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Literary Sensations:
Victorian Women Writers and Celebrity Culture

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Literary Sensations:
Victorian Women Writers and Celebrity Culture

by

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This dissertation analyzes the role of celebrity in determining the lives and literary productions of bestselling female authors in the nineteenth century. It identifies celebritydom as a compelling factor in a woman author's development of her literary persona, which affects both her public identity and the literature she produces in accord with that identity. By focusing on Dinah Mulock Craik, Florence Marryat, Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé), and Edna Lyall (Ada Ellen Bayly) "Literary Sensations" considers how star status confers new opportunities and new challenges for women writers in the publicity spotlight. Examining works of published and unpublished fiction, essays,

memoir, and stage entertainment alongside contemporary periodical reviews, personal interest stories, gossip, interviews, and author images, I explore how Victorian women writers come to view themselves as celebrities who both shape and are shaped by the various engagements with their publics. My project pays special attention to Craik, Marryat, Ouida, and Lyall to facilitate the larger argument that as celebrity authors women writers embodied a new position in public life in the Victorian period, with the ability to affect theirs and others' domestic and political existence augmented by innovations in journalism and print and media technology.

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Introduction

> I will keep this [one silver coin], madam, if you please as a memento that I once had the honor of being useful to Mrs. Siddons.—Dinah Mulock Craik, *John Halifax, Gentleman* 93

> [The author] must keep in the society which is so necessary to his worldly prospects—he must be seen in those haunts which are to others amusement, to him business…to act. It is merely creating a new self as he does a new character…—Dinah Mulock Craik, *The Ogilvies* 350

While the notion of celebrity and its cultural inundation seem relatively new, the phenomenon actually begins to assert itself in important ways in earlier historical periods. The appearance of the acclaimed eighteenth-century actress Sarah Siddons in Dinah Mulock Craik's (1826-1887) Victorian bestseller *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) illustrates that fervor surrounding a celebrated person was in full swing by the 1790s when the fictional John Halifax meets Siddons.[12] By 1849, when another of Craik's novels, *The Ogilvies*, first uses *celebrity* in its modern form to describe "a celebrated person: a public character" (OED "Celebrity, *N.*"), authors knew that popular success depended upon taking cues from the acting world in making themselves into marketable

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[1] This point is convincingly argued in Felicity Nussbaum, Rival Queens : Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[2] New scholarship by Maura Ives supports this argument. See Maura Ives, "Introduction: Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity," Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century, ed. Maura Ives Anne R. Hawkins (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012) 1.

commodities. Pairing these novels in my introductory epigraph manifests important features of celebrity culture in the Victorian period—which is the focus of my dissertation—and to the larger historical and theoretical grounding of celebrity in English and Cultural Studies, including the fact that nineteenth-century women authors, like their eighteenth-century acting predecessors, featured prominently as celebrities; that these authors were aware of their star status and developed a consumable persona to capitalize upon it in addition to incorporating celebrity into their published work; [3] and, finally, that print culture was a key feature in promoting them to fame, even if fleetingly.

Craik's inclusion of Siddons in *John Halifax, Gentleman* conveys Victorian literary stardom's indebtedness to stage performers and the considerable role that women played in celebrity culture. In her scholarship on eighteenth-century actresses Felicity Nussbaum argues that the developing public sphere that put in relief the private lives of individuals played a large part in creating celebrities. She further proposes that women taking the stage for the first time compounded the effect of publicizing private lives; like the "epistolary novel, the periodical, and autobiographical writing," actresses saw the need to create an "'interiority effect'" in developing and conveying a feeling of individuality and familiarity, which could connect them more personally with their admirers (Nussbaum 13). Set in the 1790s, Siddons's cameo suggests just that as her mere declaration of being the celebrated actress affords her transit through a riotous mob unscathed (Craik and Alexander 93). With women's public exposure limited, Nussbaum

[3] In the figurative sense, *star* has been used to describe celebrated persons since the late eighteenth century. See "Star, *N*," OED Online, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1989).

also contends that celebrity becomes a dominant cultural force after the Restoration of 1660 because captivating women utilized sexual charms surpassing those that were attributed to men by performing in public and accruing gossip in the periodical press that merged private women with their stage personas (Nussbaum 8, 17). As they developed into marketable commodities, alongside the eighteenth-century actresses' stage successes came cultural authority and autonomy for celebrated women in the public sphere (Nussbaum 1-30).

While a culture of celebrity may have been evident on the eighteenth-century English stage, female literary stars emerged in the nineteenth century. Although there were famous women authors, including Aphra Behn (1640-1689), Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), and Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806), Catherine Gallagher points out that many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century female writers did so pseudonymously or anonymously; they also often utilized a theme of disembodiment as a recurrent literary device in their work as well as in their development of an authorial persona (Gallagher xxiii). Disembodiment necessarily makes achieving celebrity and being a star author challenging, if not impossible, because self-possession, a link to one's commercial product, and a physical presence—even if virtually—are, I argue, component features of celebrity culture. Although women writers continued to work using pen names and under anonymous cover, as the nineteenth century progressed innovations in print media increasingly tied success in the literary marketplace to public acclaim. Female authors, therefore, took cues by those such as Siddons and seized the public stage, acting, as Craik's budding celebrity author makes clear in *The Ogilvies*, for economic reward and

increasing cultural and political influence. For star Victorian women authors, embodiment becomes a dominant theme in their work and in their newly commodified—and newly public—personal lives.

Authors emerge as the focus of celebrity culture alongside the technological and journalistic advances of the nineteenth century. Their dominance over other celebrities, including stage performers, occurs because of their ability to reach a wide audience, not only through the dissemination of their published work—and, for some, lecture tours, public readings, and philanthropic efforts—but also through print media and the development of New Journalism at the *fin de siècle*. With a decrease in the cost of print production due to mechanization, the development—by the 1840s—of an illustrated press, the growth of penny reading rooms, Athenaeums, Mechanics' Institutes, and circulating libraries, and an increasingly literate public (Plunkett 4-5), print culture served as the medium through which celebrities and their admirers could connect. New to journalism was the interview, which, when deployed in mass media, could be found in daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers, periodicals, and journals alike as a regular reporting feature. In locating the first self-conscious use of the interview in 1860s America and seeing its widespread exploitation by journalists in both Britain and America by the 1880s and 90s, Richard Salmon asserts that the literary interview's proliferation stands as evidence for the progressively more widespread characterization of authors as celebrities (Salmon "Signs of Intimacy" 160). Photographs—used broadly by print media as early as the 1850s (Plunkett 150)—or sketches of literary stars often accompanied these interviews, allowing admirers to scrutinize the fashions they wore,

their physical appearance, and even their homes. Not all interviews or photographs were published with permission, however; covert reports on Craik were common, sometimes even falsified, due to her abstention from the practice,[4] and a 1905 cover of *Sketch* magazine features an unauthorized photograph of Marie Corelli (1855-1924), the literary celebrity who refused "to be photographed" (Sketch qtd. in Federico 29). Putting authors on display places in sharp relief the power that their words and images had on an increasing mass readership. Cues about class status, national identity, and, often for women, their position on the 'Woman Question,' could be located and openly discussed by their followers; publicity in the periodical press ensured that a writer remained popular, but even more than that, so long as they remained an item of interest to the press it also ensured that the celebrity author continued to be seen as an authority figure.

