's mind more available to the reader. The video monologues and hashtags we come across in *Gone Full Havisham* share the same purpose and the degree of construction involved in Marian's diary writing. So do Emily's video recordings and livestreaming as her thoughts are previously written down, and have followed a process of check-up and revision before their presentation to the viewer. It is by means of post-its that she writes her own script, which substitutes the regulatory frame that controlled Emily's acts (The discourse of the Hero's Myth her father had created) and then she rehearses her performance, practicing the way to smile until she is able to come up with a grotesque one to share with her viewers or getting into training exercises as actors do before they start shooting. The fact that she behaves differently when she is broadcasting live than when she closes her laptop proves that Emily chooses to "act" gender and to "act" becoming Miss Havisham to draw attention to the constructedness of her identity. According to Butler "If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (GT, 136) Through her "acting" Emily shows that both the gender fabrication she was submitted to and her creation of Miss Havisham's are far from being real and follow the same patterns of construction and inscription therefore questioning the discourse of truth established on them.

Resistance to hierarchies for Emily implies participating in Bakhtinian's World. Bakhtin's perception of language "as an area of social conflict" is reflected in literature "particularly in the ways the discourse of characters in a literary work may disrupt and subvert the authority of ideology as expressed in a single voice of a narrator." As Sensation novels used to be narrated by different characters with different narrative voices to defy the authority voice of the writer or the unique narrator, Emily Halloran's voice is permeated with the voices of other female characters: Miss Havisham, Estella, Laura Farlie, Anne Catherick, and Helen Talboys showing the polyphony of Emily's discourse as opposed to her father's. Bakhtin's Carnival covers manifestations of folk culture (Emily constructs the feminine characters she embodies as her personal folk culture), rituals, games, symbols and various forms of corporal excess to the importance of laughter and degradation as a means of inverting hierarchical structures all of which are put in practice by *Gone Full Havisham*'s main character.

Emily Halloran introduces the Carnavalesque grotesque in her online discourse by referencing her lack of health care with such hashtags as "Gone Full Quarantine", "Oral hygiene", playing with the absurd she wants to make emphasis

on the character's disruptive behaviour and to construct an eccentricity discourse close to that of the original Miss Havisham's madness. She builds a decadent environment by wearing her wedding dress for days, not washing herself and not opening the windows. She accepts requests from her uncivilized followers which contribute to her trivialization: she asks them to decide what she should do with a banana to end up smearing her body with it, she even puts a knife to her throat while she is live making the viewers believe she might commit suicide while online. If in the Victorian period, the norms for an appropriate behaviour when it came to gender roles, sexuality and mental health were defined by contemporary social discourse and the normality or the "abnormality" of an individual was observed and estimated through social control in 2019 there is another gaze, the look of the followers which is at the same time constraining and constructive as it allows her to put up her act to be defined as insane. One of the most controversial matters in novels such as *Lady Audley's Secret* or *The Lady in White* and even *Great Expectations* is the madness of their female characters. In the case of Lady Audley, Laura or Marian it is particularly unsettling because there are no obvious signs of them suffering from mental illness and the explanations that the texts provide for locking them down remain quite ambiguous. In the first chapters both Laura and Lady Audley are described as perfect women: beautiful, young, devoted, kind and very accomplished. Insanity was applied to those attitudes which society rejected, as a woman's refusal to submit to her husband's will or her emotional distress after childbirth or when they manifested their true feelings as Emily states on her father's funeral "What would happen if I just roared it at them? Would they think I was mad? Am I mad? Or is this actually what people would do if it wasn't socially inappropriate?" (GFH, 8). Her concept of Internet as Bakhtinian Carnival's marketplace allows her to conceal Emily Halloran's identity with that of Miss Havisham's jilted bride and in the same fashion as the actors who occupied the squares, she degrades herself symbolically invoking the terror of madness and the social inappropriate, exposing it and overcoming it.

## Conclusion

Sensation Novels still have an echo in current fiction. Its most remarkable trait being its scandalous plot placing murder, blackmail, illegitimacy, impersonation, eavesdropping, bigamy and professional detectives in an everyday setting to represent the nervousness or a world whose rapid modernization was creating multiple Victorian fears portrayed in these novels. Our twenty-first century society is undergoing a similar process reflected in the consumption of certain programs and platforms that offer us fictitious or real scandals which are comparable to those of the Victorian era. The plots portrayed in many sensation novels eventually revealed that "ideal" social constructions and institutions had some dark secret tucked away. We still rely on the same strategy to lay social foundations whose truth we do not dare to question and that in the #Metoo era do not differ much from those of the nineteenth century: woman's behaviour is still put into question. The fear of identity loss is reflected in a globalised world that still does not know how to deal with migration and multiculturalism and Twitter and Instagram have built new discourses of truth. Therefore, by

appropriating sensation novel spirit, structure, symbols and characters with a modern touch, we may again cast a light on the falsehood of those established monological discourses which claim there is just one single truth.

Irene Kelleher uses Emily to draw an individual who -like all those heroines who were objectified by patriarchal society and forbidden to be the subjects of exchange – is deeply immerse in twenty-first century multiple constructive discourses and who eventually and by making use of imaginative ways is able to reconfigure herself and foresee a future where she does not have to be ashamed of being who she really is.

In the end Emily takes hold of the mask of madness and uses it to get away from the cages social discourse had constructed for her. Closing her laptop, she tears one of the pages from the bridal magazine and puts it in her mouth as a way to comment on the falsity and danger of the discourse those magazines are a platform for, and to show she will no longer fall for it. In her final scene before walking away, she informs her followers she refuses to be subjected by the gaze any more as she asks them why they are still looking at her while she flees the room "walking *like a caged animal slowly escaping*" (GFH, 16, my italics) Leaving behind all the labels, definitions and masks she has inhabited, she manages to be free.

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# Undesirable Darkness and Frightful Deeds

## Spectacle and Guilt in *Oliver Twist* and *Lady Audley's Secret*

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**Abstract.** This discussion will explore the concepts of spectacle and guilt in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Elizabeth Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and the treatment of the sensational characters in these novels. The aim of this article will be to reveal that the use of sensation is a way to shed light on the unpredictable intricacies of the human mind and the complexity of human experience. Considered as unworthy of literary praise in the period, or even dangerous devices and sources of undesired stimulation, Dickens' and Braddon's novels deserve particular recognition for their contribution to the understanding of the period's controversial conception of criminality and guilt.

**Keywords:** sensation, spectacle, crime, the Newgate novel, guilt, society

The Newgate novel and the Sensation novel respectively were on the edge of what would have been considered 'respectable' literature in the sense that they provoked emotion, suspense and thrill and exposed undesirable aspects of humanity, rather than what the period considered as elevated and literary. They were worrisome texts, especially because

[...] mid-Victorian England was also a place of anxiety and of uncertainty. The anxiety bred the questioning. England worried about its 'condition', for which reason it also worried, at length, about the state of its families and more particularly, the 'question' of its women, what they should be doing, what they might be thinking, and what they seemed to be reading (Ward 3).

The Newgate Calendar was a source of anxiety and fascination simultaneously, providing accounts of crimes and executions, but also potentially acting as cautionary tales. The novel was more threatening, in the sense that it opened a door into the intricacies of the mind and revealed the human behind such inhumane deeds. Indeed, these texts provided a space to explore and unravel the inner workings of crime as it took place in thought, to question one of the most intriguing and ambiguous aspects of any solved or unsolved crime: the concept of guilt, or more disturbingly, the lack thereof. Lisa Rodensky underlines 'the potential disjunctions of and incongruities between who they are and what they do', which is a crucial element to consider when attempting to understand how the Victorians perceived the link between the criminal characters and crime itself (Rodensky 38). In this discussion, I will explore the concept of guilt in relation to these novels' use of spectacle and performativity; the way in which these notions shape these marginalised identities, whether it concerns the depiction of children, women and men in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) or the depiction of women and concealment in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). Richard D. Altick importantly notes that although Braddon could have

been referred to as the 'reigning monarch of sensation fiction', it is also true that 'Dickens's novels were devoured for their frequent use of melodramatic situations and events' (Altick 146). The use of sensation had a significant influence on the popularity of their novels, but also contributed to a questioning of these texts' literary value.

It is essential to address the key concepts of guilt and spectacle, in order to define their use in this essay. The notion of guilt is crucial in these texts and would be considered a natural human emotion to be associated with the consequences of a criminal act. The presence or absence of guilt, it could be argued, are what differentiate the human from the inhuman, the reasonable from the insane and perhaps is the key component in one's perception of a criminal. The notion of spectacle, on the other hand, is testimony to a sense of theatrical performativity which usually confers emphasis, or at least sheds light on, a particular character's appearance or actions. Interestingly, Dickens and Braddon use both of these devices to subvert and challenge the idea of a seemingly unified or one-sided perception of criminal characters. Despite the vast scope of research which explores these texts, there is a gap in the literature addressing the concepts of guilt in relation to the use of sensation and spectacle in these novels, which this project seeks to address. Informed by an analysis of the way in which the portrayal of guilt influences the description of characters such as Oliver, Nancy, Fagin and Lady Audley, this discussion will unravel the unappreciated complexity that lies behind such novels' characterisation and what this might reveal about the period's anxieties and preconceptions.

The notion of spectacle, as it is revealed through Lady Audley's theatricality and her character's sense of performance, is at the forefront of Braddon's novel as well as of Victorian society. Braddon shows that the power of spectacle seems to lie not only in what it shows of women's influence, but most importantly in what it conceals. It manifests itself in all art forms and explores the duality of the woman, intertwining the appearance on the one hand, which men can still control to a certain extent, and the inner workings of their minds, which remain indecipherable and ultimately uncontrollable. Lady Audley's Secret unveils an aspect of society in which both private and public coincide, shedding light on the use of spectacle as a device which, although externally perceived for all to see, is used to manipulate and deceive. Indeed, Braddon subverts the predictable and assigns the notion of guilt to a woman. Altick rightly underlines that 'By that single stroke, Miss Braddon defied convention, challenging the prevailing estimate of women as angels in the house, almost by definition incapable of crime, and of murder least of all' (Altick 149). Dickens' novel also offers a profoundly insightful analysis of the various ways in which each character is portrayed, questioning the boundary between the criminal act and the representation of internal human feeling. The complex and internally felt emotions, paralleled with physical descriptions, shed light on the elements of sensation and spectacle used in these novels, which complicate the assignation of guilt. Living on the margins of their society, these characters' relationship to crime is far from straightforward and the reader is invited to question the reliability of spectacle and performativity, and perceive what lies within.

In Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, the social implication and interpretation of crime has a primordial effect on how guilt is portrayed. The author and the reader are

no longer simple lookers-on, but become the embodiment of society itself, unconsciously participating in the social judgement of the criminals who appear at the turn of the pages. I will focus my analysis on the characters whom I believe to be the most striking in light of the aforementioned concepts. Firstly, Oliver, the orphan who is lured into London's pickpocketing circles; Nancy, drawn into a criminal world and at the mercy of murderer and thief Bill Sikes; Rose, appearing as Oliver's guardian angel and ultimately revealed as his maternal aunt and finally Fagin, the leader of this group of thieving children, for which I will focus on the ending and execution in particular. Interestingly, the depiction of innocence is as crucially important as the depiction of guilt, as the contrast between them reveals the period's reliance on external physical appearance to determine inward culpability. When Oliver encounters Fagin and the children, Dickens' language brings the reader into Oliver's consciousness, therefore giving the reader this naïve child's perception of the events unravelling before his eyes. To him, the performance of stealing is an innocent spectacle and is seen as a 'very curious and uncommon game' (Dickens 54). The reader witnesses the uncanny way in which crime can be potentially entertaining but most importantly alluring to the eye of the child. As James Buzard points out, Fagin '[...] even gives Oliver a copy of the Newgate Calendar to read as preparation for his first act of house-breaking' (Buzard 1228).

The reader has an insight into the ease with which Oliver could be drawn to becoming a criminal himself, almost unconsciously, and thus indirectly implies that Oliver, as an innocent and naïve child, if taken on this path, should perhaps be forgiven. Indeed, Buzard quotes a passage from *Oliver Twist* (qtd. in Buzard) which is particularly revealing of the sense of morality that the child initially feels:

This inept attempt to get Oliver to engage in a perverse form of moral perfectionism, or the pursuit of moral improvement through the internalization of exemplars, could not be more counterproductive: "In a paroxysm of fear the boy closed the book and thrust it from him. Then, falling upon his knees, he prayed to Heaven to spare him from such deeds, and rather to will that he should die at once, than be reserved for crimes so fearful and appalling" (Buzard 1228).

By giving the reader this special access to the mind, the author exerts his power and influence in determining each character's guilt. Indeed, the reader is not the sole judge of these characters, as the narrator's accounts are often indicative of the author's opinion. There is a problematic component to the construction of opinion and guilt between Dickens' characters themselves. Indeed, Mr Brownlow's first impression of Oliver is based on his apparent criminal act, that of stealing the book, but is then put into question by his physical appearance. He wonders about 'something in the boy's face' that makes him doubt his assumption of guilt, something "that touches and interests" him, automatically followed by the question: "Can he be innocent?" (Dickens 61). There is doubt as to whether this could be solely based on his memory and the coincidence that he recognises this face as familiar, but the contrast with the first impression that Oliver has about Dodger is striking. He 'was one of the queerest-looking boys' that Oliver had ever seen and 'as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see' (Dickens 46). Indeed, Dickens 'is not a novelist who generally imagines a difference between inner and outer: the characters perform who they are' (Rodensky 38). The fact

that this portrayal implies the child's occupation is troubling, although justified, and contrasts sharply with the innocent and angelic descriptions of Oliver's face. Dodger has 'little, sharp, ugly eyes' and is a 'snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough' (Dickens 46). When Dodger's face condemns him from the start, Oliver's angelic face is the reason his guilt is questioned and his innocence believable whenever he is caught. Nancy, who remains under the dominion of Sike's influence as a character in-between two worlds, acts as an insight into what Oliver could become if he remained under Fagin's influence, as neither one nor the other seem to perform in association with who they are. Bringing Oliver back into the hands of Sike's was an act that went contrary to what she felt inwardly: '[...] and I wish I had been struck dead in the street, or had changed places with we passed so near to-night, before I had lent my hand in bringing him here' (Dickens 104). Nancy and Oliver are equally influenceable and both subvert the idea that all characters are who they appear to be on the surface.

Rather than simply performing who they are, Dickens' characters complicate the seemingly straightforward binary between innocence and guilt. Like Oliver, Nancy was brought into a world before understanding its implications, but unlike Oliver, whom she could have still saved from this fate, she feels that it is now too late to escape. Indeed, she tells Sikes that these "dirty streets are my home; and you're the wretch that drove me to them long ago; and that'll keep me there, day and night, till I die!" (Dickens 104). This brings into question the implication of appearance in the assessment of guilt, and as Lisa Rodensky argues, 'the potential disjunctions of and incongruities between who they are and what they do' (Rodensky 38). The reader has access to what the court never would: the ability to be the witness and the judge at the same time. Indeed, the fact that the narrator follows Oliver's life and experiences from the beginning enables the reader to form a comprehensive and all-encompassing judgement. This is further emphasised when Oliver is caught and met without any element to justify or prove his innocence. The debate between Mrs Maylie and the surgeon as they observe Oliver sleeping is particularly relevant to this ambiguity. To her, this 'poor child' and 'delicate' boy "can never have been the pupil of robbers!" and the reader is left at a crossroads: he was indeed the pupil of robbers, but the reader is aware of the ambiguity of this sentence in Oliver's case, and knows of his innocence in the matter (Dickens 191). Consequently, the reader is unconsciously brought to agree with this interpretation of Oliver's character, although this view is based only on her first impression of him. The surgeon provides the counter-argument: "Vice [...] takes up her abode in many temples; and who can say that a fair outside shall not enshrine her?" and argues contrary to popular images of guilt that 'the youngest and fairest are too often its chosen victims' (Dickens 191). His opinion, in contrast, is the opposite's extreme, and Rose seems to be in-between the two visions of guilt, as the epitome of compassion. Rose's opinion of Oliver is based on suppositions, yet those suppositions all reveal themselves to be true: "[...] think that he may never have known a mother's love, or the comfort of a home; and that ill-usage and blows, or the want of bread, may have driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt" (Dickens 191). This sentence unravels the underlying voice of the author, neither completely forgiving nor completely resolved.

Similarly, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the novel's use of spectacle lies in the secret of subversion and doubt that runs through the narrative. The atmospheric sense of mystery is driven by the act of 'withholding the information rather than divulging it', whether it concerns the plot or Lady Audley's participation within it (Brantlinger 2). This discussion will focus on the analysis of the main character, Lady Audley. Her personality, the one that hides within and the one that appears before society, is a double-edged performance, a perpetual confrontation of these two extreme selves. Indeed, 'Braddon's novel was threatening because, in the controversial figure of Lady Audley, the Victorian logics of authenticity were pushed to their conceptual and ideological extremes' (Voskuil 613). Contrary to what most would like to believe, fair faces do not presuppose angelic intention. Braddon exhibits that fear through the representation of Lady Audley, who turns out to have been the opposite of what was expected of her. Lady Audley's coloured cheeks and her childish nature are her most convincing elements of performance. It is the most contrasting aspect of her nature in the sense that childlike behaviour presupposes innocence and unrepressed candour. Indeed, this 'childishness had a charm which few could resist' and 'the innocence and candour of an infant beamed in Lady Audley's fair face' (Braddon 58). A performative display of innocence and beauty is at play, most commonly attributed with youth and naivety, when she is in fact a master of manipulation.

The portrayal of the eye alongside extensive emotional descriptions is recurrent in *Lady Audley's Secret*. There is a distinctive moment in which a detail is emphasised: 'her clear blue eyes flashing with indignation' (Braddon 120). There is a sense of superiority and power coming from within. A few lines later she 'looked at the man steadfastly in the face till his determined gaze sank under hers' (Braddon 120). Her inner self shines through, reaffirming her dignity and exerting a power of intimidation. There is another moment a few pages later when her eyes come into focus:

Lady Audley's clear blue eyes dilated as she fixed them suddenly on the young barrister. The winter sunlight, gleaming full upon her face from a side window, lit up the azure of those beautiful eyes, till their colour seemed to flicker and tremble betwixt blue and green, as the opal tints of the sea changes upon a summer's day. The small brush fell from her hand [...] (Braddon 129).

The reader follows the gaze of a painter as the change in colour and movement of the eye follows the change in her emotions, ending in a display of nervousness in the failing of her hand. The performativity of the representation is enhanced, using the body to translate the mind, making a spectacle out of the small failings of her control. The emotional reaction is slow and subtle, appearing in the metaphor of the changing tints of the sea. It is controlled as it is enacted, resulting in the mere dropping of a brush. The setting of this scene is also poignant as it references a 'Turneresque atmosphere' in the use of light, colour and imagery (Braddon 129). Similarly, the reader comes to see Lady Audley's emotion by reading into the extensive use of colour to describe the face:

Faint shadows of green and crimson fell upon my lady's face from the painted escutcheons in the mullioned window by which she sat; but every trace of the natural colour of that face had faded out, leaving it a ghastly ashen grey (Braddon 132).

At that moment, all colour is drained from her when she realizes that her ‘disguise’ is pierced. The ‘green’ and ‘crimson’ colours are a sharp contrast with her inward appearance, revealing itself as a ‘ghastly ashen grey’ (Braddon 132). These changes seem to appear whenever there is a threat to her power. Colour is constitutive of her mask and disappears as suddenly as her control over the situation. The opposition between what is coloured and colourless also exists in the contrast between the description of Lady Audley and Phoebe Marks. When she first arrives, the main explanation for Phoebe not being qualified as pretty is ‘the absence of colour’ (Braddon 29). Nevertheless, as soon as Lady Audley’s confidence is restored, her ‘disguise’ is stripped back on:

Her great blue eyes [...], in charming unison with the soft pressure of her little hand, and that friendly, though perhaps rather stereotyped speech, in which she told her visitors how she was so sorry to lose them, and how she didn’t know what she would do till they came once more [...] (Braddon 133).

The way she talks, looks around her and uses her hand all take part in the general performance. She stages herself as a living performance for all to see because there is a crucial importance in others witnessing her impeccable hospitality, politeness and overall agreeable impression, for her intentions to remain undetected.

The duality portrayed in Lady Audley differs from the internal sense of duality in Nancy’s character. Nancy’s encounter with Rose in *Oliver Twist* is an encounter with a mirrored self, as she sees in Rose the person she could have been if she had not been entrapped in this world of ‘thieves and ruffians’ (Dickens 270). In opposition to Lady Audley, here, the element of spectacle is the pity found in her honesty, rather than in the performance of innocence, as the narrator delves into her consciousness and provides an insight into her assessment of her own feelings of guilt:

The miserable companion of thieves and ruffians, the fallen outcast of low haunts, the associate of the scourings of the jails and hulks, living within the shadow of the gallows itself, - even this degraded being felt too proud to betray *a feeble gleam* of the womanly feeling which she thought a weakness, but *which alone connected her with that humanity*, of which her wasting life had obliterated so many, many, traces when a very child (Dickens 270).

Dickens’ narrative voice intertwines with her consciousness of the past to reveal this ‘feeble gleam’ of ‘humanity’ as the thin and fragile thread which still ties her to the outside world. Living in ‘the shadow of the gallows’, she has become accustomed to the identity she now embodies, no longer able to retrieve and reassemble the ‘many, many traces’ of who she once was. The passage in which Nancy tells Rose ‘do not speak to me kindly till you know me better’ reveals her own awareness and guilt in relation to her position, as she warns Rose that she is not worthy of her kindness (Dickens 271). She further mentions her life amongst ‘thieves’ and deplores the fact that ‘never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me’ (Dickens 271). This portrayal of guilt in Dickens goes beyond the factuality of the criminal act and is constructed on the basis of the individual’s past and the path that has led to a criminal life. Indeed, Nancy’s

character shows the complication that follows the assumptions based on appearance.

Many other characters display their own interpretation of guilt based solely on Oliver's demeanour, or on suppositions about his past. The physical characteristics are instantly recognizable but are insufficient to determine guilt, whereas the knowledge of a character's past is difficult to decipher but would be decisive in determining one's culpability. The complexity of the process of assignation of guilt is the fact that the writer of crime fiction is the only one who can assuredly possess both unequivocal access to the past and the mind of each character and completely control his or her appearance. The judicial system would not be omniscient and all-knowing. These specific instances reveal society's perception and portrayal of guilt but allows an insight into the supposed criminal's past history. Lyn Pykett argues that Dickens' position is excessively sympathetic towards its characters and was 'accused of representing criminals too sympathetically' (Pykett 28). This becomes more interesting and relevant when the character is an actual criminal who has consciously and intentionally committed a crime. The portrayal of Fagin and trial scene at the end of the novel in particular are crucial to the interpretation of his character's guilt. Dickens' ability to delve into the depths of his mind in such a singularly complex moment in the narrative and the act of writing about it in itself reveals a certain understanding or at least a certain amount of compassion towards Fagin's situation, if not as a criminal, at least as a human being. There is a sense of guilt in the lack of compassion itself. As Fagin looks around the court room just as he is about to hear his sentence, he looks for compassion in the faces he sees and particularly in the women. The narrator is clearly not impartial: 'in no one face—not even among the women, of whom there were many there—could he read the faintest sympathy with himself, or any feeling but one of all-absorbing interest that he should be condemned' (Dickens 358).

It seems that the author is condemning the readers and society as a whole, denouncing the lack of empathy and pity, but most of all, the disturbing interest in another person's death. The word 'absorbing' is as negative as it sounds, suggesting that something is omitted, something is dismissed by this audience who have their eyes set on the outcome and fail to recognise their inhumanity. Fagin's thoughts wander from the cost of the judge's dress to the counting of 'the iron spikes before him' from one paragraph to the other, but the narrator carefully reminds the reader that his mind was never 'for an instant, free from one oppressive overwhelming sense of the grave that opened at his feet, it was ever present to him' (Dickens 359). The reader's eye aligns with Fagin's as it pauses on the ephemeral materiality of his surroundings, but neither of them are given the opportunity to forget the outcome of this chapter, which reveals itself in its last word: 'death' (Dickens 364). The 'fragments' of the judge's words are disassociated in Fagin's mind, as he fails to assemble the pieces and make sense of the overwhelming situation. But these fragments of words 'gradually fell into their proper places, and by degrees suggested more: so that in the little time he had the whole, almost as it was delivered' (Dickens 360). The pace of this section is purposely slow, enticing the reader to read through the coming together of Fagin's realisation. What is underlined here is not the act, but the universal and humane process of thought which is associated with this situation. The reader is



detached from the character's intention to focus rather on the daunting and slow advancement of time as the awareness of death approaches. The emphasis is on simplicity, repetition and slowness. In the prison cell, simple words describe the reality of what is about to happen to him. After the trial, they led him to one of the condemned cells, and left him there—alone' (Dickens 360). Indeed, this paragraph ends with the following repetition of the sentence which he has finally reassembled and understood: 'To be hanged by the neck, till he was dead—that was the end. To be hanged by the neck till he was dead' (Dickens 360). The repetition is uncanny, as it mirrors the time needed for Fagin to realise the weight of this sentence and its significance, echoing in his mind.

For Fagin, the tension of this chapter culminates at the end, on 'the night of this last awful day' (Dickens 361). Fagin's state of mind is that of careless resignation, he has no explicit display of any feeling of guilt. It is Dickens' narrative voice which gives the reader the tone and his opinion of the inhuman conditions of such a death, that of being hanged. There is a poignant sense of sympathy with the character, who is about to die:

It was not until the night of this last awful day, that a withering sense of his helpless, desperate state came in its full intensity upon his blighted soul; not that he had ever held any defined or positive hope of mercy, but that he had never been able to consider more than the dim probability of dying so soon (Dickens 361).

Indeed, the probability of dying is universal to all, and had seemed distant to Fagin until his 'desperate state came in its full intensity upon his blighted soul' and the proximity of death made its reality inevitable and vivid. The reader suddenly witnesses the criminal 'in such paroxysm and fear', as the criminal finds himself trapped in the prison of his own mind (Dickens 361). His compassion does not lie in the character of Fagin as an individual, as his criminal life and selfish nature are described with pity, but with the human behind the acts. Indeed, 'Dickens had a peculiar identification with the social outsider and especially with the dark obsessions of the murderer and the thief' (Pykett 28). His own interpretation of crime is inevitably influenced by his own childhood experience and possibly lies at the heart of his compassion for Oliver as a character. The possibility of taking the wrong path in life could potentially have been one of Dickens' thoughts for himself as he looked back on his own experience.

For Lady Audley, on the other hand, the resolution unfolds when her portrait is discovered, the description of this penultimate moment of spectacle is revealing of the dual performance of masked innocence and hidden culpability. The painting is described using comparisons and imagery, making a connection with the natural. The dress itself is defined with 'flames', her hair like a 'mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace' and there is the 'sunshine' of the face (Braddon 77). The 'lightness', the fire-like colour of her hair, the 'glowing colours' and the 'exaggerated' attributes are all part of the spectacle (Braddon 77). Most importantly, the 'strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes' convey the underlying secret of the plot (Braddon 77). Referring to her as 'a beautiful fiend' and 'the hard and almost wicked look' of her 'pretty pouting mouth', show clues to her inner nature appearing outwardly (Braddon 77). It is suggested that women, then, are dangerous because of the very fact that they can use their outward beauty to convey inner innocence.

More than a concern for the truth and the detection of guilt or innocence, the authors discussed in this article have written about the human, regardless of how flawed or tortured they were, behind the crime. Indeed, it could even be argued that there exists a certain aspect of guilt in the reader of these books, who acts as both the active judge and the passive human at the same time. There are two particular instances in these texts that reveal a deeper sense of belonging to humanity as a whole, and the potential sense of guilt that comes with it. There is a sense of cruelty about condemnation itself in Dickens' novel, by showing the crowd's frantic determination and urge to condemn this little boy, Oliver, revealing a 'passion for hunting something' that is inhuman and criminal in itself. In the pursuit of Sikes, the crowd transforms itself into a raging monster, an impersonal mob:

Some called for ladders, some for sledge-hammers; some ran with torches to and fro as if to seek them, and still came back and roared again; some spent their breath in impotent curses and execrations; some pressed forward with the ecstasy of madmen, and thus impeded the progress of those below; some among the boldest attempted to climb up by the water-spout and crevices in the wall; and all waved to and fro, in the darkness beneath, like a field of corn moved by an angry wind: and joined from time to time in one loud furious roar (Dickens 343).

The length of this sentence, along with the lexical field of fury such as 'furious', 'angry', 'roared', 'roar', 'curses', 'execrations' and 'madmen' have a particularly dehumanizing effect on the crowd and its representation of society in relation to crime. Society as it is represented in this group, here, is condemned by the author for its avid desire and propensity to condemn and the troubling pleasure it seems to procure. The individual who is running away from the crowd has as personal identity and history, whereas the 'furious' crowd follow general assumption and precocious condemnation. The problematic question here lies in determining the divide between a general ugliness of human nature or individual evil as an abnormality. Sikes, just before his death, is faced with his consuming guilt: "The eyes again!" he cried, in an unearthly screech' (Dickens 347). Nancy's eyes tell the tale of the crime he committed, the witness to his guilt that survived in his mind. In a different way in Braddon's novel, Lady Audley deceives using the power she knows is the most effective, which is her physical appearance. Lady Audley is not only the object of Robert's gaze, as he scrutinizes and investigates her past, but also of 'the reader's rapt gaze' (Pykett 98). This 'intense focus on their physical appearance' emphasises the aspect of spectacle, which, imitating the blazon form, allows her flaming hair to almost become an extension of her personality. Indeed, Lady Audley uses both her body and mind as a means to acquire power, making the physical display a mirrored curiosity for an unattainable interior.

These novels attempt to uncover the remaining pieces of humanity within the apparent horror, to provide deeper layers to the criminals and crime itself, hence rejecting the idea of an irrevocably criminal mind. Dickens blurs the lines between innocence and guilt by rejecting the over-simplified binary and revealing the complexity of human experience. Braddon, on the other hand, reveals the complex layers of female power and the fears that are associated with it, in a changing society. Both of these novels invite the reader to question society's

perception of guilt by exploring the depths of the human mind, shedding light on the period's anxieties surrounding the concepts of crime and criminality.

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# Guilty of 'Penning' a Newgate Criminal as a Hero for Posterity

## Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the Case of *Eugene Aram*

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**Abstract.** By means of the fictionalisation of an actual criminal case from *The Newgate Calendar*, involving an enigmatic but appealing scholar, Edward Bulwer-Lytton provided an enthralling portrayal of a murderer which featured a criminal as the hero of his novel *Eugene Aram* (1832). In spite of its instant success, *Eugene Aram* stirred strong critical objections, which were mostly interpreted on account of its dubious morality and led the author to defend the right to indulge in crime and sensation. This article seeks to prove that the harsh critical reception that *Eugene Aram* met mostly responded to aesthetic rather than moral reasons, since, through Bulwer-Lytton's double aim of attaining popularity, but also posthumous fame as a writer, he subverted established literary conventions and introduced narratological devices to create an ambivalent portrayal of a criminal, with the aim to turn him into a memorable character, that would ultimately contribute significantly to the development of crime fiction.

**Keywords:** Newgate fiction, popularity, posterity, crime, sensation, critical reception, ethics, aesthetics.

### 1. Introduction

As Richard Altick explains in his seminal study of criminal cases in Victorian times, in the nineteenth-century, crime became a pervasive social phenomenon and sensational murders were often publicised in the press (1972: 17), from highbrow journals to street broadsheets. The nineteenth-century genre known as Newgate fiction refers to crime novels based on accounts taken from *The Newgate Calendar*, which derives its name from London's Newgate Prison, where criminals remained before their trial and eventual execution. *The Newgate Calendar* kept a record of notorious actual crimes and, subsequently, turned into a series of anthologies of true criminal biographies that began to be compiled in the United Kingdom in the early decades of the eighteenth-century. According to Stephen Knight, a comprehensive anthology of five volumes, derived from *The Newgate Calendar*, was already published in the year 1773 (2004: 6). The narratives contained in *The Newgate Calendar* mainly had a moralistic aim, featuring individual stories with a frame narrative that comprised the criminal's own confession, which was meant to praise and validate the efficiency of the penal system. Nonetheless, as Heather Worthington claims, these narratives also had a remarkable entertaining component, since reading about the thrilling lives of criminals and their sensational crimes appealed significantly to the public (2010: 14). While the broadsides and ballad sheets publicising crimes were cheap and mainly addressed readers of lower social condition, *Newgate Calendar* anthologies were fairly expensive and mostly aimed at reaching higher social

classes. Given the popularity of these crime narratives, which often blended fact and fiction, periodicals such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* began to appropriate criminal stories from broadsides and publish them on its pages for the delight of the middle classes, thus paving the way for the emergence of Newgate fiction. As Worthington observes, though, if the criminal biographies of *The Newgate Calendar* were meant to warn against crime, their criminals were mostly members of the lower classes and crime was associated with poverty, Newgate fiction rather presented crime as exciting and its heroes were often members of the middle classes, as so were the readers that this emerging genre sought to address (2010: 20). Insofar as they featured violence and crime, Newgate novels shared features with other established and incipient genres, such as picaresque fiction and the gothic romance, as well as the emerging detective narrative, since, in analogy with them, Newgate novels portrayed offenders from every walk of life but associated with the underworld, they included a romantic plot to counteract the tension triggered by the most atrocious passages in the narrative, and they sometimes presented amateur detectives trying to unravel criminal puzzles. However, Newgate novels embraced a genre of their own inasmuch as they featured a criminal, based on a biographical account from *The Newgate Calendar*, who acquired a central prominence in the development of the narrative. As Keith Hollingsworth claims, in Newgate novels, the criminal could become the object of a search, a symptom of social evil or, rather, a study in motivation from an ethical or a psychological perspective (1963: 14), thus already anticipating the popularity that criminal profiles would gain in contemporary crime fiction, or even, in what is known as true crime. In fact, as Worthington argues (2010: 23-4), Newgate fiction would contribute to the emergence of both sensation and detective fiction, since the sensational aspects of Newgate novels would be retained and taken to the core of the domestic sphere in sensation novels, whereas the focus of attention would shift from the figure of the criminal to the process of detection in detective fiction.