While celebrities of both sexes were featured in the new print culture's focus on literary stars, Lenard Berlanstein suggests that females may have garnered more attention in the press due to their idealized status as private individuals (Berlanstein 67). Exemplifying how public and private spheres begin to be reconfigured by print and visual media, being a female literary star in the publicity spotlight required a literal opening up of one's home to prying eyes, often those of other middle-class females looking for verbal and visual cues about how to negotiate a profession while still succeeding in

[4] For fabricated stories see, for instance, Rosella Rice, "The Author of John Halifax," Arthur's Home Magazine December 1884, and Maria P. Woodbridge, "The Author of 'John Halifax.'," Christian Union 19.12 (1879). Other accounts are more reliable, including "The Author of 'John Halifax.'," Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine December 1873, and Sarah M. Dawson, "A Day with Mrs. Dinah Mulock Craik, Author of 'John Halifax.'," Some Noted Princes, Authors, and Statesmen of Our Time, ed. James Parton (Norwich, CT: The Henry Bill Publishing Company, 1885) 57-61.

carrying out one's domestic responsibilities. Periodicals dedicated to celebrities 'At Home,' which were lengthy interviews with popular writers, promoted just such a relationship between female writer and reader; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *Novel Review*, and *The Strand*, along with the journal wholly dedicated to the genre, *Celebrities at Home*, are just a few of the print publications that partook in the practice.[5] 'At Homes' were an opportunity for celebrity admirers to join their favorite writers for a day, often for tea or lunch, where the author's books and personal opinions on contemporary issues were then discussed, with additional commentary by the interviewer about the celebrity's appearance, decorating style, housekeeping, and work habits. Although inviting readers into female writers' homes to meet the author ostensibly locates their profession in the private sphere, being treated by interviewers as stars and themselves performing as celebrities actually opens up the domestic space to a public market economy, revealing the authors' status as commodities, and lucrative ones at that. In addition to the original 'At Homes' that took place with female literary celebrities, book collections reprinting them, such as Helen C. Black's *Notable Women Authors of the Day* (1893), attest to their popularity and profitability, as well as of the female stars'.

Unlike the ghostwriters of celebrity tomes today, in the nineteenth century one could not be a star author in the media spotlight if one did not write. As a viable form of cultural critique, an analysis of Victorian literary celebrity reveals the performative nature

[5] See, for instance, "Edna Lyall at Home," The Pall Mall Gazette Tuesday, January 1 1889, Isabel Cooper-Oakley, "Edna Lyall at Home," Novel Review I (September 1892), "Portraits of Celebrities. Miss Edna Lyall," The Strand December 1892, and Edmund Hodgson Yates, Ouida at Villa Farinola, Celebrities at Home, First Series (London: Office of "The World", 1877).

of authorship and its status as a consumable product—one that is particularly and complexly so for female authors who must also present an appropriately gendered persona to their Victorian reading audience or risk market failure. In order to discuss nineteenth-century female authors and the management of their status as public figures the term *celebrity* must continually be invoked because this period's popular authors were conscious of their status as celebrities, often aspiring to be so, and certainly engaging with their admirers as such. Mapping the intersection of female authorship and celebrity culture shows how women writers not only marketed literature, but crafted public images, shaping theirs and others' domestic and political existence.

Because nineteenth-century celebrity scholarship is a nascent field, in the following two sections I provide an overview of celebrity generally, as well as its various theoretical approaches important to my work. I conclude my introduction by offering a synopsis of the chapters that ensue.

The Development of Nineteenth-Century Celebrity Culture

One way to understand how celebrity authorship emerges as a significant cultural force in the nineteenth century is to view its development as a form of fame. Leo Braudy defines fame as a desire to achieve singularity, to live beyond the rules of society; to transgress but in doing so to be honored for achieving something others aspire to emulate (Braudy 4). Beginning as an effort to be extraordinary, first by a personal and later a public behavior, and mediated by a chosen few, by the time that modern fame develops

out of the fall of the monarchy the public has a more direct impact on fame, as the masses—and not just a few people—assist in granting it (Braudy 17-18). Braudy provides a starting point for understanding fame's achievement as a complex process. As a wide-ranging term, however, there are versions of fame that fall under its rubric without meeting the requirements for enduring and far-reaching recognition; this is particularly so in England beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These fleeting forms of fame play an increasingly important role in daily life as a result of the rise of public society (Rojek 9), and are largely linked to the development of what Jürgen Habermas describes as the public sphere, which emerges out of discursive debate in eighteenth-century coffee houses and *salons* as well as in the periodical press, using public opinion to regulate civil society (Habermas 31; 51-52). Increasing democratization and industrialization not only made it possible for those outside of the aristocracy to gain distinction, but also for print media to publicize the celebrated to a wider, more diverse following. Eighteenth-century theatrical performers were some of the first celebrated individuals to gain fame in this manner. Heather Macpherson suggests that the theater's "emphasis on ephemeral role-playing, surrogation, and audience interaction" typified this new version whereby admirers venerated and related with those of the newly egalitarian mode of fame (McPherson 122). Nicholas Dames distinguishes three styles of democratized fame: the notable, or "figure of popularity," the lion, and the celebrity (Dames 28-30). These categories are useful in parsing out distinctive features of specific forms of fame. To be notable is to be famous among a specific community—a parish, the undergraduates at Oxford, a select group of manufacturers, for instance. As a very

limited form of fame the notable does not play a large role in my study; the lion, however, along with its grander counterpart, the celebrity, feature prominently, as both characterize nineteenth-century literary celebrity.

The lion, an appellation frequently attributed to writers, is made famous on a whim—and often by a woman who then parades the newly famed through drawing rooms—and just as quickly fades away. The lion is memorably represented in this manner by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), when he describes the particular case of the poet Robert Burns (1759-1796), who could not escape the "lion-hunters" despite his attempts to do so (Carlyle 269-70); Craik also writes of lions and lion-hunters in *The Ogilvies*. Dames describes the tensions surrounding lionizing when he writes, "for Victorian Commentators, the indiscriminancy of lionizing, combined with the sudden glare of attention that the 'lion' figured, produced an image of the terrors of the transformative processes of publicity, a fear that this sort of fame was not tameable" (Dames 31). Publicity-based fame such as that produced by lionism does not secure one's place in history, although that, too, may occur; rather, it promotes the lion as a feature of the moment to a small public eager for popular entertainment. Importantly, lions were already published writers, and when selected by society hostesses they attained a limited fame as drawing room stars but were forgotten once their attraction for the hostess and her guests waned.

The success of the lionistic model of fame relies on the rise of a consumer culture that desires an intimate knowledge of that which it promotes. A lion, argues Salmon, was

not invited to the parlor so that guests could talk to him, but was invited so that guests could look at him, thereby transforming the lion into an object of consumption via the gaze (Salmon "The Physiognomy of a Lion" 69-72). This looking "harbours relationships between lioniser and lion in which intimacy of personal contact is characteristically mediated and distanced through an asymmetrical structure of display (the mode of 'ocular survey')," developing a "model of face-to-face intimacy informed and reshaped by parasocial dimensions" (Salmon "The Physiognomy of a Lion" 68). While the lion hunter's guests may not intimately know the lion, proximal contact, perhaps even physical contact, substitutes for a deeper knowledge of the celebrated individual, fulfilling the consumptive needs of the admirer and performing the work necessary to maintain the temporary fame of the lion. Craik's epigram to this chapter, where *The Ogilvies's* budding author must circulate himself in public so as to make himself a marketable commodity, reflects the acceptance of this form of publicity by Victorian authors, one that sells a persona in order to successfully publish books.

Lions are only stars to a limited drawing room audience, hardly constituting a public, but lions can also become celebrities—those who are notable on a grand public scale—by a strategic integration of their authorial persona into their fictive work and with the help of media amplification. Like lionism, the consumptive gaze is also a key feature of literary celebrity. Lions and notables sustain their fame within select circles in part because those with whom they interact feel as if they know them intimately, resulting in cooperation on behalf of the admirer in continuing to consume what they offer—be it their person or their work—so long as the admirer finds the relationship satisfying. But

in order to be followed by a mass public the appearance of intimacy between the celebrity and an admirer, who most likely will never meet the object of admiration, must exist. Nineteenth-century writers looked to their own publications in order to establish and maintain the appearance of an intimate relationship with their admirers, achieving this connection through what Tom Mole calls a "hermeneutic of intimacy" (Mole *Byron's Romantic Celebrity* 22-27). The hermeneutic of intimacy allowed authors to brand their identity as a means to commercial promotion (Mole *Byron's Romantic Celebrity* 18), promotion that was necessary in the wake of the early nineteenth-century publishing boom that left writers and readers alienated from each other. With so many choices available to a reader, gaining a following was more probable if the writer could stand out as extraordinary; authors did this by self-promotion as much as by promoting the work at hand. Writers, therefore, developed a perception of intimacy with readers through the creative works that constituted the achievement itself, and in marketing themselves gained admirers, not only of their work, but also of their personas. George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), for instance, writes about his personal experience in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818), awaking, as the story goes, to find himself famous overnight—not for his poem, but for his person hinted at in his poetry and interpreted as Byron the man by his readers. In purchasing Byron's creative work, admirers of Byron could interact with it on multiple levels; Byron's inclusion of personal details about his fame encourages them to interpret the poem as autobiography, allowing readers to enjoy intimate access to an author in addition to the pleasure of reading the poem in and of itself. Although actors aligned themselves in a similar manner to the characters they

performed on stage (Nussbaum 2-30), their necessarily limited audience meant that as technological advances improved publishing outputs and distribution literary celebrity became the dominant popular cultural force of Victorian England.