Newgate novels immediately became widely read and acquired extraordinary popularity, to the extent that some of the criminals that these novels featured attained the status of celebrities. As Hollingsworth explains, certain circumstantial factors contributed to an unprecedented interest in this kind of crime fiction, such as the prevailing social fear of moral looseness following the Regency period, the changes in legal issues as a result of the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 and the increasing enlargement of the reading population (1963: 16). Nonetheless, as Lauren Gillingham contends, even though British novels of the eighteenth-century had already familiarised readers with crime, the popular acclaim of Newgate novels came hand in hand with a significantly hostile critical reception (2010: 93), as they often met harsh criticism on the grounds of both morality and taste. As James Campbell claims, Newgate fiction became controversial because it raised issues related to the degree of moral responsibility that authors owed to their readership, and the critical opposition that these novels met often gave way to public controversy, which was widely reported in reviews published in influential periodicals of the time (1986: 39). Writers of Newgate novels were frequently charged with shocking moral sensibilities by resorting to sensation, as they presented a sympathetic and even glamorised portrayal of the criminal. As Hollingsworth mentions, this was often the case when the offender,

whose life was turned into fiction, belonged to the middle classes or was a member of the higher classes (1963: 15), thus sanctioning the belief that individuals with respectable connections and privileges were also liable to take the wrong turn and possess a criminal record. Nevertheless, in spite of apparent strong objections on moral and ethical grounds, critics such as Gillingham have more recently referred to the fact that this unfavourable critical reception was mostly based on "the corruption of taste among the higher born" (2010: 94) rather than on actual ethical reasons. After all, it must be acknowledged that the emergence of Newgate fiction was first and foremost a literary phenomenon and, hence, it should circumscribe to the domain of literature. Even if based on actual criminal cases from *The Newgate Calendar*, Newgate novels came from a literary tradition which found its origins in the fearful villains of the Gothic novel and from depictions of the Romantic hero, whose qualities were transposed to envision the Newgate criminal.

Among the most popular writers of Newgate fiction was Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who showed an outstanding awareness of his readership's demands and produced bestselling Newgate novels which gained extraordinary attention at the time of their publication. In order to prepare his novels, Bulwer-Lytton made use of factual materials that he took from the *Newgate Calendars*, as he used to examine them thoroughly in search of a sensational crime which he could explore in his next book. After the success of his first Newgate novel, *Paul Clifford* (1830), aimed at denouncing society's treatment of the criminal, thus offering an eminently compassionate portrait of a law offender, the Victorian writer decided to pursue this method of research further and choose the actual criminal case of Eugene Aram as the subject of his following Newgate novel. On this occasion, Bulwer-Lytton focused on the curious case of a sordid crime committed by a lonesome, but extraordinarily gifted, scholar, with the literary purpose of providing a psychological study of an unusual criminal mind. Bulwer-Lytton's second Newgate novel, *Eugene Aram* (1832), gained impressive popularity, but it also met strong opposition on apparently ethical and moral grounds, as the author was accused of producing an alluring portrait of an actual murderer and turn a criminal into the Byronic hero of his novel.

As Marie Mulvey-Roberts argues, in his lifetime, Bulwer-Lytton was considered "the apotheosis of the great man" (2001: 115) and his fiction was as widely read as that of his close friend Charles Dickens. The extraordinary popularity that the Victorian writer attained, though, did not exempt him of detractors and harsh criticism, mostly fuelled, as Mulvey-Roberts further claims, by "the very phenomenon of his fame" (2001: 116). Similarly, from a contemporary perspective, in spite of Bulwer-Lytton's significant contribution to the development of the genres of crime and detection, this Victorian writer has hardly been granted any recognition as an originator and has commonly been denied the credit he deserves as "a precursor of sensation fiction" (Mulvey-Roberts 2001: 116), even if the queen of sensation, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, considered him her literary mentor. For most of his literary career, Bulwer-Lytton had to struggle with the tension of being popular and appealing to the masses, and that of attaining a high status as a writer and gaining the favour of the critics. In this respect, as Leslie Mitchell claims, Bulwer-Lytton was often caught up "between fears for his popularity and apprehension about his artistic standing"

(2003: 111). As an author, Bulwer-Lytton knew that, on the one hand, in order to attain greatness, he had to become a popular writer and be accessible to a wider readership, but, on the other hand, he objected to the audience's general taste and considered the serialisation of his novels a vulgar type of publishing. Conversely, Bulwer-Lytton was well aware of the importance of criticism and aspired to be praised in the reviews of his novels, although he also questioned the objectivity of critical judgements and often felt deeply wounded, since, as Mitchell claims, Bulwer-Lytton would often take criticism as "a commentary on his personality" (2003: 114). Consequently, as Richard Salmon puts forward, Bulwer-Lytton faced the dilemma of having to choose between "the transient demands of periodical writing and the aspiration to write for posterity" (2004: 52), between the practice of 'literary lionism,' which exemplified the condition of transient popularity in the public domain, and his literary vocation as an author, which rather sought to transcend temporality and attain posthumous fame. This debate came hand in hand with the modes of writing and publication at the time which comprised, on the one hand, the increasing mode of periodical publication, which bound the writer to immediate and momentary effects, and the formation of the modern literary market through edited books, which afforded authors a condition of writing that surpassed temporal limitations and aspired to posterity.

According to Mitchell, Bulwer-Lytton's major contribution to the Newgate school of writing (2003: xviii), during the decades of the 1830s and 1840s, played a major part in earning him a name, but it was also mostly responsible for cementing his notoriety. Conversely, although Bulwer-Lytton's Newgate novels were ranked among the author's most accomplished works in his lifetime, they no longer seem to enjoy the popularity they attained in Victorian times. As this article will seek to prove, through the examination of the writing process and critical reception of Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Eugene Aram*, it can be argued that the challenges that Bulwer-Lytton's Newgate novels and, in particular, *Eugene Aram* had to bear, evoke the same predicament that Bulwer-Lytton had to face as an author. It can be claimed that Bulwer-Lytton wrote to attract the attention of the masses, but, above all, to reach posthumous fame, hence ultimately writing sensation fiction with a view to posterity. His Newgate novels can thus be considered popular fiction with an intellectual bent of mind, while their highbrow artistry was balanced by a blatant will to indulge in crime fiction and its shocking details. Bulwer-Lytton thus defied the constraints of genre as well as the prevailing conditions of the literary market which divided authors between attending to the demands of the audience or those of critics, and which often obliged writers to choose between popularity and literary artistry. Even if inadvertently, through his Newgate novels and particularly through his novel *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton subverted the traditional notion that sensation could not be intellectual and, conversely, that highbrow literature could not indulge in sensationalism. Ironically, *Eugene Aram* met the same critical opposition on ethical grounds as other representatives of Newgate fiction. In this respect, Pierre Bourdieu distinguishes between two categories of cultural response, namely the taste of sense, which comprises an uneducated kind of reading indicative of passive readers, and the taste of reflection, which involves an educated type of reading suggestive of reflective readers (1989: 6-7). Bearing in mind Bourdieu's categorisation, critics who opposed Newgate novels were wary

that readers would succumb to the thrilling threats that this fiction posed, thus identifying the general readership as primarily having a taste of sense and being passive readers. However, as will be shown, taking into account Bourdieu's classification, upon writing his Newgate novel *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton rather had in mind an audience with a taste of reflection and addressed a reflective reader who indulged in an educated kind of reading rather than being carried away by the exciting twists of the plot, as passive readers would do. Bulwer-Lytton was hence more interested in reaching enduring fame and in writing for posterity rather than enjoying transient popularity, even though, ironically, contemporary critics judged him harshly for writing sensation and promoting what Bourdieu would call a taste of sense instead of a taste of reflection.

Besides, in her recent study of Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram*, Shalyn Claggett also claims that the controversy following the publication of Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram* was grounded on "the ethical implications of basing a novel on the life of an actual criminal" (2016: 171). As Claggett further asserts, in *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton decided to retain the murderer's proper name, Eugene Aram, and make use of dramatic irony owing to the general reader's prior knowledge of Eugene Aram's actual criminal case. By so doing, Bulwer-Lytton paved the way for establishing a comparison between the real and the represented in his novel, which brought to the fore ethical assumptions on behalf of critics concerning what an actual criminal's personality must be like. Critics could not accept that a criminal was not characterised as a flat type, and objected to Bulwer-Lytton's portrayal of a complex character with contradictory traits, as a gentle scholar and as a cold-blooded criminal; a literary licence which was considered neither plausible nor ethical. Despite the fact that it has often been claimed that harsh reviews of *Eugene Aram* referred to ethical and moral issues, I would like to argue that the controversy following the publication of Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram* was not so much rooted in ethics as it was in aesthetics, since, by means of endowing a criminal with psychological depth in fiction, Bulwer-Lytton was actually subverting literary conventions established at the time and revealing his concern about posterity as an author. By means of analysing Bulwer-Lytton's arrangement of the original facts of the actual criminal case, their transformation into fiction and the critical reception of *Eugene Aram*, I intend to prove that, by means of featuring a criminal as the hero of his novel and endowing him with alluring complexity and ambivalence as a character, Bulwer-Lytton sought to create a sensation hero who would not only be appealing to the masses and attract fleeting popularity, but who would also become a memorable character that would outlive him as an author.

## 2. Researching for a Newgate novel: the potential popularity of the actual case of Eugene Aram

As Nancy Jane Tyson contends, the criminal case of Eugene Aram appealed significantly to the Victorian literary imagination (1983: 4). The discovery that an apparently quiet and highly-respected scholar had been responsible for an unreasonable murder in cold blood was beyond any human understanding,



especially inasmuch as an act of violence appeared to be at odds with a seemingly peaceful nature and intellectual turn of mind. It might be owing to the dichotomy traditionally established between the public and private spheres deeply ingrained within the Victorian mind-set, which the figure of Eugene Aram appeared to typify, that this criminal case attracted much attention in Victorian times. The original character of Eugene Aram also complied with tenets pertaining to the Byronic hero, insofar as he personified an intellectually gifted individual who rejected established norms and conventions, and displayed remarkable Faustian and Promethean traits, which rendered him close to the literary archetype of the sage who dares play God, such as Faust and even Victor Frankenstein, but whose ambiguous nature and deceitful looks also foreshadow characters of late Victorian gothic narratives, such as Doctor Jekyll, Dorian Gray, and even Dracula. As Hollingsworth notices, Thomas Hood's tragic poem "The Dream of Eugene Aram," published in the annual *The Gem* in 1829, contributed to popularising the case of Eugene Aram, as it became a haunting story for contemporary readership (1963: 84). Owing to its popular acclaim, different literary fictionalisations resulted from the actual case at the time, such as plays and narratives, since the figure of the scholar-criminal appeared to play a pivotal role in fuelling the imagination of Victorian writers.

According to biographer Michael Sadleir, Bulwer-Lytton often displayed opportunism in the choice of the topics for his novels as well as an acute instinct in prejudging popular taste (1931: 275) and, given the fame and notoriety that the story of Eugene Aram had acquired at the time, Bulwer-Lytton soon identified it as a potential choice to turn it into fiction. With the aim of gathering information in order to write his next novel, Bulwer-Lytton thoroughly researched into the criminal case of Eugene Aram, thus ironically finding himself emulating the solipsistic conduct of the scholar-criminal and even the detective work of Walter Lester, Eugene Aram's antagonist in Bulwer-Lytton's novel, who is depicted as an amateur detective ultimately disclosing Eugene Aram's identity and outrageous secret. Hence, although the case of Eugene Aram was well-known in Victorian times, as Hollingsworth claims (1963: 83), Bulwer-Lytton first read about the criminal case of Eugene Aram in the *Newgate Calendar* bulletins, when he was in preparation of his first crime novel, *Paul Clifford*. In his previous novel *Pelham; or, The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), Bulwer-Lytton had already based a character, Thornton, on the notorious murderer John Thurtell, while, in his later novel *Lucretia; or, The Children of the Night* (1846), Bulwer-Lytton would also model another character, Varney, on a contemporary criminal, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. On this occasion, the original criminal case which caught Bulwer-Lytton's attention involved the English philologist, Eugene Aram, born of a humble family in Yorkshire, who worked as a schoolmaster in Knaresborough for ten years until he decided to abandon his wife and move to London when a close friend, Daniel Clark, disappeared after obtaining an important amount of goods taken deviously from the tradesmen in town. Years later, when some bones were found in Saint Robert's Cave in Knaresborough and were alleged to be those of Clark, suspicions fell upon Eugene Aram, since his deserted wife had hinted that her husband and a man called Richard Houseman were involved in Daniel Clark's disappearance. When Houseman was arrested and confronted with the bones recently found, he confessed the actual place where

Clark's body had been buried and also implicated Eugene Aram in the murder. Following Houseman's declaration, Eugene Aram was arrested and sent to York for trial, where he conducted his own defence, but was finally found guilty and condemned to be executed. After confessing his guilt and disclosing that the actual purpose of his crime had to do with the discovery of his wife's relationship with Clark, Eugene Aram made an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide in his cell only to be hanged some days later for murder.

Even though Bulwer-Lytton knew that the original criminal case of Eugene Aram had much potential for a novel, the Victorian writer was also well aware that he needed to alter some aspects from the original story to trigger the interest of Victorian readers and transform it from a criminal case into crime fiction. As Lucy Sussex notices, the chronological narratives of crime provided in *The Newgate Calendar* differed significantly from the narrative structure of crime fiction, in which events are reordered and information is withheld for the sake of suspense (2008: 14). The narratives in *The New Calendar* followed a specific structure, mainly providing a detailed biography of the criminal rather than privileging the investigation and solution of the crime. Hence, as Sussex further argues, for writers of crime fiction, true crime taken from periodicals posed a technical challenge (2008: 9), as they had to incorporate the disjointed structure of crime fiction – comprising the story of the crime, as well as the story of the investigation – which was unknown to the existing structure of the novel, as it customarily followed a linear progression. When Bulwer-Lytton fictionalised the actual criminal case of Eugene Aram published in *The Newgate Calendar*, he emulated the latest developments of crime investigation and constructed a plot with two elements, one featuring the criminal, and another one introducing an amateur detective, hence already anticipating Tzvetan Todorov's bipartite structure of crime fiction and contributing significantly to the development of the English crime novel (Sussex 2008: 8-9). Above all, though, Bulwer-Lytton took special interest in the psychological development of Eugene Aram as a complex character, trying to reach a balance between the sensational content he imported from true crime periodicals and his conviction as a writer of crime fiction that "the element of the highest genius [...] is in crime" and that "it is not immoral, it is moral, and of the most impressive and epic order of morals, to arouse and sustain interest for a criminal" (Lytton 1913: 86). In order to accomplish that purpose, Bulwer-Lytton first altered the hero's personality, since, instead of being a schoolmaster, as was the case in the original criminal case, the literary character was turned into an extraordinary, but gloomy, scholar, deeply interested in the sciences of botany and astronomy and, thus, closely associated with nature and concerned about unravelling the secrets of the universe. In Bulwer-Lytton's novel, Eugene Aram is also portrayed as a lonely and reclusive individual who enjoys his solitude and detachment from the outside world and, so, in contrast with the original character, Bulwer-Lytton's literary hero is deprived of a wife and a family of his own. Having introduced this alteration, Bulwer-Lytton also felt obliged to change the original motive that led the actual figure of Eugene Aram to commit murder – taking revenge for his wife's unfaithfulness – and, instead, in the novel, the ultimate motive which leads Eugene Aram to kill his victim, Daniel Clarke, is to rob him of the money that will allow him to devote his entire existence to the pursuit of knowledge, thus unveiling that his moral crime lies in regarding

wisdom as an end in itself instead of a means to benefit humankind. Finally, if in the original criminal case Eugene Aram tried to commit suicide before his execution, but failed in his attempt and was eventually killed by hanging, Bulwer-Lytton sought to endow his literary hero with some ultimate tragic quality and magnificence and, in his novel, he allows him to take his own life in his cell before being publicly executed, thus defending his literary adaptation of the character of Eugene Aram as a criminal, but also as an eminently Romantic hero.

In addition to endowing his hero with an intellectual and even tragic vein, Bulwer-Lytton also made sure that his literary Eugene Aram presented some qualities which would make him profoundly appealing and even sympathetic to his readership and, with that aim in mind, he introduced a romantic plot in the novel that directly involved the solitary scholar. In the novel, when Eugene Aram's neighbour, the fine-looking and kind-hearted Madeline Lester, daughter of Squire Rowland Lester, sprains her ankle nearby the scholar's house while she is going for a walk with her sister Ellinor, Eugene Aram comes to her aid and she immediately falls in love with this prominent, but mysterious, intellectual, who gradually becomes a regular guest of the Lester family. According to Worthington, a tangled love affair became an essential part of sensation fiction (2010: 24) and, ironically, even if critics of *Eugene Aram* would mostly object to its pervasive sensation elements, as Claggett notices, they mostly referred to Bulwer-Lytton's inclusion of the entirely fictional Lester family in the plot – which propitiated the sensation affair between Madeline Lester and the criminal – as one of the greatest aesthetic achievements of the novel (2016: 178). Besides, in order to ensure that the readership perceived Eugene Aram in a positive light, Bulwer-Lytton also decided to transform the man that the hero slays, Daniel Clarke, into a despicable and depraved character so that, although Eugene Aram's crime would still be considered unlawful from a legal perspective, his misdeed would not be regarded as highly objectionable on behalf of readers, who would ultimately consider the murder as a result of poetic justice. Knowing the intricacies of literary fiction in depth, Bulwer-Lytton also felt the need to create an antagonist to his hero and he devised a parallel plot involving Walter Lester, Rowland Lester's nephew, who competes with Aram for the love of his cousin Madeline, but also acts as an amateurish detective, not only discovering that the murdered Daniel Clarke was actually his father, but also unveiling that Clarke had disappeared years before and had acquired a different identity. Through a sensational twist of the plot, Walter Lester eventually finds out that Eugene Aram is to blame for Daniel Clarke's death, that is, the death of Walter Lester's father.

In the course of exploring and gaining insight into the psychology of the criminal to write his novel, Bulwer-Lytton could not avoid romanticising and even identifying with some traits characterising his hero, who also happens to be the villain in the story. Bulwer-Lytton's narrative strategies contributed to turning Eugene Aram into a rather mysterious and even alluring character for the readership, but also to portraying him as a psychologically complex character for which Bulwer-Lytton even appeared to develop some sort of personal sympathy. As Mitchell claims (2003: 175), in order to do research for his crime novels, Bulwer-Lytton even went as far as moving in disguise among the London criminal classes, learn their jargon and imitate their behaviour, thus merging with them as if he were one of their members, in spite of his actual aristocratic background. The

personal turmoil that the Victorian writer was undergoing at the time also might have contributed to giving shape to the tormented nature that characterises his criminal hero. Bulwer-Lytton must have felt somehow identified with Eugene Aram's economic difficulties, which ultimately lead the criminal hero to commit his crime. As Mulvey-Roberts asserts (2001: 121), Bulwer-Lytton was compelled to write extensively to make a living, since he had been cut off financially by his mother, who disapproved of her son's marriage to Rosina Wheeler. Owing to these circumstances, according to Tyson, the tremendous pressure under which Bulwer-Lytton laboured during the composition of *Eugene Aram* led him to physical debilitation (1983: 66), while his biographer Sadleir also claims that this novel was "an obvious product of over-wrought nerves" (1931: 270), which may have influenced the characterisation of his criminal hero and the author's own sympathy towards him.

However, the reasons why Bulwer-Lytton sympathised with his literary hero not only had to do with the economic constraints and stressful period that he also went through while he was writing the novel. The figure of Eugene Aram also fascinated its author because, along the process of research for his novel, the Victorian writer found out that the actual person on whom his character was based on had been personally connected with his own family. As Bulwer-Lytton's grandson Victor Lytton argues (1948: 47), the scholar Eugene Aram had been a friend of Bulwer-Lytton's paternal grandfather and had also been employed as a tutor to his family. In the course of his investigations, Bulwer-Lytton discovered that his paternal grandfather, Justice Bulwer, as he was commonly known, had hired the scholar, who would later on acquire infamous popularity for being charged with murder, to instruct his daughters during their holidays. Hence, in the preface to the 1840 edition of the novel, Bulwer-Lytton unveils how he learned about the close connection between the real Eugene Aram and his paternal family, as he states that, "Aram frequently visited at Heydon (my grandfather's house), and gave lessons, probably in no very elevated branches of erudition, to the younger members of the family – this I chanced to hear when I was on a visit in Norfolk, some two years before this novel was published" (v). Bulwer-Lytton's surprising discovery about the connection established between Eugene Aram and his own family unleashed the author's imagination even further to transform the original elements into a sensation gothic romance, but it also contributed significantly to the author's personal commitment to his criminal hero. Drawing on the association between Eugene Aram and Bulwer-Lytton's paternal family, Tyson argues that the Lester family in the novel was possibly related in the author's mind to his ancestors, the Bulwers at Heydon Hall, inasmuch as Squire Rowland Lester is reminiscent of Justice Bulwer, while his daughters in the fiction, Madeline and Ellinor, parallel Bulwer-Lytton's aunts whom Eugene Aram tutored at Heydon (1983: 77). The melodramatic and ill-fated relationship between Eugene Aram and Madeline Lester in the novel thus appears to be rooted in Bulwer-Lytton's fantasies about a liaison between one of his aunts and the scholar Eugene Aram, thus introducing a romantic plot in the novel which would serve the purpose of undermining, but also increasing, the dramatic tension of the plot until Eugene Aram is eventually exposed and apprehended as a murderer.

In preparation for his novel *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton thus relied on the popularity of the actual criminal case at the time and retained some of its shocking

details to appeal to the masses and compose a sensation novel that would attract enormous immediate fame. Nonetheless, owing to certain circumstances, such as his personal sympathy for the character and even his personal attachment owing to the surprising discovery that the actual character had met his own family contributed to endowing this criminal character with unusual eminence and complexity, turning him into the hero of his novel in spite of his criminal records and providing him with a psychological complexity which was most unusual in fictional villains up to then.

### 3. Taking sides with the villain: narratological devices and a criminal's profile

The use of certain narrative techniques in the novel contributes to creating a favourable, and even multifaceted, characterisation of the scholar-criminal, thus betraying Bulwer-Lytton's dual aim of appealing to the audience as well as creating a character of psychological and literary depth. Even though the action is mediated through an omniscient narrator, its narrative focalisation clearly revolves around the character that gives name to the novel, Eugene Aram, only to discover, to the shock of Victorian readers, that the hero of the novel, with whom they have been taking sides, is also the villain. As Jonathan Grossman claims, in Newgate fiction, the omniscient third-person narration that usually characterises these novels aids in blending the overseeing perspective of a realistic narration with the inward point-of-view of the criminal without making any explicit differentiation, thus allowing readers to move from adopting an authoritative distance from the criminal character to feeling in communion with this liminal member of society (2004: 75). As Worthington argues, in contrast, the narratives from *The Newgate Calendar* often comprised a first-person confession on behalf of the criminal followed by a biography of the offender written in the third person (2010: 14). Hence, novels like Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram*, which became pioneers of the omniscient treatment of the criminal character, ultimately turned into a source of moral dissatisfaction at the time, insofar as they mostly allied an authoritative point of view on society with the subjective perspective of the criminal without establishing any explicit difference between them (Grossman 2004: 75). Newgate novels thus reflected the kind of third-person form of defence that lawyers had begun to provide in court, which contributed to blurring the distinction between an authoritative perspective representing the law and the criminal's own testimony and subjective views on the deeds committed. Accordingly, Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Eugene Aram* adopts an indistinguishable bifocalised perspective inasmuch as the narrator observes at a distance, but also aids in giving shape to the criminal's defence.

Owing to the moral dilemma that it posed at the time, the troublesome narrative technique of omniscience for the psychological exploration of the criminal was subsequently left behind, as shown by the narrative strategies displayed in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*. Collins's novel provides a series of accounts on behalf of different witnesses that eventually lead Sergeant Cuff to solve the case, thus discarding the use of an omniscient narrator to establish, instead, a clear distinction between the figure of the detective and any suspects who may have indulged in criminal behaviour. Conversely, in Bulwer-Lytton's

*Eugene Aram*, even if inadvertently, the reader's attention remains focalised on the hero, who also happens to be the villain of the narrative, until his identity is disclosed and it is Walter, the amateur detective, who takes over the role of the hero at the end of the novel, when the truth is eventually disclosed to the reader. In spite of having traits pertaining to the detective novel, given the prominent role that the criminal hero plays in the novel in comparison with the detective Walter Lester, *Eugene Aram* can hardly be considered a detective novel *per se*, especially in comparison with Bulwer-Lytton's previous novel *Pelham; or, The Adventures of a Gentleman*, in which Pelham, who is the protagonist of Bulwer-Lytton's eponymous novel, turns into an amateur detective whom Knight considers a transitional character in detective fiction (2004: 12). In this respect, according to Sussex (2008: 8), it can be argued that Bulwer-Lytton establishes the literary link between William Godwin's *Caleb Williams; or, Things As They Are* (1794), featuring the first amateur fictional detective, and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), traditionally regarded as the first English detective novel.

According to Worthington, Bulwer-Lytton appeared to follow a logical progression in his crime fiction, since, in his first Newgate novel, *Paul Clifford*, the action revolves around a criminal with the aim of articulating the author's reformist message against some aspects of the penal code, while, in *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton rather focuses on the figure of the criminal in order to gain insight into the psychological profile of the delinquent's mind (2004: 63), thus moving from focusing on crime itself to concentrating on the criminal's personality. As Worthington further claims, the criminal figure in Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram* is presented as an "alienated Byronic hero of romance" (2004: 63), thus conveying a compassionate portrayal of the criminal-hero in a highly ambiguous portrait which both appeals and disgusts the reader upon gaining insight into his ambivalent personality. In fact, as Claggett contends, Eugene Aram attains "a high degree of complexity as a character" (2016: 183), and cannot be described as a flat character in spite of being a criminal, but rather as a round and multifaceted individual. In particular, the schism separating the character's appearance from his inner nature bespeaks Bulwer-Lytton's thesis that apparently respected members of society can turn into criminals, and that an inherent criminal capacity is shared by all individuals within the social community. In this respect, as Allan Conrad Christensen argues, Bulwer-Lytton found a profound sublimity in the notion that each individual possesses an evil demon (1976: 64), and so the author's sympathetic, but eminently ambivalent, portrayal of Eugene Aram responds to Bulwer-Lytton's philosophical belief in the inherent dual quality of human beings. At first, Eugene Aram is mostly depicted as a secluded scholar, stating that "there was a singular calmness, and, so to speak, profundity of thought, eloquent upon its clear expanse, which suggested the idea of one who had passed his life rather in contemplation than emotion" (38), thus asserting the criminal scholar's mostly intellectual nature. Nonetheless, throughout the novel, a series of passages also give clear evidence of Bulwer-Lytton's wish to indulge in sensation. As a case in point, when some thieves break into his house at night, Squire Rowland Lester is gladly surprised when Eugene Aram displays his ability with a gun and shoots the thieves to defend the family, as the scholar eloquently confesses, "the darkness is familiar to me [...] I could walk by the edge of a precipice in the darkest night without one false step" (193). Eugene Aram's profile

as a lonely scholar only interested in perusing his books stands in contrast with passages which also depict him as a fitting man of action and adventure. As the scholar establishes a close friendship with the Lesters and begins to court Madeline, there are certain occasions on which the reader is left to wonder whether Eugene Aram is truly the entirely venerable character that he appears to be at first sight. Upon meeting new acquaintances, Eugene Aram refuses to shake hands with his right hand and only gives his left hand, he also avoids going to church with Madeline when she requests his company, while Walter, who competes with Aram for the love of Madeline, witnesses his rival wandering in the forest at night and whispering to himself unintelligible words as if something was tormenting him. In a direct address to the reader, the omniscient narrator of the novel explicitly alludes to Eugene Aram's ambivalent portrait as both a scholar and a man of action, stating that,

it has been the necessary course of our narrative, to portray Aram more often in his weaker moments [...] but whenever he stood in the actual presence of danger, his whole soul was in arms to cope with it worthily: courage, sagacity, even cunning, all awakened to the encounter; and the mind which his life had so austere cultivated repaid him in the urgent season with its acute address and unswerving hardihood (201-2).

The ambiguous description of the criminal hero in Bulwer-Lytton's novel places an important emphasis on the contrast between his appearance and his inner nature, which becomes particularly explicit with regard to the way he is depicted in terms of his aging traits. In this respect, on some occasions, Eugene Aram is depicted as young and innocent-looking in appearance, but aged and terribly cunning in truth. When Eugene Aram becomes engaged to marry the young Madeline Lester, he gradually appears to be younger although he is past the prime of life, and he even admits that "now I have grown a child, and can see around me nothing but hope" (165). Conversely, every time Walter Lester secretly observes the scholar when the latter believes he is alone, the young man concedes that "a fierce and abrupt change broke over the scholar's countenance" (57) and Aram is urged to confess that all scholars "grow old before our time, we wither up, the sap of youth shrinks from our veins" as "the body avenges its own neglect" (58). This ambivalent characterisation of the criminal hero in terms of aging contributes to both concealing and betraying his ambiguous nature which, at times, underlines his revered traits as an extraordinary, gifted scholar and, at times, reveals a surprising rejuvenated quality, mostly pertaining to a man of action, which allows the reader to ponder whether Eugene Aram is truly the meek and compliant individual that he appears to be.

This dualistic quality in Eugene Aram is also conveyed through his portrayal as a tormented individual who must bear the terrible burden of guilt, as it is hinted that this sense of pervasive culpability must be rooted in a loathsome misdeed he committed in the past. Eugene Aram thus arises as an eminently tragic hero, based, as Gillingham claims, on a literary tradition established by William Godwin, Lord Byron and Walter Scott (2010: 95). His compulsion to engage in monologues and ponder in his loneliness betrays a remorse that turns Eugene Aram into a Byronic hero detached from the rest of individuals. In fact, the character of Manfred in Lord Byron's homonymous poem, published in 1817,

exerted a clear influence on Bulwer-Lytton's characterisation of Eugene Aram. In Byron's poem, Manfred is an aristocrat living in the Bernese Alps, who feels suffused with guilt owing to the death of his beloved Astarte, and resorts to his mastery of language to summon seven spirits from whom he seeks to obtain the gift of forgetfulness. In analogy with Manfred, Eugene Aram often finds himself soliloquising in the forest, showing his incapacity to forget his devious past and his need to justify his misdemeanour. Nonetheless, Eugene Aram is also presented as a lamenting fatalist who tries to convince himself that the murder he committed was strictly a necessary means to an end, which would allow him to pursue his learning with the apparent aim of contributing to human perfectibility. As Hollingsworth further argues, through Eugene Aram's reasoning, Bulwer-Lytton aimed to expose the treacherous fallacy of taking some of the precepts pertaining to Utilitarian ethics too far (1963: 89), inasmuch as Eugene Aram deludes himself into thinking that his criminal misbehaviour actually responds to obtaining the greatest benefit for the greatest number, thus convincing himself that his misdeed cannot be considered an actual crime, as he regards it as a single wrong committed for the sake of humankind's advancement. In this respect, Eugene Aram justifies himself, stating that, "I became haunted with the ambition to enlighten and instruct my race" (353), thus envisioning himself treacherously as a designated individual on whom there has been bequeathed the privilege of ensuring the progress of humanity, which truly arises as Eugene Aram's actual moral transgression in the novel.

Consequently, Eugene Aram is also depicted as a Romantic hero who dares defy established standards and conventions. In his role as a seeker of knowledge who aspires to intellectual eminence, Eugene Aram resembles other figures within the literary tradition, since, as Campbell claims, in order to write his novel, Bulwer-Lytton drew on literary figures that had revived through the rise of Romanticism (1986: 46), as is the case with the mythical Prometheus, the biblical Adam, and the rebellious and intellectual Faust. Like Prometheus in the Greek myth, who steals the fire from the gods to confer it to humanity against the dictates of Zeus, Eugene Aram also believes that his boundless pursuit of knowledge will contribute to enlightening humankind, even if it involves disobeying both human and divine laws. In resemblance with the biblical Adam, Eugene Aram also falls from grace into temptation and is metaphorically expelled from Paradise, that is, barred from the happiness that awaits him with his beloved Madeline once his sin is exposed. Above all, though, Bulwer-Lytton particularly based the character of Eugene Aram on Faust, as depicted in Goethe's masterpiece, to the extent that Eugene Aram justifies his misdeed declaring that "everyone knows the magnificent moral of Goethe's *Faust* [...] the yearning for the intellectual Paradise beyond" (121), so that an explicit intertextual link is established between Faust and the character of Eugene Aram, as they are both depicted as perpetual seekers of knowledge who are doomed for their unfathomable intellectual ambition.

In spite of Eugene Aram's boundless pursuit of knowledge which goes beyond established standards of ethics, Bulwer-Lytton's portrayal of this scholar-criminal often entices readers to feel sympathy and regard him as an eminently tragic figure who, despite being guilty of murder, is also a victim of fate. In this respect, as Campbell contends, Bulwer-Lytton's narrative depicts an individual who



commits “a terrible act of violence at variance with his whole nature” (1986: 45), which ultimately proves of no consequence since, due to an astounding turn of circumstances which takes place shortly after his crime, he ironically finds out that he is an unlucky victim of fate. As he states in a letter of confession which he addresses to Walter Lester, Eugene Aram admits that, although he murdered Daniel Clarke to provide himself with enough money to devote his life to the pursuit of knowledge, only three days after he has committed the crime, he is informed that a recently deceased relative has named him sole inheritor of his fortune. Upon learning about this tragic and ironic twist of circumstances, Eugene Aram exclaims in his letter that, “had I waited but three little days!” and admits that “when they told me, I thought I heard the devils laugh out at the fool who had boasted wisdom” (361), thus referring to the ultimate futility of his crime and realising that destiny was punishing him for his arrogance and conceit upon believing himself of a superior mind. Bearing in mind these circumstances, Eugene Aram is reported to be a criminal, but, for the most part, he is also portrayed as a victim of fate, who falls prey to his immoral ambitions and is harshly punished for daring trespass the boundaries separating good from evil.