In addition to a writer's own creative production, the periodical press also helped establish literary celebrity as a key feature of Victorian popular culture. They did this through cultivating a mediated intimacy between star authors and admirers by reporting on events that feted them in their gossip columns as well as by offering space for celebrities to rebuff erroneous reports; other forms of print publicity include portraits, biographies, and memoirs. Charles Dickens (1812-1870), for example, attempts to maintain his reputation with readers when in 1858 he notoriously publishes letters to the public asserting that his separation from his wife Catherine Hogarth Dickens (1815-1879) was, first, resulting from living "unhappily" together for some time (Dickens "Personal" 601), and second, because Catherine was mentally ill and an unfit parent (Dickens "The Dickens Domestic Affair").[6] Coupled with their literary productions, reading about the personal lives of their favorite stars in the press provided admirers the connection necessary to sustain a parasocial relationship, an association, if satisfying enough, that resulted in continued celebrity for the admired figure.[7] Maintaining the illusion of intimacy—through creative work and the press—is the burden of the celebrity.

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[6] Recent scholarship by Lillian Nayder disputes Dickens's account of his relationship with Catherine Hogarth. See Lillian Nayder, The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[7] For research supporting parasocial relationship's ability to satisfy and influence a large public see Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, "Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance," Psychiatry 19 (1956).

While late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century print publicity including that utilized by Dickens continue to be viable forms of public mediation, later forms of mediated intimacy including the interview and the photograph, first authorized, and at the *fin de siècle*, when photography became a more widely available technology, unauthorized, align Victorian literary celebrity with what modern culture recognizes as common publicity techniques. Just as today, these mediations of intimacy are incredibly important to creating a perceived familiarity between a celebrity and admirer in the Victorian period, often at the cost of the private life of the celebrity in focus. Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé, 1839-1908), in fact, describes the interview and the biography as banes on the celebrity, noting that "the invasion of private life and character never was so great or so general as it is in the last years of this century" (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 377). Ouida's singling out of reporting techniques that limit a person's ability to craft their own persona emphasizes the slippage possible in attempting to produce a mediated relationship between a celebrity and admirer, in any form. A careful rendering by the celebrity of a persona, meant to be interpreted in a specific way, can be misread or even disputed by visual evidence or printed reports and reproduced on a grand scale before the star even knows about it; Ouida is certainly victim to this, an act she writes about in her *roman à clef*, *Friendship* (1879).

Due to their expendable income and increasing influence in the nineteenth century, those admirers that celebrities had most to pursue were the middle classes. With celebrity only becoming a category of fame after a democratic turn acknowledging new forms of distinction replaces that based on privilege (Rojek 28-29), the middle class

comes to play a large role in forming taste culture and in consuming it in the nineteenth century. It is this group that celebrities often not only were a part of, but also had to satisfy. Siddons' cameo in *John Halifax, Gentleman* exemplifies the value inherent in celebrity figures for the middle class, as well as the celebrity's reliance on that same group for success. When Siddons attempts to pass through a mob scene on her way to the theater by announcing from a covered sedan, "'good people, let me pass—I am Sarah Siddons,'" "[t]he crowd divided instantaneously, and in moving, set up a cheer that must have rang all through the town" (Craik and Alexander 93). Mole contends that Siddons's name and likeness had been systematically circulated throughout the newly industrialized print culture, resulting in the crowd acting toward her as if they already were acquainted (Mole "Introduction" 1). Halifax, who had never met her before, is no exception, and as one of the crowd that assists her in gaining access to the theater, Siddons offers Halifax remuneration, money made from admirers like himself. In selecting a single silver coin as payment—rather than taking more, as more was proffered— and announcing his intent of keeping the coin as a "memento," Halifax signals that the value assigned to his brush with fame is more than the value of the silver itself, and infers that the "honor of being useful to Mrs. Siddons" (Craik and Alexander 93), one that only few can claim, cements his commitment to being an admirer of the star at any cost.

Approaches to Celebrity Studies

How or why a person such as Siddons reaches celebrity status depends on the theoretical model. A subjective view of celebrity relies on the idea of charisma to identify potential stars. Charisma is the natural gift that marks a person as distinct and capable of celebrity. According to this model of celebrity, society cannot understand why a person is celebrated except to think that something they have makes them so. Sociologist Stephen P. Turner asserts that a person who is charismatic is able to transform taboos into societal norms, and to command authority despite the lack of a foundation for these powers of control in law or custom (S. P. Turner 9).[8] Charisma has its roots in theology,[9] but with the loss of faith in religious tradition, celebrities, among other social leaders, are looked to for guidance because of the idea that they are uniquely special. S. P. Turner suggests that the reason for this is that, post-God, the proscriptions that are most powerful are those that can be comprehended despite the sometimes fearful indeterminacies people face; in addition to experimenting with these proscriptions, people also learn from paying attention to the lives of those whose achievements are baffling (S. P. Turner 25), including those of celebrities. The celebrity's transgressions of—or her adherence to—social norms are part of what makes her successful and an agent of cultural transformation. If one uses the celebrity as a model for their own behavior, then when

[8] For a recent analysis of the myth of the need for male charismatic leadership in order to enact social change, see Erica R. Edwards, Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
[9] For a detailed history of charisma, see Max Weber, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, Economy and Society : An Outline of Interpretive Sociology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 1111-57.

they behave in the same way—either by breaking taboos or maintaining them—they shift or continue to reify social norms. Conversely, if what the celebrity represents goes out of fashion, the celebrity does, too, as occurred with the celebrated *fin-de-siècle* writer Alice Meynell (1847-1922). According to Talia Schaffer, Meynell so fully embraced the 'angel in the house' persona, or the ideal wife and woman popularized by Coventry Patmore's (1823-1896) 1854 poem of the same name,[10] that when the political tide shifts at the end of the century towards a more feminist view of womanhood championed by those such as Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Meynell's public image, and her writings, suffer (Schaffer 191-94).

The idea that charisma and innate talent set a person apart and on the path toward celebrity often is embraced by biographers writing on their celebrity subjects—and even celebrities themselves. Ouida, for example, identifies a unique ability in the celebrity to see the world differently, and critiques the interview and photograph hounds in their promoting a myth that, if one can only be like the celebrity, then one can see like the celebrity. She writes,

> The worst result of the literary clamour for these arrays of facts, or presumed facts, is that the ordinary multitude, who have not the talent of the original seekers, imitate the latter, and deem it of more importance to know what any famous person eats, drinks, and wears, in what way he sins, and in what manner he sorrows, than it does to rightly measure and

[10] See Coventry Patmore, The Angel in the House (London, Paris, New York & Melbourne: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1887).

> value his picture, his position, his romance, or his poem. (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 377)

For Ouida, celebrity is inimitable, and those that achieve fame should be honored for their work and not pestered with personal inquiries because no amount of personal information will reveal the secret of celebrity. No secret exists—it is in one's nature to be unique and talented or it is not. What Ouida and other proponents of this theory of the natural talent of the celebrated fail to identify is that the same interview and photograph seekers, the same biographers, are what allow the world access to their innate talent, further promoting them to their consuming admirers. In her essay Ouida views publicity as detracting from her work, but does not make the connection between her success and celebrated status and that publicity.