Hence, even though the character of Eugene Aram stirred objections from “the morally-minded reader” (Mulvey-Roberts 2001: 116) and Bulwer-Lytton’s rhetorical decisions to turn an actual criminal into a hero created “an ethical dissonance” (Claggett 2016: 178), Bulwer-Lytton’s aim was primarily to endow his fictional version of Eugene Aram with human fallibility and inner complexity in order to make him a memorable character in crime fiction. Consequently, the actual reasons for the controversy should be sought in the author’s aesthetic interest in exploring the criminal mind and turning it into a legitimate theme in fiction. Criticism thus rather arose as a result of Bulwer-Lytton’s subversion of narratological tenets which dictated criminals should remain secondary flat characters deprived of literary complexity and psychological depth. By means of not only focusing on a criminal as a hero, but also of producing an alluring portrayal of a murderer, Bulwer-Lytton thus defied established literary conventions already at the advent of crime fiction, which earned him enormous popularity, but also hostile critical response.

#### 4. An author’s dilemma: popular acclaim and critical reception

The description of a scholar-criminal that is, for the most part, presented in Bulwer-Lytton’s *Eugene Aram* induces the reader to consider the hero, but also villain of the story, through a rather understanding and even considerate approach. With that purpose in mind, as has been shown, the narrator attempts to establish a friendly comradeship with his readers, sometimes even addressing them in an explicit way to secure some sort of complicity on their behalf. It is at the end of the novel that the narrator addresses the reader in these terms, admitting that, after everything they have shared, “then is there a tie between thee and me which cannot readily be broken” (378) and, by means of this explicit statement, the narrator already requests sympathy and indulgence from his readers to defend his novel and, particularly, his criminal hero. Owing to the narrator’s final address, it can be inferred that Bulwer-Lytton himself could

already foretell that his literary treatment of this criminal case and, particularly, that his favourable portrayal of a murderer may not meet an entirely approving critical reception among his contemporary critics. As Hollingsworth admits, Bulwer-Lytton mostly takes the side of the criminal and even seems unable to dissociate himself from him (1963: 92), as it is Eugene Aram who centres the attention of the whole novel and, despite his condition as a murderer, arises as its only hero.

As regards its readership, *Eugene Aram* gained immediate popularity and turned into a huge success to the extent that it became one of Bulwer-Lytton's most widely read novels. However, as its author had conjectured, if readers showed genuine enthusiasm, reviews of the novel showed that critics were of a rather diverse opinion. As Hollingsworth notices, periodicals such as *The Monthly Review* regarded the novel as one of Bulwer-Lytton's best books, *The Athenaeum* also underscored the genius this novel displayed, and *The Spectator* highlighted the idealised portrait that Bulwer-Lytton offered of Eugene Aram in which they saw nothing to blame (1963: 93). Conversely, though, these same reviews from *The Athenaeum* and *The Spectator*, along with others from *The Edinburgh Review* and *Tatler*, mostly deprecated Bulwer-Lytton's implausible portrait of the main character as a scholar as well as a criminal. As Claggett asserts, while the public's enduring fascination with Eugene Aram was based on his singularity as a scholar-criminal, critics found it difficult to accept that an exceptional intellectual could act so dishonestly (2016: 182) or that a cold-blooded criminal could also be a man of sensibility. In particular, William Manginn, from *Fraser's Magazine*, produced one of the harshest reviews of Bulwer-Lytton's novel, insofar as he denounced that *Eugene Aram* presented a murderer as a noble, and even attractive, character for the enjoyment of the masses. Even though the negative reviews upon the reception of *Eugene Aram* may at first sight appear to be grounded on moral and ethical reasons, judging them upon Manginn's statement that Bulwer-Lytton's sympathetic portrayal of a criminal comes hand in hand with "a modern, depraved, and corrupting taste" (Hollingsworth 1963: 93), it can be claimed that, as Manginn precisely asserts, his reasons have to do with taste and prevailing aesthetic views. Manginn's words thus unveil the literary prejudice that the reading public should not gain an intimate insight into the criminal's psychology, as this contributed to producing a humanised account of a character that was supposed to be categorised as despicable from a narratological point of view.

The criticism that his choice of featuring a criminal as the hero of his novel unleashed from the press urged Bulwer-Lytton not only to defend his right to write crime fiction, but also to justify himself for having resorted to sensation. As a popular writer of crime fiction, in a critical essay entitled "On Art in Fiction," published in 1838, Bulwer-Lytton gives evidence of being a self-conscious writer with a deep knowledge about his literary craft, while he also defends the legitimate inclusion of elements of sensation in his novels. In this critical essay, Bulwer-Lytton defends that "true art never disgusts" (339), and establishes the difference between 'terror' and 'horror,' stating that the former refers to a true tragic emotion, while the latter rather addresses our basest instincts, thus implying that he resorted to terror rather than horror to delineate the character of Eugene Aram. With a similar purpose in mind, following the publication of his crime

novel *Lucretia; or, The Children of the Night* (1846), which, as Sussex claims, would “earn Bulwer-Lytton the worst reviews of his career” (2008: 18), the author would also publish an extended critical essay under the title of *A Word to the Public: Containing Hints toward a Critical Essay upon the Artistic Principles and Ethical Designs of Fiction* in 1847, which also aimed at defending himself from accusations with respect to his fiction. In this later essay, although Bulwer-Lytton also sought to ground the defence of his novel alluding to an inherent moral purpose, insofar as his literary rendering of this criminal case displays how his shameful and guilty memories ultimately deprive Eugene Aram of any peace of mind, Bulwer-Lytton mostly justifies his taste for crime and sensation fiction appealing to “the fair liberty in the choice of materials, which it is the interest, both of art and the public, to permit to imaginative writers” (5). Upon focusing on the novels on behalf of which he had to bear strong criticism, in this essay, Bulwer-Lytton also defends himself from his choice to write a book such as *Eugene Aram* and outline the profile of an actual murderer. In praise of this novel in particular, Bulwer-Lytton justifies the choice of its theme claiming that the portrayal of an apparently blameless scholar that conceals a dark secret involving a murder, which is eventually brought to light, cannot be taken as a commonplace criminal case, but precisely, owing to its peculiarity, the author considered it to be particularly suitable for turning it into the subject of one of his novels. Given the appealing quality of this criminal case for the domain of fiction, in this critical essay, Bulwer-Lytton also concedes that other writers had also considered similar issues for literary purposes, as was the case with his mentor William Godwin and his much admired novel *Caleb Williams*, or even Walter Scott, to whom Bulwer-Lytton would eventually dedicate *Eugene Aram*. Consequently, in his aim to defend his crime fiction, Bulwer-Lytton contends in his essay *A Word to the Public* that “in dealing especially with coarser and more violent crimes, the author is bound to have some object in view, belonging to the purer and more thoughtful principles of art” (31-2), thus establishing that what was claimed as an objectionable incursion in sensation was mainly aimed at earning himself a name for posterity as a writer.

According to Tyson, despite the heated defence that Bulwer-Lytton made of *Eugene Aram* in his critical essays defending his crime fiction, it was only two years later that he apparently submitted to the judgment of criticism and published a revised edition of the original novel (1983: 105). Drawing on his habit of sharing the ultimate purpose of his writings with his readership, in the preface to the 1849 edition of *Eugene Aram*, Bulwer-Lytton gave an account of the major changes, as well as less important alterations, that he had introduced in the present edition of his novel. In the preface that he wrote to that purpose, the author concludes that, “I have convinced myself, that though an accomplice in the robbery of Clarke, he [Eugene Aram] was free both from the premeditated design and the actual deed of murder” (ix). It is in these terms that the author of the novel declares that the major change introduced in this new edition is that he has decided to acquit Aram of the murder of Daniel Clarke, so that the main character of his novel is no longer guilty as happened in the original criminal case and the first version of Bulwer-Lytton’s novel, but Aram is merely turned into Richard Houseman’s accomplice to robbery. As Tyson further argues, as a result of this major change in the plot, the author also felt obliged to introduce some minor

alterations, such as dropping the original emphasis on Eugene Aram's utilitarian justification for his crime, expunging passages that may be considered particularly irreligious or accentuating the character's remorse even further although the hero of his novel can no longer be considered a murderer (1983: 108). Critics, as is the case of Tyson (1983: 105) and, more recently, that of Claggett (2016: 171-2), claim that Bulwer-Lytton's decision to introduce such outstanding change in the plot of subsequent editions of his novel and exonerate his hero may respond to the writer's concession to harsh criticism. Nevertheless, Bulwer-Lytton's concern to present his hero in a more positive light from a critical perspective and, thus, gain the sympathy of reviewers in addition to that of his readership, may also respond to some more subtle reasons. After all, this would not be the last time that Bulwer-Lytton decided to introduce changes to literary texts which had already been published. As Sussex comments, Bulwer-Lytton would also rewrite his novel *Lucretia; or, The Children of the Night* (1846) in 1853 so that it had a happy ending (2008: 19), while, as is widely known, Bulwer-Lytton would also persuade his friend Charles Dickens to change the end of *Great Expectations* (Conrad Christensen 1976: 233). According to Sussex, Bulwer-Lytton's fondness of modifying some aspects of already published novels should be interpreted as "part of a continuing experiment with the controlled release of information" (2008: 15), which seemed particularly fitting to the genre of crime and detection, rather than succumbing to critical objections on moral grounds. It can thus be claimed that his concern about modifying some aspects of his novels were mostly aimed at preserving his public status as an author and defending crime as a suitable area to explore in fiction, with the view of securing himself a place as a writer for posterity. The author's need to defend his character not only in his critical essays, but also in subsequent editions of the novel, also unveils the writer's ultimate aesthetic aim to turn his sensation hero into a memorable character as well as his concern about public acclaim as a literary figure. The author's personal attachment to this scholar-criminal is also rooted in envisioning Eugene Aram as a cathartic portrayal of himself as a writer. Eugene Aram would remind Bulwer-Lytton that he had become a popular writer of sensation fiction, acclaimed by his readership, since, in a metaphorical way, like his criminal hero, Bulwer-Lytton had also ironically dared to indulge in crime as an author. However, as a Faustian hero, like the criminal character of his novel, Bulwer-Lytton was also thinking about his posthumous fame as a writer and defied the literary conventions which, even if they had earned him strong critical opposition in his lifetime, may ultimately contribute to earning him a name as a writer of crime fiction in forthcoming generations.

## 5. Conclusion

The publication of *Eugene Aram* involved a step forward in Bulwer-Lytton's career as a writer of crime fiction, insofar as he produced a psychological profile of a criminal, using an omniscient narrator who focalises his attention on the character of a murderer and presenting a sympathetic portrait of an individual, who, in spite of his condition as villain, also turns into the undisputable hero of the novel. Bulwer-Lytton's mostly romanticised profile of his criminal hero

responds to the author's intention to fictionalise the life of a murderer and gain the attention of his readership. Besides, though, the author's particular alluring portrayal of Eugene Aram was also grounded on the author's aim to write for posterity and, by means of endowing his character with complexity and psychological depth, turn him into a memorable character in spite of his criminal deeds. By means of the portrait that Bulwer-Lytton presents of this scholar-criminal, Eugene Aram arises as an eminently ambivalent literary hero as well as an extraordinary character in crime fiction. His fame as a literary criminal was sanctioned by the great popular acclaim that the novel obtained, which came hand in hand with the controversy that it also unleashed in critical reviews published in the press. Even though the harsh critical response to Bulwer-Lytton's portrayal of Eugene Aram appeared to be rooted in ethical reasons, it can be claimed that critical objections which referred to the impracticality of depicting a criminal as a sensitive man or an intellectual with homicidal tendencies mostly responded to Bulwer-Lytton's ground-breaking narratological devices which allowed readers to gain insight into Eugene Aram's thoughts and motivations, and even sympathise with this criminal hero and take pity on his tragic fate. Bulwer-Lytton's own critical positioning, as he defended the right to indulge in sensation, along with his literary ambition to provide an ambivalent portrait of a criminal in fiction, underscores his intention to attract instant popularity resorting to sensation, but also his will to gain enduring fame as a merited author of crime fiction. The critical controversy that Bulwer-Lytton had to face evokes the words of Edgar Allan Poe, who would review some of Bulwer-Lytton's novels, as the American writer declares "how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect*," ultimately stating that "the true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by means most advantageously applicable" (1970: 523). Bearing in mind Poe's words, Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Eugene Aram* should be judged by its author's intended design, which was that of elaborating an enduring portrait of the criminal as a hero that would outlast fading popularity, and attain posthumous fame for having defied established literary conventions and having accomplished his projected literary purpose.

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# Crime, Class, and Gender in Victorian Sensation Fiction

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**Abstract.** The popularity of Victorian sensation fiction reflects social and cultural changes in the Victorian age. This high demand for sensational stories, whether they were real or fictional, is connected with the social structure of Victorian England and the genre's challenging of the conventional understandings of criminality. Accordingly, this paper explores the reasons for the recognition of sensation fiction in the mid-Victorian age, elaborating public perceptions of crime and their subversion. With reference to reviews on its content and effects on Victorian society, it investigates the realism of sensation fiction in relation to real criminal cases.

**Keywords:** Victorian sensation fiction, crime, popularity, class, gender

## 1. Introduction

Sensation fiction flourished in England as a literary genre in the late 1850s and reached a conspicuous popularity in the 1860s and 1870s (Ascari 110). As it narrates crimes and scandals in middle and upper-class houses, many reviewers stigmatized its popularity and influence on society. It typically deals with certain felonies and sensational transgressions such as fraud, murder, bigamy, and adultery in upper-class and domestic settings. In addition to its subversion of Victorian social values, it manifests unconventional criminal identities such as aristocrats and women. However, works belonging to this genre can be viewed as reflections of Victorian ambivalent attitudes about crime and scandals because these kinds of stories both frightened and amazed the Victorians. Besides, this popularity reflects social and cultural changes in the Victorian age, and explanations for the high demand for such stories, whether they were real or fictional. This is closely connected with the social structure of nineteenth century England, conventional understandings of criminality, and the quick spread of news reports and fictional stories through newspapers. Accordingly, this paper explores the reasons for the popularity of sensation fiction in the mid-Victorian age, elaborating public perceptions of crime. With reference to reviews on its content and effects on Victorian society, it investigates the realism of sensation fiction in relation to real criminal cases.

## 2. Crime in the Victorian Age

For a further elaboration of the popularity of sensation fiction, it is necessary to investigate the social and cultural transformations which have significant effects on society starting from the early nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution and technological advances afterwards engendered prominent changes in society, economics, and politics in England. Through the accelerating number of factory workers and urban population in cities, the gap between the social classes broadened (Case and Shaw 3). With an increasing working-class population and

the terrible conditions of the poor, criminal activity also grew (Gilfillan 13). The working class was regarded as a threat to the social order and values maintained by the middle and upper classes. Moreover, criminality was commonly attributed to the working class because of higher crime rates in poor areas. Working class proclivity for crime was foregrounded as a way to control the members of this group. For this reason, in the early Victorian period, conventional understandings of criminality were mostly based on social class, gender and also ethnic background. Underprivileged members of society were pigeonholed as criminals most of the time, and criminality was generally viewed as a male activity, not a female one. (Gatrell 277). This mindset is substantially related to gender bias, and the Victorian image of women as submissive and inferior to men.

These established beliefs about crime played a significant role in the construction of criminal identity, and crime became an attractive subject due to the rise of illegal activities in the early nineteenth century (Gatrell 249). Although people were frightened of criminals, they were craving for crime stories as well. This brings us to the entertainment side of these stories. As there were not many things to be interested in these urban communities, people wanted to entertain themselves with criminal narratives. Thus, stories about offenders and their crimes had already been interesting for people since Gothic fiction was established in the eighteenth century. F. S. Schwarzbach comments on penny dreadfuls and broadsheets "that specialized in sensational crimes and gallows confessions", and how they achieved high number of sales (233). People wanted to learn about criminals and the offenses they committed, so they just needed to pick up a newspaper to satisfy this desire. The reduction in "taxes on knowledge" made newspapers cheaper and easily accessible for the lower classes, too (Diamond 1). Together with the success of these journalistic publications, Newgate novels became popular in the 1830s. They were narratives based on the lives of real criminals in the Newgate Prison which were published in the *Newgate Calendar*. Although the *Newgate Calendar* was initially meant to offer moral guidance, it became a way of entertainment rather than a lesson. Newgate novels gained popularity with the effect of preceding recognition of the *Newgate Calendar*. Similarly, stage melodramas about the lives of these malefactors were the ones getting public interest and popularity (Flanders 2011). Melodramas in that period were initially inspired by real crime stories and the plots of Newgate novels.

Crime was already a startling matter; however, if the criminal or the victim belonged to the upper class, it became a much more sensational incident. Michael Diamond stresses the role of social hierarchy in this interest in criminals from the higher ranks of society, and "a wicked baronet always seemed wickeder than a villain without a title" in real life and in fiction (6). If a crime event involved a woman or a member of the aristocracy, it became a more shocking incident which attracted several people. That is to say, violation of social class norms and gendered ideals brought sensational criminal cases into the public, and they became considerably popular. Accordingly, people would crowd crime scenes, trials, and public executions until this form of punishment was banned after the mid-nineteenth century.