Rejecting the innate theory of celebrity is P. David Marshall, who, like Michel Foucault's work on power/knowledge,[11] views celebrity instead as a site of power and a form of social control (Marshall xi). He proposes that the emphasis on a celebrity's uniqueness reinforces the Western ideology of individualism; as a willing saleable commodity the celebrity promotes a capitalist economic model of exchange and value (Marshall x), and works for the media industry as a powerful social force. A celebrity can help to control society because she reinforces the façade of individualism, making one think that they have agency when in fact they do not. The power of celebrity lies in

[11] An account of institutions and their control over society is articulated in Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

how the public perceives them as having earned a discursive voice, a space to speak, thereby conferring public renown and interest in their life because of widely acknowledged achievement. For the Victorian literary celebrity this achievement derives from the popular success of their published work and is quantified by sales reflected in numerous print editions and their works' presence in circulating libraries and other lending institutions. Only after attaining a degree of public interest in their work does print media transform the successful writer into a celebrity author. Some celebrities—like those starring on realities shows such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*—are not tied to specific achievements, however, and it is then that the celebrity can also be a source of derision, especially when the media machine that creates and manages celebrity is revealed. In these instances celebrity represents misplaced value because a star's celebrated status may be viewed as unmerited, lacking the requisite ties to work (Marshall xi). The celebrity sign remains tensioned between genuine and counterfeit cultural value, but this tension reveals the importance of the celebrity: her power lies in symbolizing the active creation of identity in society (Marshall xi). The celebrity is at once an individual human and the ideological representative of a collective body—the audience—relying on both the audience's selective acceptance of what she represents and the media to maintain her celebrity status and power (Marshall xi). According to this model, a celebrity is made because the media can mold the person who becomes the celebrity, controlling consumer culture via notions of a socially constructed identity. While this theory's emphasis on media and audience as powerful factors of celebrity are compelling and useful, it fails to account for a person's personality as a component of

celebrity, nor does it consider earlier celebrity culture, wherein authors, as I mention above, did indeed work to achieve their celebrated status, often taking great care to make sure the public knew the effort involved.[12]

Richard Dyer's theoretical approach advances and integrates the theories of celebrity detailed by S. Turner and Marshall, and in doing so best represents my own method for studying literary celebrity in the Victorian period. Although Marshall does not consider charisma as a reckoning force in celebrity culture, Dyer contends that the psychology of the celebrity individual, the media's manufacturing of the subject for consumption, and the resulting image are all involved in producing the celebrity. "Appearances," according to Dyer, "are a kind of reality, just as manufacture[d personas] and individual persons are" (Dyer 2). Dyer's approach to celebrity studies acknowledges that, like Marshall, stars are socially constructed, but his view also incorporates the subjective theory championed by S. Turner emphasizing charisma, which values the identity of the person distinct from their public persona. The making of a celebrity depends upon using all that is publicly available about the star (Dyer 2). This includes, for the Victorian literary celebrity, the literature they write and promotional materials of their work and of themselves: interviews, authorized and unauthorized photographs, sketches, biographies, memoirs, ephemera, reviews, devotee responses, and more.

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[12] Craik's *The Ogilvies* takes up this topic. For more first-hand accounts of female writers indicating the work involved in being an author, see Helen C. Black, Notable Women Authors of the Day (Glasgow: David Bryce and Son, 1893). For a good scholarly inquiry of male authors concerned with viewing authorship as a profession, see also James Eli Adams, Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

According to this model, the meaning of celebrity is not generated by media alone, nor is meaning focused on the nature, aptitude, and embodiment of the celebrity subject (Rojek 45). Rather, meaning derives from the variously assembled texts and their interaction. Like the "death of the author" that made way for the "birth of the reader" as the arbiter of multiple meanings, so do the people that create, manage, and consume celebrity develop the phenomenon and its effective significance (Barthes and Heath 148). As a cultural form that has a social purpose (G. Turner 9), the study of celebrity culture, especially as it develops in its earliest days, provides an opportunity for semiotic analysis of an important feature of Western society.

Literary Celebrity and the Victorian Woman Writer

Recent scholarship on the nineteenth century has taken up the connection between print culture, gender, and the literary celebrity by focusing on such famous authors as Corelli, Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), and Mary Braddon (1835-1915).[13] Little attention has been given, however, to how women writers were self-consciously putting themselves on display as star authors, garnering publicity by strategies ranging from completely abstaining from interviews and its opposite—a devotion to the practice, to writing novels based not just on their lives but on their lives as celebrity authors,

[13] See, for instance, Alexis Easley, Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914 (Newark; Lanham, Md.: University of Delaware Press ; Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), and Annette Federico, Idol of Suburbia : Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture, Victorian Literature and Culture Series (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

suggesting not only their preoccupation with being a celebrity, but in their popularity society's preoccupation with their celebrity status as well.[14] Each of the dissertation chapters that follows is shaped around a single, bestselling popular Victorian woman writer and her engagement with celebrity culture, both in her life and in her writing: Dinah Mulock Craik (1826-1887), Florence Marryat (1833-1899), Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé) (1839-1908), and Edna Lyall (Ada Ellen Bayly) (1857-1903). Well-known in the Victorian era, I analyze the ways that these authors reflect, influence, and perform for an admiring audience whose following is bought by publicity focused on the writer, a publicity newly influential because of the innovations in technology and journalism that occur during the period. Already in the public sphere by virtue of being published writers, now female authors are also so for publicizing their private lives and personal opinions. As case studies of the manners by which women writers could and did engage with their publics as celebrities, these chapters offer an opportunity to examine how women negotiated their status as private individuals and public personas, ultimately using their privileged star status for creative inspiration, financial independence, and even cultural and political sway.

Appropriate to the study of celebrity, my first chapter evaluates Dinah Mulock Craik's acute, early appreciation of celebrity culture and articulates how Craik manages

[14] Two new collections on women's literary celebrity begin to address this aspect of nineteenth-century literary celebrity, particularly Brenda Weber's. See Ann R. Hawkins and Maura C. Ives, Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), and Brenda R. Weber, Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century : The Transatlantic Production of Fame and Gender (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

her literary persona via a mediated intimacy with her admirers. Credited with first using the word in our modern understanding of the term, Craik's thematic deployment of celebrity in her novel *The Ogilvies* highlights the asymmetrical relationship between star authors and their admirers in its focus on a young woman's obsession with the poet John Keats. Equally compelling in the novel is the development of one aspiring writer into a celebrity himself, highlighting the need for nineteenth-century literary stars to market themselves and not just their work in order to become famous. Finally, this chapter also excavates Craik's reputation as it develops through her association with her popular novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman*. It explores how the author successfully creates an identity palatable to middle-class Victorian readers but an identity that does not withstand ideological changes at the *fin de siècle*, posthumously leaving Craik open to personal critique for the same reasons that she was first so beloved.

Chapter Two follows the author and actress Florence Marryat as she recounts her life and journey through North America in the 1886 memoir *Tom Tiddler's Ground*. A record of her 1884 American stage tour for her one-woman show, *Love Letters*, *Tom Tiddler's Ground* reveals the fine line between person and persona in what and who is chronicled as Marryat makes her way across the eastern United States and north into Canada. The daughter of the famous Captain Frederick Marryat, whom she never fails to invoke in interviews and her own writing, in the travelogue's title Marryat also aligns herself with Charles Dickens, and in doing so reinforces her reliance throughout her career on a paternalistic fame in order to sustain her own. Marryat manages to maintain a public image of decorum and appropriate Victorian femininity partially through these

patriarchal connections despite being twice married and writing on sensational matter. Her decision to wear a revealing dress while performing in the United States, however, conveys the frailty of her reputation once the lecture tour operator decides to sue her for breach of contract based on what he deems as Marryat's unsuitable sartorial choice. Emphasizing the role that theater and performance play in fashioning a literary celebrity, I critically evaluate Marryat's American tour of *Love Letters*, including the class and gender implications of her supposed breach of contract and her strategic dismissal of the suit by not mentioning the seriousness of the allegations in her travelogue.

The third chapter assesses the sensational and sensationalist writer Ouida. Wishing to view herself as an artist and her writing as art, Ouida prohibited most forms of print publicity, including the majority of interview requests, from interfering with that pursuit. Instead, Ouida held weekly *salons* at her private residence, accessible to artists and social elites, with herself as the guest of honor. Both lion hunter and lion, the spectacle that Ouida creates, at her *salons* and elsewhere, makes her a regular feature of gossip columns. Compounding the sensation that arises from Ouida's antics is the publication of her *roman à clef*, *Friendship*, which focuses on her status as a celebrated writer and artist and the love triangle that arises when she becomes romantically involved with an unmarried man and his married lover. In this chapter I suggest that Ouida's decision to write one of the most astounding events of her own life into fiction complicates her relationship to celebrity culture, a culture that her ostensibly private *salons*, which convey her commitment to writing as a high-cultural pursuit, are intended to disavow. Further, as a by-product of writing her *roman à clef*, Ouida develops a new

form of sensation fiction, one that arises out of Victorian culture's obsession with celebrity.

In the final chapter, I follow my work on some of England's best-known popular women writers with an analysis of Edna Lyall, one of its least recognized former literary stars. Edna Lyall exclusively uses the pseudonym Ada Ellen Bayly for the first ten years of publishing her novels, including two of her most popular, *Donovan* (1882) and *We, Too* (1884). Hounded with rumors about her religiosity after creating an atheist hero in these two novels—which she bases on the real-life secularist MP Charles Bradlaugh—and impersonated by a woman in Ceylon, in 1888 Lyall allows her publishers to print notices in *The Times* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* attesting to her Christian respectability, beginning a lifelong commitment to publicity in order to maintain her widespread Christian appeal and endorse political causes important to her. The most politically and socially minded of the authors I study, Lyall markets herself and her fiction through a media campaign that includes illustrated interviews and news briefs emphasizing her belief in 'novels with a purpose,' which, I argue, reveals her status as an early feminist aware of the need to adhere to the prescriptions of femininity in order to sway public sentiment. While Lyall's entry onto the public stage to dispel rumors that could hurt her earning potential suggests popular writers' reliance on publicity for generating income, in manipulating the periodical press to promote a liberal program Lyall also stands as a model for female literary stars that embrace celebrity culture as a means to effect social change.

As Lyall exemplifies, for Victorian writers celebrity was often a necessity if they were to achieve or sustain financial success. This was not always the case—one's fame and fortune could be a product of the work itself.[15] Linda Shires contends that, between the late 1820s and late 1920s, "artists who had formerly thought of themselves as following a vocation increasingly saw themselves as leading a life that was potentially as commodified or commercial" as other professional occupations (Shires 198). Aware of their status as celebrity authors, Craik, Marryat, Ouida, and Lyall each perform stardom in a unique way, and in sharing their lives and writing a critical analysis conveys just how representative they were of the diverse ways in which women circulated in popular Victorian culture as marketable commodities, as well as the influence that they had as celebrities on their admiring readers. While one might, then, initially view the clamor over celebrity in popular culture as just articulating the superficiality of the modern subject, an evaluation of how celebrity functions in the public and private lives of female Victorian literary stars and their admirers instead produces a depth of knowledge that reveals the impact celebrity culture has on politics, ideologies, subjectivity, and creative production.

[15] Examples of acclaim for one's work without the need for self-promotion include the Brontë sisters; see Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë (North Books, 2007).

Chapter One

Dinah Mulock Craik Among the Masses: "The Author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*," *The Ogilvies*, and Celebrity Culture

In retelling stories of her social life in Victorian London, the Scottish author Lucy B. Walford (1845-1915) dedicates several pages to an encounter with "the author of 'John Halifax, Gentleman'" (Walford 200), Dinah Mulock Craik (1826-1887). Having written more than thirty-five works of fiction, non-fiction, and children's literature over the course of a forty-year career, Craik became famous for the *bildungsroman* by which Walford alludes to her. *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856)—counted in 1863 as outselling all but Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) (Mitchell 50)—functioned as a source of comfort for innumerable middle-class readers hoping to achieve success amid the struggles of daily life through hard work and Christian ideals, much as the novel's main character, John Halifax, does. On being invited to meet Craik, Walford's excited reaction is predicated on memories of reading the novel and to later making a pilgrimage to sites connected to Craik's most famous work:

> Would I care?
>
> Care to meet the author of "John Halifax, Gentleman?"
>
> By a flash, Memory went back to a lonely shooting-box in the far-off Isle of Mull, where first I read, or to be exact, heard read aloud that wonderful book.

> It was in the terrible year of the Indian Mutiny, and as each day was saddened by the awful accounts—(although my family had no personal anxiety)—I remembered how my father would say as he settled himself in his arm-chair for the evening, "But now for 'John Halifax!'"—as for a streak of sunshine in the gloom.
>
> Later on, I had seen the house at Tewkesbury accredited to "Phineas Fletcher" and his son, and all the different places in which scenes from the famous novel were said to be laid—and there were chapters in it that I almost knew by heart. (Walford 200)

On the strength of this memory, despite protesting to readers that she "disliked going out to luncheon," Walford "cheerfully laid aside paper and pencil" to undertake the appointment with her cousin Mary, with whom the meeting with Craik was to occur (Walford 200). Seemingly frivolous, Walford's account of being invited to meet Craik is striking in its elucidation of celebrity culture.

The story underscores an intimacy that admirers feel that they share with a celebrity, which is an intimacy formed, not by personal acquaintance, but, as exhibited in Walford's case, through private memories of reading and visiting sites associated with a literary star's fiction. Published in 1912, Walford's *Memories* of Craik date from about 1874, as she recalls a tale Craik tells about her daughter Dorothy, then a young girl of five years old (Walford 204); Dorothy had been found and adopted as an infant by Craik and her husband in 1869 (Mitchell 17). By 1874, Craik had already established herself as

a prolific novelist, poet, and essayist, securing her post as the author of books "more widely read than…the productions of any other writer after Dickens," having gained her literary celebrity and large following through the 1856 publication of *John Halifax, Gentleman* (W.S.). That Walford decides to dine with Craik based on her own experiences reading and subsequently touring locations connected with *John Halifax, Gentleman*, supports a theory of fame proposed by Tom Mole whereby a celebrity attains intimacy with her audience through the marketing of her identity in a way that makes it commercially promotable, resulting in "palliat[ing] the feeling of alienation between cultural producers and consumers" (Mole "Lord Byron and the End of Fame" 345). This "branding" occurs, according to Mole, as a reaction to the late eighteenth-century innovations in industrialized print technology that "left readers feeling swamped with new reading material, yet estranged from its writers" (Mole "Lord Byron and the End of Fame" 345). Not yet in the era of widespread public readings by famous authors that Charles Dickens made popular beginning in 1853 (Ferguson 729-30), nor of New Journalism techniques of the *fin de siècle* that used periodicals and newspapers to promote celebrity personas through interviews, illustrations, and photographs 'At Home' (Salmon "Signs of Intimacy" 159-77), early nineteenth-century celebrities instead deployed, through their published work, a "hermeneutic of intimacy," or what Mole describes as "an intertextually elaborated paradigm for approaching the products of celebrity culture as conduits through which to form an asymmetrical, mediated relationship with the celebrated individual" (Mole "Mary Robinson's Conflicted Celebrity" 190). Although Craik began writing in the 1840s and continued into the 1880s

to publish, her celebrity style remained fixed on this earlier model.[16] Craik's admirers could employ her written texts as a means through which they could come to "know" her. In fact, this was the only way readers could interact with her, unless introduced by personal acquaintance or the rare personal interest story penned by ladies that encountered Craik socially or through Craik's philanthropic work.[17] Craik gave no interviews nor wrote to the press to refute gossip even as these public forays became the norm for celebrity writers. Walford, then, anticipates an exciting encounter with Craik because her reading of *John Halifax, Gentleman* and her later pilgrimage to Tewkesbury to visit places that inspire the novel inform her understanding of the novelist's personality and compel her to want to learn more about the notoriously private writer whom she already thinks she knows.

Walford's actual experience meeting Craik disappoints her, and Walford, first an admirer, now resorts to mean-spirited quips in her assessment of the author. Immediately after relaying admiration for and anticipation in dining with Craik because of the memories Craik inspires in her, Walford follows with a derogatory statement previewing the event: "…sometimes it is a pity to meet the giver of a great gift. 'John Halifax' was

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[16] For recent studies of other early literary celebrities utilizing this method, see Tom Mole, "Mary Robinson's Conflicted Celebrity," Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 186-206, and Linda Zionkowski, "Celebrity Violence in the Careers of Savage, Pope, and Johnson," Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 168-85.