The public reaction and enthusiasm during these displays of capital punishment stand for the great Victorian interest in criminal cases. Michael



Diamond states that an estimated 40,000 spectators watched François Courvoisier's execution, and around the execution area, certain places at the windows of neighbouring houses were sold for large amounts, and roofs were filled with curious people wishing to see the execution from a better place (157). François Courvoisier was a Swiss butler and valet who was convicted of murdering his master Lord William Russell in 1840 (Diamond 154). Although there were not many proofs of him being the murderer, he was executed, and he confessed the murder on the scaffold. Maria and George Manning's trial was as thrilling as Courvoisier's. They were convicted of murdering Patrick O'Connor whose body was found under the flagstones of their kitchen. (Flanders 158). As Maria Manning was a Swiss woman formerly working in some upper-class houses, she was the one who caught public attention. She became a public figure with her strict features and character in contrast to her husband, and even a statue of her was made in Madame Tussaud's in London (Flanders 174).

One of the other Victorian cases involving upper class criminals was that of Madeleine Smith. She was the daughter of a wealthy man, and she was convicted of murdering her ex-fiancé in order to marry a richer and socially higher man (Diamond 171). She was charged with poisoning her former lover when he started blackmailing her about their sexual affair. Although there were proofs that she possibly poisoned him with arsenic, she was acquitted. Her case became famous partly because of signifying the injustice in the British legal system and partly because it was about an upper-class female criminal. In the late nineteenth century Jack the Ripper became the most well-known murderer of the period. Five women were murdered violently in 1888 and 1889, and the perpetrator of these violent murders could never be found. As the bodies were cruelly and skilfully mutilated, the murderer is believed to have had medical education. Moreover, the murderer was linked to some members of the aristocracy and even royalty because the women were prostitutes and some of them may have had affairs with these men. (Diamond 184). The police were unable to find this serial killer and investigations were halted soon after, so this cover-up intensified these suspicions about the identity of the murderer as a highly placed individual.

Murder was not the only offense that amazed the public. People were also intrigued by sex scandals and divorce cases as much as murder. As Michael Diamond expresses, sex scandals mostly proceeded from the court, especially the Divorce court, which was the main place of sensation (120). In other words, private secrets could be revealed in these courts, which the public and journalists were highly interested in. Because only the privileged could afford the expenses of a divorce suit, the secrets and crimes of the higher classes were inevitably revealed (Diamond 124). Therefore, details of bigamy and divorce cases could be made even more public by newspaper reports (Pykett, "Sensation Novel" 2). Hence, the popularity of sensation fiction is not surprising in such a time filled with scandalous circumstances.

### 3. Victorian Sensation Fiction

Sensation novels incorporate the accounts of crime in Newgate fiction and the prevailing atmosphere of terror in Gothic romances, but these elements are

manifested in different ways in the sensation genre. Patrick Brantlinger argues that "the sensation novel involves both the secularization and the domestication of the apparently higher (or at any rate, more romantic) mysteries of the Gothic romance" ("What is sensational" 4). Sensation fiction transforms the romantic and religious overtones of Gothic fiction into more realistic forms with its settings and subjects. In addition, Patrick R. O'Malley points out that Gothic fiction, with the psychological theories in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, focuses on somatic effects of terror on the mind in relation to spaces like castles or monasteries (85). Sensation fiction, through industrialisation, trade, and the rise of the middle class, rather touches Victorian materialism and financial issues. While doing that, it revolves around domestic settings because it deals with "the hidden secrets of the family [...] and the specifics of *British* life" (O'Malley 90). It intrudes the homes and private lives of the upper-class characters who generally have monetary motives and reasons for the crimes they commit.

Besides Gothic conventions like mysteries and terror, Patrick Brantlinger points out that sensation novels were sensational because "their plots involved transgressions of gender and class proprieties and boundaries" ("Class and race" 430). In a similar way to real criminal cases, subversion of these ideologies about gender and social class were among the most prominent factors for sensation fiction's popularity. That is, these works showed that crime did not only concern the lower levels of society, but the upper classes could be involved in scandals and sensational events too. Christopher Pittard explains that sensation fiction displayed the transition of crime narrative from the streets and slums to the confidential spaces of the family home, and it marks "a type of invasion, the threat of a working-class literature of crime usurping the settings of the middle-class romance" (107). This could be paralleled with the shift of crime from the working-class areas to inside the upper-class genteel homes. That is to say, conventional perceptions of crime based on class identity were no longer regarded as mainstream. Picturing upper class and female transgressors in respectable or aristocratic environments is one of the most notable factors that made these works shocking in a capitalist and conventional age.

Concerning transgressions of social boundaries, sensation novels represent a juxtaposition of narratives and characters belonging to different levels of society. Because these works also addressed middle and upper-class female readers in addition to working class readers, they were seen as invading the respectable literary marketplace. As Deborah Wynne notes, with its origins in Gothic romances, melodramas, and cheap fiction, the sensation novel is the first Victorian genre that contains "aspects of its 'low' origins [...] while still appealing widely to 'respectable' readers" (*The Sensation Novel* 14). Just as it combines high and low forms of literature by attracting the readers from all social classes, it includes characters from different social strata, including servants. Besides the prominent position of the upper-class genteel characters in many sensation novels, servants play significant roles in their plots. For example, Wilkie Collins usually includes servants as witnesses with their testimonies in the revelation of the secrets and crimes committed in respectable families.

The portrayal of unconventional women in sensation novels and the rise in the number of female writers were among other reasons why these works were criticized and considered to be controversial (*The Sensation Novel* 40). Female

sensation novelists explored problems that many Victorian female readers experienced. Furthermore, the challenging image of the women depicted in these novels generated anxiety about this genre, which therefore resulted in stern disapproval by certain scholars. Some critics also form a connection between the popularity of sensation novels and reforms for women's legal rights in marriage and social life. As Deborah Wynne points out, the fact that these novels were popular with female readers was indirectly ascribed to the feminist movement in the 1850s which sought legal, economic, and social equality with men ("Critical responses" 391). Almost every sensation novel features a woman who can solve mysteries or take matters into their hands. (Pykett *The Sensation Novel* 6). Therefore, it is believed that this focus on gender issues may have triggered legal reforms about women's property and divorce rights in the second half of the nineteenth century (Maceachen 139).

Along with gender and class issues, Patrick Brantlinger relates the popularity of sensation novels to the influence of stage melodramas, sensational journalism, bigamy trials and the divorce law reform in the Victorian age ("What is sensational" 2). People were preoccupied with such controversial issues, so sensation novelists make these the most common topics in their works. Accordingly, sensation novels became so popular among female readers that even different products about these works started to be merchandised. Kimberly Harrison notes that sensation novels were products of a "commercialized literary marketplace" that met the demand for sensational stories, and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) even inspired products such as bonnets, cloaks, dances, and perfumes (529). These merchandised products of sensation novels show the extent of their popularity.

As reflections of real criminal cases and newspaper reports about scandalous stories including upper-class men and women, novels illustrating upper class crime narratives started to become more common in the 1850s. Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), though not exactly a sensation novel, features an aristocrat, Lady Dedlock, with her secret past challenging Victorian moral certitudes. The family lawyer, Mr. Tulkinghorn, bothers her upon revealing that she had a baby out of wedlock before her current marriage. After the disclosure of her disreputable previous actions in contrast to Victorian merits, Dickens's introducing her as one of the suspects of Mr. Tulkinghorn's murder foregrounds the sensational side of the novel. However, as it covers only a small part of the work with its major focus on the flaws in Chancery court, the novel is not totally included in sensation fiction. Nevertheless, it can be seen as a pioneer work for the development of this genre.

Apart from *Bleak House*, it is appropriate to delve into two of the most obvious examples of sensation fiction. Although they have been studied widely, it is important to demonstrate what they offer about Victorian society and the popularity of the genre. The first one, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, was serialized in Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round* in 1859 and 1860. The novel is broadly accepted as the first example of sensation fiction, for it incorporates almost all the essential elements of the genre with its mystery, crime, and scandalous events in the plot. The story's main subject is on the fraud and crimes committed by Sir Percival Glyde and his Italian ally, Count Fosco. Following his marriage to Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde is revealed to be after his wife's

fortune to repay his debts. The story narrates how Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe, Laura's half-sister, endeavour to reveal the mystery behind Glyde and Fosco. Thus, Wilkie Collins challenges traditional perceptions of crime by portraying two aristocratic villains and the startling crimes they commit throughout the novel.

The novel starts with Walter's encounter with Anne Catherick, the woman in white, and her terrifying impact on Walter with her horrifyingly sudden presence. Collins catches the reader's attention from the very beginning with such a mysterious and eccentric woman. Deborah Wynne describes the sensation fiction's "concern with secrets and mysteries" as a distinctive feature of the genre (*The Sensation Novel* 4). These secrets, linked to crimes and scandals, usually disturb the lives of the upper classes. In the novel, the secret of Anne Catherick breaks into Limmeridge House and makes Walter and Marian follow her mystery which leads them to discover the misdemeanours of Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco.

In a similar way to earlier Gothic novels, Collins illustrates upper classes who commit fraud, incarcerate women, and even cause one character to die of a heart problem. Sir Percival Glyde seems like a "gentleman born and brought up, who ought to have set a better example" (Collins 421). However, his social identity is totally overthrown by some criminal deeds to overcome his financial problems. He forges his parents' marriage record to eliminate his illegitimacy and inherit his father's property. Also, social conflict is clearly presented when Walter Hartright as a lower-class teacher starts tracing these aristocrat criminals to reveal their secrets. Walter, in a way, replaces Sir Percival by marrying Laura and violates Victorian social boundaries. For the sake of saving Laura from Sir Percival, Walter bears many hardships, then becomes the Heir of Limmeridge House and an aristocrat through the social status of his new wife. This transgression of social boundaries is one of the features that makes the novel sensational. However, as Walter is not an offender or villain, but an amateur detective, his position does not seem vexatious and provoking.

Collins draws attention to the situation of women because Laura Fairlie is subjected to emotional and financial abuse by Sir Percival Glyde through his indifference to her and his pressure to get her fortune due to the legality of their marriage. There is also a clear reference to the property rights of married women and the severity of divorce laws. On the other hand, Collins creates one of the most peculiar female characters in Victorian fiction. Marian Halcombe does not totally fit into the norms of Victorian femininity with her appearance and character. She is pictured as an "ugly" lady with "a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw" (Collins 24), and this image is strengthened through the description of her head's contradicting with her "masculine form" (Collins 25) and body. In addition to her physical appearance, her following remarks about men display that her character is different from traditional Victorian women:

No man under heaven deserves these sacrifices from us women. Men! They are enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship – they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. (Collins 159)

With these ideas on women placed in subordinate positions, she stands for non-conformist women seeking equality with men. Additionally, for unearthing the real identities of Glyde and Fosco, her efforts as an amateur detective are as crucial as Walter's endeavours. Thus, Collins refers to the need for equality between men and women and defies Victorian principles and gendered subjectivity through an unorthodox female figure.

Besides these controversial topics, social demand and curiosity for trials apparently influenced Wilkie Collins on the novel's narrative structure. He constructs the novel in such an interesting way that his inspiration from trials of scandalous cases is obvious. The story in *The Woman in White* is narrated by Walter Hartright with his collected statements from different characters. As Lyn Pykett suggests, Walter undertakes a kind of lawyer role by collecting all the evidence and testimonies and presenting it to readers (*Wilkie Collins* 57). This could be a deliberate reference to trials where curious people would crowd the courts. Through the novel, Collins presents his readers with the excitement they would feel in a courtroom while listening to the particulars of a sensational lawsuit. The characters give a lot of details about the villains and the victims who belong to the upper class. Together with the influence of the newspaper reports, the narrative style is affected by this enthusiasm and curiosity of people about surprising incidents.

Another notable sensation novel is *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, one of the representative female sensation novelists. As the title suggests, the main character is a woman, and the novel revolves around her mystery and shocking crimes. When her husband does not come back from Australia for years, Helen Talboys disguises herself as a governess with a different name, Lucy. After a while, she gets married to an aristocrat, the rich Mr. Audley. When Mr. Audley's nephew arrives with Lucy's ex-husband coincidentally, Lady Audley commits several crimes in order not to disclose her real name and her previous marriage. As observed, Braddon includes secrets and scandals in a very sensational story. Lady Audley commits murder, bigamy, and she is kept in an asylum in the end. The novel is inevitably among the most important sensation novels with its plot and features that make it a perfect example of the genre.

Lady Audley challenges both social and gender norms of the Victorian age. The fact that she transgresses social boundaries by entering the aristocracy from a lower-class environment is sensational and shaking the social order (Brantlinger "Class and Race" 433-434). Furthermore, she subverts gender ideology by committing misdemeanours unexpected from an aristocratic Victorian lady because such figures usually stand for gentility, innocence, and morality. However, Lady Audley commits bigamy, arson, and even attempted murder throughout the novel. As a female writer in a conventional period, it is not surprising that Mrs. Braddon questions Victorian gender conventions and refers to real scandals in aristocratic homes. In Natalie Schroeder's words, Braddon's "sensation novels are especially significant today for what they reveal about Victorian women's resistance to conventionally prescribed social norms" (87). She portrays Helen Talboys as courageous enough to change her name and social status to live a better life, although she leaves her son behind with her husband's father.

Braddon emphasizes the core of sensation novels' plots when Robert Audley, the amateur detective in the novel, points out the crimes committed in seemingly peaceful houses in the following words:

What do we know of the mysteries that may hang about the houses we enter? If I were to go to-morrow into that commonplace, plebeian, eight-roomed house in which Maria Manning and her husband murdered their guest, I should have no awful prescience of that bygone horror. Foul deeds have been done under the most hospitable roofs; terrible crimes have been committed amid the fairest scenes, and have left no trace upon the spot where they were done. [...] I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty. (153-154)

Whilst Robert Audley implies his suspicions about Lady Audley's mystery and criminality in this extract, Braddon refers to important facts about real criminal cases and sensation novels. She emphasizes that even a supposedly innocent and privileged lady could be a felon. Although Lady Audley's actions can be thought of as exaggerated and unreal in a fictional story, figures like Maria Manning and Madeleine Smith show that such a fictional character is credible and realistic. Thus, Lady Audley's alleged innocence and beauty mask her crimes. That is to say, respectable houses may be places concealing mysteries, scandals, and crimes. On the other hand, after her real identity is revealed to the reader, she is described like a monstrous creature with the "flame in her eyes – a greenish light, such as might flash from [...] an angry mermaid" (Braddon 347) and the "horrible demoniac force" (Braddon 351). Braddon embodies this unconventional depiction of a woman as a recurrent motif encountered in several sensation novels.

These novels were often criticized for their immoral subject matter and unrealistic plotlines with melodramatic overtones (Wynne "Critical Responses" 390). However, it can be observed that they were not such exaggerated narratives with regard to real criminal cases and scandals. Besides, most writers of sensation novels admitted they had been inspired by newspaper reports for their plots. Charles Reade, one of the most renowned writers of sensation fiction, usually states that he takes ideas for his novels from the newspapers. John F. Quinn suggests that Charles Reade was highly concerned with newspaper reports which were sources for his novels, and he kept several volumes in which he compiled interesting reports and articles clipped from newspapers (4-5). Charles Reade usually admitted that he found his story lines in the pages of *The Times*, and Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens both similarly declared that some of their works were influenced by real-life criminal trials (Diamond 189). Hence, sensation fiction's credibility and exaggeration should be criticized bearing in mind the newspapers' contents. As Lyn Pykett claims, "the sensation genre was a journalistic construct, a label attached by reviewers to novels whose plots centred on criminal deeds, or social transgressions and illicit passions" ("The Newgate novel" 33). Thereupon, sensation novels presented readers with the thrill of reading scandalous crime stories in newspapers.

#### 4. Conclusion

As sensation fiction was a prolific genre in the second half of the nineteenth century, its effects on Victorian society and the literary marketplace cannot be overlooked. Even though the sensation novel continues significant elements of Gothic fiction and Newgate novels, it mainly focuses on material culture and financial subjects in the context of the Victorian industrialisation. Sir Percival incarcerates and abuses Laura psychologically to steal her fortune as a way of reaching financial stability and keeping his social reputation. Lady Audley commits several crimes to maintain her comfortable life and higher social status because her former husband, with the aim of earning more money, leaves her destitute and alone for a long time. The characters generally have financial motives for most of the crimes in these works. With this in mind, the sensation novel shows that supernatural beings are not the ones that cause horror anymore, but social hypocrisy and upper-class criminality cause real terror and harm in Victorian industrial society. With the appearance of middle-class houses, it becomes more realistic unlike the haunted castles and fortresses employed in Gothic fiction. Integrating the features of gothic literature and Newgate novels, it paves the way for the development and the popularity of detective fiction in the late nineteenth century.

Although sensation fiction was denounced for its corrupt content by some reviewers in the Victorian age, it tells us a lot about social and cultural fears and ideas in the period. It displays anxieties about crime, family life, financial insecurities, gender and social boundaries, and transgressions of these concepts. As observed, the sensation novel did not influence Victorian morality negatively because similar stories had been published in newspapers for decades before its popularity. On the contrary, it mirrors Victorian debates and concerns about crime, scandals, and hypocrisy in aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Accordingly, it raises social awareness and accelerates reforms in legal and societal matters. The writers of sensation novels challenge perceptions of crime based on social rank and gender in the Victorian age, which can be seen in real criminal cases in that period. These writers and their works show that criminality and scandals are present in genteel homes as much as they are in underprivileged districts. In addition to mysteries and gothic stories in their storylines, sensation novels represent subversion of Victorian moral and social norms and the rigidity of these values. What is more, the popularity of sensation fiction could be attributed to public demand and craving for criminal and sensational stories. It is also deep-rooted in human nature, as it is normal to feel curiosity and take an interest in sensational events which people do not often encounter in their normal lives. In a similar vein, it is not surprising that novels and TV shows including violence, nudity, and intrigues are globally popular even today.

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## “O Heal My Soul”

### Health and Healing in Anne Bradstreet’s Poetry

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**Abstract.** The main concern of this article is a close study of Anne Bradstreet’s recurrent focus in her poetry on health and healing in the physical and spiritual sense. For the Puritans in Bradstreet’s colonial New England, physical afflictions meant God’s trials closely associated with guilt and moral depravity. On the other hand, good health was commonly considered to be an indication of spiritual purity and redemption from sinfulness. It was therefore interpreted as a reward from God. In this regard, Bradstreet’s poetry, which embodies various allusions and explicit evidence, recurrently gestures to this fundamental Puritan dichotomy of illness and wellness.

**Keywords:** Anne Bradstreet, health and healing, spiritual healing, Puritanism, Puritan spirituality, colonial Puritanism, New England Puritans

In her poem “For Deliverance from A Fever” (p. 247), Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) describes how she desperately cried out to God for redemption and her recovery of health. She had been suffering from high fever; she says, as her “burning flesh in sweat did boil” (*line 6*), she implored to God in pain: “O heal my soul” (*line 18*). Considered within the broader cultural and spiritual context of early Puritanism and the Puritan idea of the self in colonial New England (Bercovitch 1-35 in particular), Bradstreet’s call upon God for healing reiterates the common Puritan perception of God as the health-giver and the healer. For the Puritan mind, health and spirituality were closely interrelated. Physical afflictions such as an illness or a disease were regarded as “life’s trials” (Doriani 59) and “chastisement from God” (Doriani 60) or “God’s dispensations” (Hammond 13). On the other hand, well-being and recovery from an affliction was understood as the healing effects of faith and supplication, immaculate spirituality, and both bodily and spiritual self-discipline in view of worldly temptations and sinfulness. In other words, in Puritan faith, afflictions and illnesses were attributed to one’s sinful self and, therefore, given by God as chastisement. As for well-being, it was related to one’s piety and spiritual purity. Moreover, it was considered to be a reward from God, for which gratitude was expressed through prayer and absolute supplication to God. This dual vision of wellness is a recurrent theme in Bradstreet and also in the poetry of her contemporaries, especially Edward Taylor and Michael Wigglesworth.

Historically, Bradstreet made her literary *début* in 1650 with the publication of her book of poetry, metaphorically entitled *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America* and cited briefly ever after as *The Tenth Muse*. Written within a Puritan social and cultural context, Bradstreet's poetry embodies a vast range of topicality, fundamentally combining early New England Puritan intellectualism and an unusual display of female sensitivity that reveals her own feminine self and challenges dominant Puritan patriarchy. As the first woman poet in American literature, she has never lost her literary popularity for study and research. In this regard one may recall Rosamond Rosenmeier's view that "each age has discovered its own Anne Bradstreet" (xi). Also relevant is Jane D. Eberwein's statement that "each generation constructs its own portrait" of Bradstreet ("Anne Bradstreet" 165). Moreover, besides her Puritan and pious self, she has also come to be recognized as a romantic worldly self, a feminist, a liberated intellectual, a public instructor, a historian-poet, a progressive mind, and a self-searching individual. For her, as a woman poet, the writing of poetry was a serious literary interest and indeed a career rather than a mere feminine pastime in an otherwise anti-poetical social milieu of colonial Puritan New England. Therefore, considered within the history of poetry in America, she has been eulogized deservedly as the "historically, metaphorically, and even biologically mother of American poetry" (Eberwein, "Anne Bradstreet" 161).

Bradstreet's poetry with its range of thematic variety is predominantly informed by Puritan spirituality and Biblical acculturation while at the same time it is extensively concerned with worldly sensibilities and issues. Indeed, as Beth Doriani has pointed out by referring to the eminent Bradstreet scholar Robert Daly,

Bradstreet remained faithful to her tradition in that she celebrated the sensible world while consistently ascending to a celebration of its Creator through her contemplation of the world (52).

In other words, the dichotomy of the soul and the flesh is levelled out in her poetry and constitutes a discourse which recurrently reveals a close relationship and ongoing interaction between the metaphysics of the soul and the worldliness of the flesh. One most explicit projection of this relationship and interaction in her poetry is her constant invocation of God for help and redemption in overcoming her afflictions whether physical or psychological (Bradstreet, especially pp. 222-23. 240-45, 247-49). At this point, it would be a useful framework of reference to dwell briefly on the Puritan metaphysics of faith and its relationship with good health. Then, the question of how she privileges an inalienable relationship between spirituality and healing or, more broadly, between faith and good health can be answered through references to her poetry. In fact, what Brett Hendrickson has stated in a totally different context seems relevant to our point:

European colonizers on both the Atlantic seaboard and in what is now the U.S. Southwest drew on explicit Christian practices and beliefs about healing as well as theological assumptions about health and healing (348).

In the Puritan culture of colonial New England, religion and medicine were understood as inalienable from each other; in other words, faith and physical as well as spiritual good health were regarded as closely interrelated. For

consolation, relief, endurance, and spiritual sustenance in overcoming illnesses, afflictions, and all sorts of infirmities, Puritans completely relied on their faith and, in a mood of profound spirituality, prayed and implored to God as the health-giver and the healer. Accordingly, as Jean Marie Lutes has argued, in Puritan New England,

the lines between folk belief, religious ritual, and scientific endeavor were far from impermeable. [...] Ministers, as members of a privileged group of educated men, often served double duty as doctors and preachers (314).

Evidently, for the Puritan mind, the indisputable instances of the interaction of religion and medicine or religious propagation and medical healing were to be seen in the healing miracles performed by Christ and his apostles (*King James Version*, Matt. 4.23-4, 8.2 and 5-16, and 9.20-2; Luke 4.33-6 and 38-40, 5.12-5 and 18-25; Acts 9.33-4 and 14.8-10; Jas 5.13-6). In Matt. 4.23, for example, Christ is depicted as performing his miracles of "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," while at the same time he continues to teach and preach "the gospel of [God's] kingdom." Furthermore, upon Christ's healing miracles, there were

brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Matt.4.24).

Through his miracles Christ demonstrated that health and healing could be attained and sustained both physically and spiritually and that spiritual purity is a state of wellness. Similarly, it was a common conviction among the Puritans of colonial New England that all diseases and afflictions could be remedied through an unwavering devotion to Christ and by full submission to God's grace and that spiritual purity was essential for the maintenance of a healthy life. Both Bradstreet and her contemporaries voiced all these fundamental Puritan convictions and dogmas in their writings. For instance, Edward Taylor emphasizes how spiritual purity and healing is attained through absolute love for Christ; in his poem "Christ's Reply" (p. 51), Christ offers grace and mercy to the faithful who are afflicted and traumatized by their sinfulness and despair:

If that you stick unto my Cause,  
Opposing whom oppose my Laws,  
I am your own, and you are mine.  
The weary Soule I will refresh,  
And Ease him of his heaviness.  
[...]  
I will you comfort sweet extend.  
[...]  
To him that smiteth hip and thigh  
My foes as his: Walks warily,  
I'll give him Grace: he'st give me praise. (51)

Indeed, throughout his poetry, especially both in "Gods Determinations" (pp. 31-109) and in "Meditations" (pp. 123-79), Taylor strongly reiterates his "ardor of [...] love for Christ" (Johnson 16), which he expresses in a "homoeoteric" mode adapted from secular love poetry and employed for a spiritual end (Johnson 16-

7). For him, spiritual agony and despair is a state of illness and undermines physical and spiritual health. Therefore, he further implies, without complete submission to Christ, and because of indulgence in worldliness and sinfulness, man fails to maintain good health and loses his spiritual purity, as indicated metaphorically in “The Effects of Man’s Apostacy” (pp. 34-5):

While man unmarr’d abode, his Spirits all  
 In Vivid hue were active in their hall,  
 This spotless Body; here and there mentain  
 Their traffick for the Universall gain,  
 Till Sin Beat up for Volunteers. Whence came  
 A thousand Grievs attending on the same.  
 Which march in ranck and file, proceed to make  
 A Battery, and the fort of Life to take. (34)

Moreover, for Taylor, due to sinfulness and, indeed, moral corruption, man is traumatized by agonies and becomes physically and spiritually sick:

Yet this he easily feels, he liveth in  
 A dying Life, and Living Death by Sin. (35)

In fact, what has been termed “soul loss” in the “soul retrieval therapy” today (Hendrickson 347) perfectly corresponds to the Puritan idea of sinfulness and its consequent effect, which is the loss of health. As a leading voice for soul-retrieval therapy in modern medicine, Hendrickson states that

the cause of much suffering and illness is ‘soul loss’ caused by traumatic events that fracture the soul and force parts of it out of the body. The resulting lack of wholeness creates imbalances that can be both psychologically and physically debilitating (347).

As regards this interrelationship of physicality and spirituality, Philippa Koch stresses in her comments on the Puritan minister Cotton Mather’s medical knowledge that

like most Christians of his generation, he [Cotton Mather] found the origins of sickness in the original sin of Adam and Eve. [...] [For him] sickness was a symptom and reminder of human weakness and transience and an invaluable opportunity to encourage sufferers to reflect on their spiritual state and God’s providential promise of salvation. By repenting and turning to God, sinners could heal their souls (559).

Preceding Mather a generation earlier, Bradstreet also had clearly stressed the same idea through her allegorical figure “Childhood” (pp. 52-5) in her poem “Of the Four Ages of Man” (pp. 50-64). For her, the human body was, owing to the original sin of Adam and Eve, subject to all kinds of sinfulness and sickness, which inevitably led to the loss of spiritual purity:

But yet let me relate before I go  
 The sins and dangers I am subject to.  
 Stained from birth with Adam’s sinful fact,  
 Thence I began to sin as soon as act.  
 [...]  
 As many are my sins, so dangers too;  
 For sin brings sorrow, sickness, death, and woe (*lines 120-23 and 130-31*).

It was within the context of all this Puritan culture of spirituality and physical well-being that Bradstreet's perspective of the interrelationship of faith and health or, more broadly, of religion and medicine, was shaped. Like her fellow Puritans she was convinced that poor health was a physical symptom of sinfulness. On the other hand, she also shared the common Puritan belief that, for somatic and spiritual healing, redemption from one's sins was of paramount importance; accordingly, redemption could only be attained through repentance, prayer, and absolute submission to God. Therefore, in her poetry, she recurrently emphasizes how she was spiritually and physically healed from her illnesses and traumas through full spiritual self-abandonment to God's love and mercy. For instance, her poem "From Another Sore Fit" (p. 248), among others, is a relevant example in this regard for illustration:

In my distress I sought the Lord  
When naught on earth could comfort give,  
And when my soul these things abhorred,  
Then, Lord, Thou said'st unto me, "Live."  
Thou knowest the sorrows that I felt;  
My plaints and groans were heard of Thee,  
And how in sweat I seemed to melt  
Thou help'st and Thou regardest me.

[...]

My heart I wholly give to Thee;  
O make it fruitful, faithful Lord.  
My life shall dedicated be

To praise in thought, in deed, in word (*lines 2-9 and 18-21*).

Evidently Bradstreet's colonial life under Puritan austerity and patriarchy was barely endurable owing to the harsh physical, economic, and social circumstances of her time. While trying with her family, like all other early Puritan colonists, to build up a safe and prosperous life in the wilderness of colonial New England, she inevitably faced a host of traumatic challenges. Recurrent illnesses, untimely death of her children and grandchildren, the destruction by fire of the family house, and days of depressing loneliness due to her husband's frequent absence on business, obviously had a traumatic impact on her private life. Indeed she extensively voices her physical and spiritual agonies and traumas through her poetry, which contains a great deal of autobiographical as well as confessional details and becomes a powerful expression of gender identity *vis-à-vis* dominant Puritan patriarchy. Therefore, throughout her poetry with an autobiographical and confessional dimension (for example, pp. 14-7, 225-30, 247-49, 265-68), one always senses an undercurrent of tension displaying an internalized and unabated conflict between the Puritan doctrinal values and way of life on the one hand and her liberal and feminine self on the other (Hammond 12). In this regard, her poetry can be read as the portrayal of what Hammond somewhat categorically calls "a decidedly un-Puritan self who reveals unusual difficulties in adapting to the demands of her faith and her society" (11). So, in order to overcome her traumas and constantly recurring afflictions, Bradstreet turned to poetry and, by pouring out her agonies into her poetry, used it as a healing or, in Robert Daly's term, "salvific" practice (136). In other words, in poetry she definitely discovered a comforting and healing consolation for her illnesses and traumatic experiences.

For her, besides devoted piety and absolute supplication to God's mercy, one's creative practice of art, including poetry, has a healing effect on one's afflicted body and brain. She clearly emphasizes this conviction of hers in "The Prologue" (pp. 15-17), which can also be considered to be her poem of *apologia* in the Renaissance humanistic tradition for her book of poetry *The Tenth Muse* against possible patriarchal and anti-feminist attacks on her as a poet. By giving the example of the ancient Greek orator Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.), whom she describes as "that fluent sweet tongued Greek" (line 21), she self-confidently asserts the healing effects of art:

By art he gladly found what he did seek,  
A full requittal of his striving pain.  
Art can do much [...] (lines 23-5).

Moreover, in addition to the healing power of poetry, she found healing also in her love of nature. Doctrinally, the common Puritan attitude towards the physical and human world was one of ambivalence. On the one hand, as can be seen in the poetry of Wigglesworth (especially "The Day of Doom") and Taylor, the Puritans abhorred the pleasures and comforts of this world and constantly tried to refrain from them in order to avoid sinfulness and spiritual contamination. Yet, on the other, with a sense of what one may aptly term Puritan transcendentalism, they also regarded the physical world as a revelation of God's own power and love. In other words, for them, God was immanent in the physical world, and the beauty of nature was a transcendental reflection of divine beauty that could be best appreciated through contemplation, which also has a healing effect on the troubled mind or traumatized soul. Although in various poems as, for example, in "The Flesh and the Spirit" (pp. 215-18), "The Vanity of All Wordly Things" (pp. 219-20), "Meditations" (pp. 251-53), and "As Weary Pilgrim" (pp. 294-95), Bradstreet voices the Puritan prohibition of wordliness and warns against sinfulness, it is the healing and transcendental idea of the natural world that she brings to the fore in her "Contemplations" (pp. 204-14) with an explicit sense of romanticism. For instance, in the opening section of the poem, she celebrates the scenic beauty of the New England landscape in autumn and feels spiritually uplifted ("rapt") and healed:

Some time now past in the autumnal tide,  
When Phoebus wanted but one hour to bed,  
The trees all richly clad, yet void of pride,  
Where gilded o'er by his rich golden head.  
Their leaves and fruits seemed painted, but was true,  
Of green, of red, of yellow, mixed hue;  
Rapt were my senses at this delectable view (lines 2-8).

Indeed, to get over her afflictions and spiritually traumatized moments, she turns to nature for God's immanent presence and, thereby, through contemplation and self-reflection, experiences the impact of spiritual healing and well-being.

To conclude, in her life Bradstreet constantly suffered from physical and spiritual as well as patriarchal and doctrinal traumas. Therefore, she was indefatigably struggling for both physical and spiritual healthiness. However, as can be understood from her 1669 poem "As Weary Pilgrim" (pp.294-95), she began towards the end of her life to consider herself as a "weary pilgrim" (line 1)

in this world and longed for death as a complete release from agonies and as a means for an eternal reunion with God. As a devoted Puritan, who cherished a transcendent vision of life in this world, she believed she would acquire through death not only a blessed deliverance from an unhappy earthly life of pain, doubt, fear, and all kinds of affliction but also an unadulterated state of well-being in union with God.

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## Reviews

Emily Alder. *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin de Siècle*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

x + 250 pp. ISBN: 978-3-030-32651-7 (HC), 978-3-030-32652-4 (eBook).