[17] These stories often relayed misinformation regarding Craik's personal life, and were even at times clearly fabricated accounts. See, for instance, Rice, "The Author of John Halifax.", and Woodbridge, "The Author of 'John Halifax.'." Others are more accurate, including "The Author of 'John Halifax.'.", and Dawson, "A Day with Mrs. Dinah Mulock Craik, Author of 'John Halifax.'."

a royal gift to every English reader—and Mrs. Craik was not attractive" (Walford 201). Walford knows the results of her meeting prior to constructing the Craik *Memories* narrative, and yet as a storytelling device Walford uses her personal account to build up to a climax that never occurs, but rather turns into a joke at the expense of Craik. If Walford is to be believed, Craik is not only boring, but pathetic: "she was nice, and friendly, and kindly, but not interesting," raving about the commonplace "very 'Early'" and "very 'Victorian'" carpet underfoot as opposed to her own "grey felt" covering at home (Walford 201). "Being a little impatient of the subject," Walford nevertheless listens politely as Craik admits that "grey felt" is not her taste, but her husband's (Walford 201). Walford's use of punctuation in dictating the conversation, coupled with her commentary afterward, reveals the pitying light in which Walford views—and wants the reader to view—Craik:

> 'Oh, it isn't [my taste],' said Mrs. Craik, laughing, 'indeed, it isn't. Not by any manner of means. It is my husband's taste I have to conform to,—' and she put on a demure look.
>
> As she was the elder of the two by a dozen years, I thought I understood; otherwise, surely a woman is the head of the carpet-department in her own house. (Walford 201)

Deploying the dash suggests that Craik edits herself mid-sentence, and the demure look she then dons implies a correction of unacceptable behavior—in this instance, of revealing dissatisfaction that her husband's, and not her own, design ideas are

implemented at home. This assessment of Craik has merit, for Craik candidly writes on a woman's domestic role throughout her career, even publishing an essay on the topic, "Concerning Men," just before her death in 1887 which contains an articulation of what early American suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton descried as Craik's "door-mat" theory (Stanton 73-74): the natural desire in a woman "to make herself a mat for the man's feet to walk over, to believe everything he does and says is right, to be ready to live for him or die for him, or merge her own identity completely in his" (Craik "Concerning Men" 5). Speaking about her dislike of the grey felt floor covering that her husband loved so much would contradict Craik's public gender relations philosophy. Rather than focus on this discrepancy, however, Walford instead implies that Craik's response is predicated on an undesirable age gap between Craik and her husband, thereby turning viable critique into a petty display of supposed-superiority (Walford 201). What began as an appreciation of one of the most popular authors of the nineteenth century devolves into a personal attack.

As an anecdote of celebrity/admirer relations, Walford's narrative represents an ambivalence commonly expressed by admirers of famous persons. Graeme Turner's work on this subject in twentieth- and twenty-first-century celebrity culture suggests that Walford's account and others like hers are precursors to tabloid journalism championed by such periodicals as *Hello!* or *The National Enquirer*. He argues that celebrity admirers often indulge in contradictory relationships to stars, simultaneously deriving pleasure from celebrities as they function as objects of desire and admiration as well as acting as objects of "derision, ridicule, and resentment" (G. Turner 48). Operating as an unofficial informant, Walford counters the prevalent image of Craik as a woman worthy

of admiration by reporting an anti-climactic encounter that highlights Craik's banal and colorless life. Walford's "out-of-face" encounter with Craik, a term Chris Rojek uses to describe real-life meetings with celebrities (Rojek 17), could have served to further cement the mediated intimacy between Craik and her admirers, in turn performing the work necessary to sustain a positive celebrity image in line with that promoted by Craik through her writing. Instead, Craik is left open to mockery for her aesthetic taste and appears pitiable for the circumstances of her marriage. Once a star lauded for her bright personality and similarity to her heroines (Oliphant "Mrs. Craik" 81-85; The Author of John Halifax" 380), some twenty-five years after her death she is remembered with ridicule by a fellow, if less-successful, popular woman writer.

Opening this chapter with an extended account of Walford's reporting on her meeting the star author of *John Halifax, Gentleman* offers an intimate portrait of one admirer's experience of idolizing, and subsequently being disappointed by, Craik. Craik's popularity as an author, and her celebrity, derives not from any innovation in technique or style but in her ability to reflect and connect to the middle-class sentiments of the period, thereby reinforcing their values and as a result becoming, through her novels, their spokesperson. Retrospectively, Walford's assessment of Craik is tainted because Craik and her most famous novel failed to continue to do so at the *fin de siècle* and into the twentieth century.

While *John Halifax, Gentleman* is the work most remembered by Craik admirers for evoking their interests and ideals, Craik's earliest adult novel, *The Ogilvies* (1849),

suggests that Craik's talent for exploiting the fascinations and concerns of the middle class was an early-learned skill, and, as opposed to *John Halifax, Gentleman*, its themes endure and are relevant even today. Ostensibly a marriage plot novel, its dual storylines utilize Craik's personal history in order to delve into the intrigues of celebrity culture, with, on the one hand, an extended encounter between an admirer and a literary celebrity's doppelganger, and, on the other, a behind-the-scenes look at how a writer becomes a star author. Decades before Walford would share her recollections as an admirer of Craik, Craik herself reveals in *The Ogilvies* her awareness of authorship as a literary commodity and the problems that arise when an admirer of a celebrity author takes idol worship too far. Credited with first using the word in its present-day context as a term that identifies "a celebrated person: a public character" ("Celebrity, *N.*"), for scholars of celebrity *The Ogilvies* offers rich material from which to understand how celebrity was already a large part of middle-class culture early in the nineteenth century, both for their admirers as well as those aspiring to be famous.

As a close reading of *The Ogilvies* and a discussion of the popularity of her novel *John Halifax, Gentleman* will make clear, Craik was at one point a key chronicler of celebrity culture and a prominent voice of the middle class. Recognizing the changes in women's roles and in publishing that take place during the Victorian period will provide some clarity for how Walford, once an admirer, can later become a critic of Craik, underscoring Craik's altered celebrity at the close of the nineteenth century. By interrogating a life and work so often overlooked by scholars for her contributions to an

understanding of celebrity authorship,[18] in this chapter I wish to suggest that prior to becoming an artifact as a once-popular and relevant cultural icon to her contemporary Victorian period, Craik, in fact, was at the forefront of literary celebrity. By first writing about the public demands required to achieve literary fame and in exploring the cultural implications of celebrity, not just on those that become famous, but on their admirers as well, Craik's literary stardom was predicated on recognizing the desires of the middle-class reader. She exploits these desires from the outset with *The Ogilvies*, and with the popular success of *John Halifax, Gentleman* confirms how writing about commonplace themes was key to her enormous following during the Victorian period, albeit responsible for critical neglect subsequently. While using her published work to manage her reputation allows Craik to conform to the gender ideals of the period, a study of Craik also reveals a keen attentiveness on her part to the demands of the public for a relationship with the author they come to admire, suggesting an active engagement with celebrity image management that cultivates a persona meant to adhere to the feminine prescriptions of the day. It also reveals how, given Craik's reticence for adopting the changing attitudes and practices of the later Victorian populace, she is unable to maintain the popular success that once made her a household name.

[18] For instances of oversight with respect to Craik and celebrity, see Daniel J. Boorstin and J. Boorstin Collection Daniel, The Image : A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America (New York: Atheneum, 1987) 57, and Nicholas Dames, "Brushes with Fame: Thackeray and the Work of Celebrity," Nineteenth-Century Literature 56.1 (2001): 6.

A Celebrity in the Shadows

At the start of her literary career, Craik made the decision to keep her name off of the title pages of her work. This meant that *The Ogilvies* listed no author, and subsequent novels were advertised as being by "the author of" previous works. Sally Mitchell, in her critical biography of Craik, clarifies that the author did not refrain from signing her work to be anonymous *per se*, as reviewers often named Craik as the author in their appraisals,[19] and Craik herself even corrects an erroneous attribution of *John Halifax, Gentleman* when someone attempts to take credit for the popular book shortly after its publication (Mitchell 13). Rather, Mitchell suggests that Craik's reason for remaining off of the title pages was an effort to keep a private life. In her biography, Mitchell shares that Craik wrote to her first publisher, Chapman, once he reissued her first works as "Mulock's novels"—her maiden name until her 1865 marriage to George Lillie Craik—asking him to cease the practice because she did not wish to garner personal publicity (Mitchell 13). Clearly, even publishing her name on her writing was, for Craik, too much of an association between her public and private lives.

Why Craik chose to remain out of the publicity spotlight that, by the 1880s, was shining brightly on literary stars, is a point of speculation. Mitchell's thought that Craik's refraining from publicity was an attempt to maintain a private life is a valid observation (Mitchell 13), and also suggests why Craik had a reticence for interviews. Craik's friend

[19] See, for example, "The Author of *John Halifax*," The British Quarterly Review 44.77 (1866): 32.