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It is safe to assume that there has been a resurgence of interest in weird fiction over the last two decades. This is evidenced both in general publishing by the abundance of new collections and anthologies dedicated to weird stories, as well as in academia by the increasing number of books and articles that treat the weird as a distinct type of speculative fiction. While initial scholarship focused primarily on H. P. Lovecraft and his fellow authors writing for the American pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, more recent studies have extended the scope of investigation, and the literary output of the Lovecraft circle in the 1920s and 1930s is now viewed merely as a later stage of a longer development that has its roots in the nineteenth century. The triggering factors of this development, however, still remain largely unplumbed. Emily Alder's *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin de Siècle* sets out to address this gap in knowledge by arguing that the emergence of the genre can be seen as a response to the changing landscapes of scientific culture at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the first chapter, Alder outlines the theoretical framework of the book, conceptualising weird fiction as “a literature of borderland science” (26). By the end of the nineteenth century, Alder observes, new discoveries across various disciplines and the growing influence of occult ideas had undermined previously dominant assumptions about science, blurring the boundaries of what counts as legitimate scientific inquiry and compelling a re-evaluation of positivist methods as the primary means of knowing the world. Alder sees this climate as the fertile ground from which weird fiction's fascination with the unknown arises, adding that the weird, unlike science fiction, revels in what *cannot* be achieved or explained by science. The rest of the book provides sufficient evidence for her thesis by looking at a range of weird stories—all by Lovecraft's British predecessors, in a more or less chronological order—and analysing the ways these narratives reflect on problematic areas of *fin-de-siècle* science.

The next three chapters form the first part of Alder's case studies, “Borderlands of Mind, Body, and Spirit.” In Chapter 2, Alder discusses Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan*, linking the weird monstrosity represented by Edward Hyde and Helen Vaughan to the debates of contemporary psychology about human consciousness and the nature of reality. The focus of Chapter 3 shifts from ontology to epistemology. Returning to the aforementioned two novellas and also covering Machen's “The Inmost Light” and Edith Nesbit's “The Three Drugs” and



“The Five Senses,” Alder sees the alternative ways of knowing offered by the weird story as a critique of positivism, highlighting the limits of sensory perception. Chapter 4 centres around three series of short stories featuring an occult detective character and establishes that E. and H. Heron’s Flaxman Low, Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence, and William Hope Hodgson’s Thomas Carnacki all have to rely on a combination of occult and mainstream scientific methods when tackling the weird phenomena they encounter. As a fresh addition to the weird terminology, Alder coins the terms “weirdfinder” and “weirdfinding” in reference to these figures and their profession (116-17).

The last two chapters make up the second part, “Borderlands of Time, Place, and Matter.” The texts discussed in Chapter 5 are H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and Hodgson’s “The Voice in the Night” and “The Derelict.” In her analysis, Alder applies Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia to describe the remote marine settings of these stories as “other” spaces where life can take on strange, previously unseen, hardly categorisable, or, in other words, weird forms. These weird forms of life are then examined in the light of radical theories in biology about the nature of organic matter. Finally, Chapter 6 deals with Hodgson’s *The House on the Borderland* and *The Night Land* and Blackwood’s “A Psychical Invasion” (a John Silence story already touched upon in chapter 4) and “The Willows.” Alder interprets these stories in terms of energy transformations, which was a widely debated topic among the physicians of the time.

The structure of the volume is innovative. Whereas similar books on the weird usually confine the analysis to a single author per chapter, this one is more flexible, allowing the examination of the same text from different viewpoints. Alder’s selection of the literary corpus, too, deserves special attention. Most notably, the inclusion of Stevenson’s novella as a pioneering weird story is a welcome extension of the still forming canon. In addition, it is encouraging to see that the likes of Nesbit and Wells, who are mainly recognised for their respective contributions in children’s literature and science fiction, are more frequently considered in the context of weird fiction, too. As for Machen, Blackwood, and Hodgson, who by now have become household names in the weird canon, the book is successful in presenting new information on their oft-discussed stories, and Alder’s reading of “The Willows” is especially engaging.

The relationship between weird fiction and science has not yet been investigated in detail, so this monograph offers an intriguing new perspective, and one can argue that a systematic exploration of the subject has been long overdue. Such an interdisciplinary approach means, though, that Alder’s book relies heavily on scientific theory, which at times might prove a bit too hard to follow for the common researcher of literary studies. To make this engagement easier, a short conclusion is placed at the end of each chapter to summarise the main findings. The author’s expertise in both fields is beyond question, as her evidence is drawn from a wide array of both primary and secondary sources, of which, unfortunately, no comprehensive bibliography is provided. All things considered, though, *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin de Siècle* is a commendable endeavour that will be a stimulating and informative read for scholars interested in weird fiction, the intersections of literature and the sciences, or *fin-de-siècle* culture in general.

Bandia, Paul F., ed., *Writing and Translating Francophone Discourse: Africa, The Caribbean, Diaspora*. Amsterdam & New York: Brill / Rodopi, 2014.  
236 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-3894-3.

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Dedicated to Edouard Glissant, this collection, volume 78 of the *TextxeT* series of studies in comparative literature, gathers ten essays by international scholars, specialists in French and Francophone studies and/or translation studies. The research methods and tools to explore the intimate connections between those academic fields are multiple and eclectic, since the analytical framework draws upon translation studies, postcolonial studies, discourse analysis, stylistics, but also film studies, to name but a few (see the useful index provided at the end of the book).

Informed by Glissant's seminal concept of *Tout-Monde* and his Poetics of Relation, along with Deleuze's striking metaphor of the rhizome, Bandia's introduction accurately brings to the fore the similitudes between postcolonial writing and translation, whether it be performed *per se* or viewed as a metaphor for inter- and trans-cultural communication. The articles following range from literature to movies, to historical documents, geography and philosophy, and cover diverse Francophone areas, as the subtitle puts it, even though the Caribbean takes the lion share. The approach of the authors, mostly postcolonial, nonetheless 'seeks to transcend [...] binary conceptualizations' (3). Indeed, Bandia points out that the archetypal *francophonie* model, based on a colonial hierarchy, can prove particularly segregating for authors, due to institutional and publishing politics, whereas translation may help reconsider this traditional order of things and open up new vistas thanks, in part, to the archipelagic turn taken by post-colonial studies.

Lieven D'hulst first examines the relation between the French Antilles and the Caribbean: what could be perceived as a geopolitical as well as a literary whole is in fact constrained by the strong institutional ties of the former with metropolitan France. Both from a linguistic (Creole is used in a diglossic space) and cultural (Creole writings are often received as exotic literature) standpoint, Antillean authors are often seen as neither here, nor there, and secluded in a 'postcolonial niche' (33). D'hulst ascertains how much their works are infused with translation, from the oral to the written code, from code-switching to code-mixing, from Creole to French—translation is often included in the narrative itself, by way of specific characters for instance. Translating those productions into a third language is therefore eminently complex and often relies on paratextual devices to preserve both the original text and its final readability. All in all, D'hulst nevertheless regrets the absence of a 'homogenous politics of translation' (35) within the French-speaking Caribbean area, owing both to institutional strategies and linguistic and cultural practices regarding Creole literature.

Chapter 2, 'A 'Flavor of Diversity': Intercreation and the Making of a Mosaic-Whole', by Christine Raguét, relies on Victor Segalen's notion of diversity, based on a reassessment of exoticism to make it evolve towards 'fair and respectful

exchanges' (38) rather than on a voyeuristic stance. Raguet includes Antoine Berman's 'trial of the foreign', Jean-Louis Cordonnier 'openity' and De Campos's manifesto on philosophic anthropophagy in her reflection, to demonstrate how translation can avoid dualistic preconceptions and promote the Diverse in the Other. A translator herself, she puts under scrutiny Segalen's main concepts, such as 'kaleidoscopic vision', 'strong individuality', 'distance', 'complementary elements', 'adaptation', 'perfect comprehension and eternal incomprehensibility' to analyse extracts from Anglo-Jamaican novels and their French translations. Using a simile with mosaic *tesserae*, she thus defends an ethical translation process, fulfilling both a social and creative function to render the 'flavor of diversity' of the original text, far from too common sterilizing and *cliché*-creating practices.

Sandra L. Bermann, author of 'Glissant and the Imagination of World Literature: Relation, Creolization and Translation', considers Creolization too, as she advocates its inscription in World Literature, following Glissant's Poetics of Relation and Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome. To this end, she underscores the relevancy of the notion of *métissage* inherent to Creolization, when applied to translation, for 'a more linguistically and culturally open and attentive World Literature' (85) that would help balance hegemonic nationalistic views of the literary through new circulation routes in the 'constellations of cultures and languages' (79), a spatial metaphor reminiscent of the recurrent island trope which runs through this book.

The reader will similarly find hybridization at the core of the next chapter, epitomised in the hyphen, the semiotics of which Samia Kassab-Charfi studies in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Biblique des derniers gestes*. Exploring the notion of polylexicality, and the hyphen's dialectical meaning, she emphasizes its analogy with translation, but also with the 'Linked World' concept. The iconic value of the hyphen as an articulation glyph extends to the representation of a work-in-progress, but it is also a fruitful lexicogenetic device, concerning each and every grammatical category and marking both condensation and dislocation. The mosaic metaphor used by the author echoes Raguet's previous chapter, even though translation is treated more metaphorically than pragmatically in this fine stylistics essay.

This is the case, too, with Tom Conley's 'Mapping "Tout-Monde"', moving on to Glissant's Poetics of Relation reviewed through the cartographic prism. Conley draws a parallel between Glissant's very graphic archipelagic thinking and the ideology at play behind maps throughout History, in order to proclaim the capacity of Glissant's speech to translate from language to space, in synesthetic dynamics. His short essay, investigating mainly the islands system as opposed to the continental order, is richly documented and resorts to history, geography, politics and poetics to propose a very convincing demonstration by deconstructing the many facets of the 'Whole-World' notion.

Next comes a questioning, 'Translating the Other's Voice: When is Too Much Too Much?' penned by Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo & Elizabeth Wilson, who investigate the translation of Caribbean texts and their multilingual setting to review the translators' strategies in conveying Creole voices. The authors have, interestingly enough, chosen to study both Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean extracts, analysed within their ideological and linguistic contexts, in

contrastive regard to their respective translations into French and English. The ‘polyphonic nature’ (134) of those works induces diverse transfer practices. Several case studies are provided, ranging from examples showing a tendency towards reconstructing a ‘questionable authenticity’ (144) to productions which respect the original and show an overall consistency by accepting a part of the poetic opacity already present in the text (paratextual apparatus are often offered to help the reader in that respect). Nzengou-Tayo & Wilson hence call for a further conceptualization of their practices by Caribbean translators, to bridge the gaps between *praxis* and *doxa*.

Diglossia is also examined by Réda Bensmaïa, in an article on ‘The Language of the Stranger’ which sets into motion ‘A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Abdelkébir Khatibi on Language and Translation’. Maghrebian literatures are focused on in this chapter, but also language as a whole in its use by the ‘speaking subject’ (163). To tackle those issues, Bensmaïa addresses problematics such as norms and singularity *via* the latent ‘standard model’ underlying the ‘plurality of idioms’ (155) which makes Maghrebian authors write in reaction to the dominant language: even unconsciously, they usually choose to negate it or to deconstruct it in order to submit it to their very personal style. As demonstrated by Derrida, no writer or speaker can free themselves from the ‘fundamental structure of alienation’ (163) thus imposed; the monolingual becomes ‘*aphasic*’ (original emphasis) and has to live in ‘absolute translation’ in order to find his own ‘target’ language, having lost any proper ‘source’ language.

The last three chapters are also dedicated to Africa, with two of them dealing with cinema: the first, ‘Vernacular Monolingualism and Translation in West African Popular Film’, conveys Moradewun Adejunmobi’s research on the subtitling of Yoruba movies. Yoruba, an indigenous Nigerian language, is also spoken in Benin; the vernacular monolingual films are then subtitled in English in the former country, and in French in the latter, for economic reasons, to increase their circulation among local non-Yoruba speaking spectators. That linguistic choice allows the audience to hear the vernacular language, and promotes it within both countries. The comparative analysis of the original version and the two subtitled ones shows that their subtitles do not rely on standard English and French but display a Nigerian variety of both languages, re-appropriated by the local video industry and audience. This rather concise study is well contextualised, including paratextual items of the videos under scrutiny.

The next article by Verena Andermatt Conley, ‘Ameur-Zaïmeche: Translation as Artistic Practice’ focuses on two ‘docu-fictions’ by the Algerian director born in France, both set in the Paris ‘*banlieue*’. Their dialogues are conducted in French and Arabic, a code-switching practice that entails an intricate translation web, linguistic as well as cultural, between the characters. Besides, the analysis extends to other filmic codes beyond the verbal, e.g. music, or visual components like colour and space. It is worth noting that translation is not only literal, but also metaphorical in those films, as it reveals the social status of the protagonists, and, consequently, may explain their fate in the city. Moreover, translating is a step towards negotiation, in a milieu where religious and gender issues are notably pregnant.

The last chapter, ‘In a Free State? Translation and the Basotho: From Eugene Casalis to Antje Krog’ provides original insight, by Alain Ricard, into the

ethnographic and translation work of French and Swiss missionaries in South Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. Drawing on archival and editorial sources, Ricard's reading of those early essays and oral performances' transcriptions informs the reader of political and linguistic issues at stake, as opposed to the dominant Boer historical narrative, and stresses the mythical and poetic value of those folklore texts, reminiscent of our contemporary 'rap'; they bespeak a 'dialogical relationship' (211) between their missionary collectors-transcribers-editors-publishers and the Basotho and Zulu peoples, and a rigorous methodology of research, so that Ricard considers their authors 'the first South African intellectuals'. He aptly demonstrates the fundamental role played by those first cosmopolitan translators from the indigenous languages in the circulation of those tales in Europe, be it Francophone or Anglophone, even though they have received only scant academic attention yet.

Indeed, this volume represents a step forward in the intertwining fields of postcolonial and translation studies; the Francophone areas covered have in common a diglossic, sometimes polyglossic tradition, which justifies their exploration through the translation prism, an original and fruitful way of investigating and apprehending the linguistic and cultural issues at stake. The theoretical and descriptive models provided open new perspectives on the way Creolization is instantiated, or so-called 'minor' languages and vernaculars are taken into account in their intercultural dimension *vis-à-vis* French language and academic and publishing institutions. Although one can notice some redundancies between chapters, those could be read as a sign of an overall coherence. In any case, the authors are effective in drawing a dynamic map of a thriving phenomenon, more complex and vivid than the reductive centre-to-periphery '*francophonie*' label could suggest, and this map is supported by appropriate bibliographic references: in short, scholars and academics involved in those developing interdisciplinary fields of research will find much food for thought in most of the stimulating essays collected here.

## Notes on Contributors

**Carmen Botamino** currently works as an English teacher in different private centres, as well as a freelance translator. PhD in English, Renaissance and Restoration Literature and Drama. Defended her thesis: "The Strategies of Power of the Merry Widows in English Restoration Comedies" in 2015 participating in different conferences both as a lecturer and as an assistant. She has also specialized in teaching Spanish to foreigners and translation. Her current research interests are: Myths and Modern Myths, Gender studies, LGBT, Diaspora and Post-colonial. Critical perspective: New Historicism, Feminism, Dialogism.

**Céleste Callen** holds a BA in English Language and Literature from King's College London (2018) and an MSc in Enlightenment, Romantic and Victorian Literature from the University of Edinburgh (2019). She is now a second-year PhD candidate at the University of Edinburgh. The focus of her doctoral research is the exploration of the subjective experience of time in the nineteenth-century novel, with a particular focus on the novels of Charles Dickens. Her research seeks to reveal the nineteenth-century novel's anticipation of French philosopher Henri Bergson's philosophy of the subjective experience of time as *durée* or duration.

**Marta Miquel-Baldellou** holds a PhD in English Philology from the University of Lleida. In the course of her doctoral studies, she was granted a government-scholarship to conduct a research stay at the Victorian Studies Centre of the University of Leicester in the UK, which enabled her to receive an International Doctorate. She is a member of the research group *Dedal-Lit* at the University of Lleida and, as a researcher, she has taken part in different government-funded research projects. Her doctoral dissertation, *Symbolic Transitions as Modalities of Aging: Intertextuality in the Life and Works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Edgar Allan Poe*, which was published in 2016, analyses the literary works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Edgar Allan Poe through a comparative and biographical approach. Her research into Bulwer-Lytton's fiction has been published in international academic journals, such as *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, *Meridian Critic Analele* and *Op.Cit.: A Journal of Anglo-American Studies*.

**Sercan Öztekin** is a lecturer of English at Kocaeli University, Turkey. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Dumlupınar University, Turkey, the Department of English Language and Literature, and Master's Degree from Granada University, Spain. He obtained his Ph.D. degree in Istanbul Aydin University in 2019. His Ph.D study is on Victorian social constructions of crime, criminality, and the legal system with their representations in the novels of Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Charles Reade in the 1850s. His research includes Victorian literature and culture, crime fiction, and the history of crime and the police.

**Himmet Umunç** received his PhD in 1974 as a British Council scholar from the University of London (King's College) for an intertextual and trans-literary study of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* within the context of Renaissance humanism, humanist writings, and allegorical literary practice. He was promoted associate professor in 1981 and full professor in 1987. He taught British culture and literature for over forty years in the Department of English Language and Literature, Hacettepe University, Ankara. During the 1985-86 academic year and in 2000 he was a Fulbright research fellow at Harvard University (Department of English, and the Charles Warren Center of American History and Literature respectively). For two three-year terms (2013-2019) he served as the President of the English Language and Literature Research Association of

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