W.S., the writer of her obituary in *The Academy*,[20] also speaks to this point. In his notice for the author he writes that Craik "had a strong antipathy to the publication of private details" about her life, continuing:

> To compilers of "Celebrities" and other books of personal reference she was wont to reply that she had no information to give save the dates of her birth and marriage and those of the appearance of her books. It was also her hope…that after her death little should be said in public about the woman—whatever of praise or blame should come to be uttered concerning the author. (W.S. 270)

Consequently, out of respect for Craik his notice does not "expatiate upon personal details" (W.S. 270), but rather focuses on her literary reputation, which he places alongside Jane Austen, the two being leaders in the writing of "domestic tragedy and comedy" but below the Brontë sisters (Charlotte, 1816-1855; Emily, 1818-1848; Anne, 1820-1849), George Sand (1804-1876), and George Eliot (1819-1880) in terms of novelistic quality (W.S. 269). But his, as well as Mitchell's remarks, do little to elucidate the reasons behind taking such a firm position against publicity that Craik does beyond

[20] W.S. may be William Teignmouth Shore, editor of *The Academy and Literature* from 1903-5, with a long career in periodical work. For biographical information, see "W. Teignmouth Shore," Who's Who 1907: An Annual Biographical Dictionary, ed. Charles Henry Oakes Henry Robert Addison, William John Lawson, Douglas Brook Wheelton Sladen (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), vol. 59, 1602.

the fact that she was a private person, especially provided the changes taking place in journalistic practices as early as the 1860s.[21]

Like W.S., Margaret Oliphant also knew of Craik's distaste for personal publicity. She points this fact out in her own obituary on the author, but departing from W.S.'s consideration for Craik, offers some insight into why Craik might have refused such public forays into her private world prior to revealing personal details Craik had tried so hard to keep confidential. Oliphant remarks,

> It was the fashion of our generation…that whatever our work for the public might be, our own homes and personal lives were to be strictly and jealously private, and our pride to consist, not in our literary reputation…but in the household duties and domestic occupations which are the rule of life for most women. Perhaps there was a little innocent affectation in this studious avoidance of all publicity. It is not the weakness of this day; but we who are now the seniors still prefer it to the banal confidences now so often made to public curiosity in newspapers and elsewhere. No such invasion of her privacy was ever permitted by Mrs. Craik. (Oliphant "Mrs. Craik" 84)

What Oliphant reveals here is a delicate negotiation of the public and private spaces that literary women undertook in order to conform to the nineteenth-century ideal of 'separate

[21] For a history of these changes, including the interview, first beginning in America, see Richard Salmon, "Signs of Intimacy: The Literary Celebrity in the 'Age of Interviewing'," Victorian Literature and Culture 25.1 (1997).

spheres,' a phrase denoting a distinction between middle-class men's and women's roles based upon gendered assumptions of sexual difference. According to Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, these assumptions figured upon a delineation of an amoral and moral world, where the market economy of life outside the home and its deleterious effects on men could only be countered by the salve of the pure domestic environment presided over by equally untainted women (Davidoff 74). By using the term "fashion" to describe the sentiments and behavior of early Victorian women writers, Oliphant underscores the conscious decision-making that went into performing as though they were not actively engaged in market activity themselves. The term "fashion" also highlights the fleeting nature of doctrinal ideals, so seemingly solid at their zenith that to see beyond them is difficult, and to pay lip service with "innocent affectation" so as to outwardly conform the common practice. Craik's well-documented "door-mat" theory and her prizing of domesticity is in fact betrayed by her pride of home ownership, a feat she tells friends she accomplished "practically out of the proceeds of her most famous book," *John Halifax, Gentleman* (W.S. 269). Having married her husband, George Lillie Craik, in 1865, and purchased her home, The Corner House, in Kent in 1869, her disclosure to friends about the details of its acquisition counters her own publicly held notion that a woman should "merge her own identity completely in [her husband's]" (Craik "Concerning Men" 5), suggesting instead that a separate identity indeed existed for herself. Because her marriage and later home purchase were prior to the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, which would allow a woman to keep earned income and property, Craik's pronouncement did not legally affect her civil liberties under the still-active laws

of coverture, which denied her rights of ownership. However, in signaling that The Corner House was bought by her writing—not her husband's work—Craik subtly defies the domestic mores she so publicly and staunchly upholds in identifying herself as a separate, and perhaps more economically prolific, entity. Without mass success and literary fame Craik would have been unable to procure the domestic life that she finally establishes. But that she refrains from any public intrusion into her private life is certain: no record of interviews by newspapers or magazines exists. Saying so publicly, as Oliphant remarks, however, would have signaled that Craik did not quite conform to gendered expectations; "a little innocent affectation in this studious avoidance of all publicity" that Oliphant admits that her contemporary women writers partook in (Oliphant "Mrs. Craik" 84), including Craik, intimates that Craik was calculating in the management of her own celebrity image. Given that Craik privately expresses joy over her accomplishments, Craik's refraining from public intrusions into her personal life appears convenient in its conforming to Victorian feminine ideals and shrewd in terms of presenting a public persona eschewing technological advancements in celebrity culture.

While adhering to the prescribed gender roles of her day may have been a factor in Craik avoiding public exposure once celebrity 'At Homes' and other personal accounts became the fashion for marketing oneself and one's work, scholar Karen Bourrier's recent work in the Craik archives persuasively suggests that personal reasons and a business reserve are why Craik refused the celebrity spotlight. Tracing Craik's troubled family history, a history that she shared with none but her closest family members, Bourrier recounts a pattern of mental illness and abuse originating in her father and their

long-term effects not only on Craik but also on the rest of her immediate family, including her mother and two brothers. Craik manages to keep these facts hidden throughout her lifetime, and Bourrier argues that Craik's painful personal history leads her to make business decisions based on an "ethics of reserve and integrity" that "transcends notions of private and public as well as gender, and protects [Craik's] fragile private self from gossiping tongues" (Bourrier "Narrating Insanity" 205). Bourrier's assessment of Craik has merit, and, when coupled by the also-plausible theory that nineteenth-century gender roles played a part in perpetuating Craik's disdain for publicity even as the 1880s saw celebrity news stories and interviews become the fashion, it is no wonder that she continued to rely on her books and the intimacy they fostered between herself and her admirers to market her work and support her literary stardom. Cultivating a hermeneutic of intimacy through the text both protected her past from potentially disrupting her upward literary and economic success as well as allowed Craik to maintain the ideal of Victorian femininity.

The Ogilvies, Celebrity's Victim, and the Makings of a Literary Star

Craik's past, one that is only partially revealed by Craik acquaintances such as Oliphant and, later, more fully exposed by scholars including Mitchell and Bourrier, is integral to understanding her development as a writer as well as her popular literary success. Prior to becoming famous for being the "author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*" Craik struggled to procure a living in London. Her father's mental illness and improper

handling of finances had left the family destitute multiple times (Bourrier "Narrating Insanity" 1-2). As Mitchell recounts, Craik's mother, before dying when Craik was only nineteen, had had the foresight to place the principal of her inheritance in trust for her three children, Dinah, Thomas Jr., and Ben, so that Thomas Mulock Sr. could not completely destroy their future prospects. Upon her death Craik's father abandoned the family once more,[22] and two years away from being of an age to access the funds, Craik turned to writing various short pieces for anthologies and literary magazines as well as authoring several children's books in order to support herself and her two brothers (Mitchell 6-7).[23] Craik continued to write professionally even when she turned twenty-one in 1847 and had access to the annuity, for the small amount of forty pounds could not adequately keep Craik "at a minimum acceptable level of comfort and decency," an amount of approximately one hundred pounds being needed to do so (Mitchell 9). Mitchell points out that with her education and some teaching experience, Craik could have found a position as a governess (Mitchell 8). Her father's own limited success as a writer of religious and political tracts, however, along with introductions to what would become the artists later known collectively as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, including

[22] While Showalter's work asserts that Thomas Mulock abandoned his family this one time, new archival research by Bourrier argues for repeated instances. See Karen Bourrier, "Narrating Insanity in the Letters of Thomas Mulock and Dinah Mulock Craik," Victorian Literature and Culture 39.1 (2011).

[23] These publications include, but are not limited to, Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, How to Win Love; or Rhoda's Lesson (London: Arthur Hall, 1848), Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, Michael the Miner (London: Religious Tract Society, 1846), Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, "Notice of the Life of Matilda of Scotland. Queen of Henry the First," The Book of Beauty; or Regal Gallery, ed. Margeurite Blessington (London: D. Bogue, 1848), Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, "The Strawberry Girl," Chambers's Edinburgh Journal 11.137 (1846), and Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, "Too Handsome--a Tale," Sharpe's London Magazine 27 November 1847.

Holman Hunt (Mitchell 1-9), probably had some influence over her choice of profession in choosing writing over education. Craik would later contend, in *A Woman's Thoughts About Women*, that literature is a field where women can excel—and even at times exceed men's abilities—because the qualities necessary to become a good writer are those within women's reach; being articulate, imaginative, and exact are highlighted attributes, with education beyond basic proficiency, a requisite for an artist, noticeably absent from Craik's estimation (Craik *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* 50). In the same passage, Craik provides sources to back up her claim, beginning with the success of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's (1806-1861) *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and following with the pronouncement that "any publisher's list, any handful of weekly or monthly periodicals, can testify to our power of entering boldly on the literary profession, and pursuing it wholly, self-devotedly, and self-reliantly, thwarted by no hardships, and content with no height short of the highest" (Craik *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* 52). In these lines, written in 1858, it is difficult not to see Craik imagining herself and her own rise to stardom and literary acclaim, having independently persevered through challenges to become the celebrity author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*.

John Halifax, Gentleman was, however, Craik's fifth adult novel. Her first, *The Ogilvies*, was published in 1849 following the many shorter periodical works and children's stories with which she began her career. It is a novel whose center revolves around the love lives of two cousins, Katherine and Eleanor Ogilvie. Katherine's social debut coincides with her fixation on the image of the poet John Keats and her tale tracks the fatal consequences that arise when she meets a man whom she finds bears an

extraordinary likeness to her idol. Eleanor's case is quite different; having been in love with and finally betrothed to her childhood friend Phillip Wychnor, his refusal to take church Orders requires that he leave her behind while he tries to make his fortune in secular society. This lands Wychnor—whose story is not dissimilar to Craik's own—in London, where he falls into literary society and eventually becomes a promising writer and young celebrity, capable of marrying Eleanor.

Reception of the novel by reviewers marked Craik as a talented young writer. She was welcomed "into the world of literary fiction" by *The Athenaeum* and *The Literary World* described her first work as a "domestic and social life" novel with a "fresh" style ("The Ogilvies. A Novel; The Ogilvies").[24] What is remarkable about these and other reviews of the novel, however, is that none draw attention to the thematic arc that runs throughout the book, which is the literary celebrity: his various ascents to fame, life once there, and even his celebrity once deceased. Therefore, although the *OED* credits *The Ogilvies* for first using *celebrity* as a way to distinguish "a celebrated person: a public character" ("Celebrity, *N.*"), it does not appear as though Craik's contemporaries were as surprised by the word's treatment in the text as a noun, or even more broadly as a plot device. The lack of fanfare over *celebrity*, though, does not mean that its application by Craik was unimportant; rather, it suggests that *celebrity* was already circulating, if only orally, as a term to describe the publicly famous. Craik's position as a rising literary star affords unique insight into 1840s literary fame because in writing *The Ogilvies* and

[24] Not all reviews would speak so highly of *The Ogilvies*. See R.H. Hutton, "Novels by the Authoress of John Halifax," North British Review 29 (November 1858), and "The Ogilvies," The Spectator 20 October 1849.

transforming her London literary exploits while herself a struggling writer into a fictional account of the same period, Craik highlights the pervasive interest that celebrity already held for middle-class readers of the period, for admirers and aspiring writers alike.

With no technical jargon yet available to identify intimate relationships formed between admirers and authors through the act of reading, admirers of celebrated nineteenth-century authors nevertheless developed close ties to writers they never were to meet. The production of a mediated intimacy between an admirer and a celebrity is described in the early years of the twenty-first century by David C. Giles and John Maltby, when they open their study on the role of celebrities in adolescent development with a statement attesting to a phenomenon affecting a young person's transition into adulthood. They write:

> A hundred years ago, the range of people who could exert an influence over adolescent socialization was restricted to peers, relatives, neighbours and teachers. In the intervening period, this number has swelled out of all proportion with the appearance of the mass media. Today, young people are exposed…to an immense range of influential figures through television and radio, popular culture, print media and the internet. (Giles and Maltby 813-14)

Giles and Maltby fall prey to the fallacy that Western culture's obsession with stars and celebrity influence is a recent event. More than 150 years before Giles and Maltby's work on the wide-ranging effects of celebrity on young people, and before psychologists

would research and develop scales to determine an admirer's perceived relationship to and levels of worship identification with a celebrity,[25] Craik devises in her heroine Katherine Ogilvie a case study of the deleterious results of adolescent idol adoration on a person's ability to successfully mature. With a "mind left to form its own ideal of what is good and true," comments the narrator about Katherine, "Her solitary childhood had created an imaginary world in which she moved side by side with its inhabitants. These were the heroes and heroines of the books which she had read…and the beings who peopled her own fanciful dreams" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 7). At sixteen, however, Katherine requires a love interest to round out her fantasy life, and instead of relying on literary characters or those made up by her imagination, she chooses a "real human being—that young poet whose life itself was a poem, Keats" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 7). A real human being, yes, but one whose life had already ended, and whose fame would rise as friends and critics alike took to writing about his life and works for public consumption. Katherine's fascination with Keats, whom the narrator significantly identifies by last name only—no first name being necessary by 1849 for the public to know who Katherine idealizes—derives, therefore, from a mediated knowledge of the poet, with an intimacy forming from materials published about Keats regardless of Keats's actual self or of his inability to become a viable love interest.

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[25] These scales include those created by Lynn E. McCutcheon, Rense Lange and James Houran, "Conceptualization and Measurement of Celebrity Worship," British Journal of Psychology 93 (2002), A.M. Rubin, E.M. Perse and R.A. Powell, "Loneliness, Parasocial Interaction, and Local Television News Viewing," Human Communication Research 12 (1985), G.S. Stever, "The Celebrity Appeal Questionnaire," Psychological Reports 68 (1991), and D.L. Wann, "Preliminary Validation of the Sport Fan Motivation Scale," Journal of Sport and Social Issues 19 (1995).

Understanding Keats as an ideal love interest for Katherine Ogilvie requires briefly historicizing what Sidney Colvin titularly calls his *After-Fame*, particularly because Keats has been famously identified by peers and later writers as unmanly, and to some, pathetic, rather than the hero Katherine views him to be. Keats's death in 1821 is declared by Percy Bysshe Shelley in the preface to his elegiac poem, *Adonais*, for example, as due to an inability to recover from negative reviews of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*.[26] Shelley writes that Keats's "genius…was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful" and describes his death as follows:

> The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly afflicted. (Shelley 410)

Published shortly after Keats's death, this preface, along with *Adonais*' effusive rendering of the same theme,[27] is echoed by other Keats contemporaries as well as later poets and literary critics,[28] constructing what Andrew Bennett describes as a

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[26] See John Wilson Croker, "*Endymion: A Poetic Romance*. By John Keats," The Quarterly Review 19.37 (April 1818): 204-08.

[27] See, for example, stanzas 2, 27, 36-39 in Percy Bysshe Shelley, "*Adonais*," Shelley's Poetry and Prose, eds. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002) 409-27.

[28] Contemporaries promoting this point of view include William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. See William Hazlitt, Johnson's Lives of the British Poets, vol. 4 (London: Nathaniel

"feminising…representation which has marked criticism and biography of Keats up to the present day" (Bennett 143).[29] In an attempt to counter the "feminising reputation" being built around Keats, in 1848 Richard Monckton Milnes published the first biography of the poet. Heavily informed by the records of Charles Brown, a friend of Keats, Milnes is tasked by Brown to "correct the pathetic Keats of Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*" (Najarian 21), a biographic sketch that, like Shelley's work, did nothing to stop the construction of a feminizing reputation by describing Keats as emotional and guilty of "poetical effeminacy" (Hunt 419). In writing Keats's life story with the intention of portraying Keats as a masculine hero, Milnes thereby "canonises a certain oppositional rhetoric of power and masculinity" to counter the feminization of earlier Keatsian accounts (Bennett 143), and provides material from which Katherine Ogilvie can construct her own romantic hero.

Cooke, 1854) 304, and Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries, with Recollections of the Author's Life, and of His Visit to Italy, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1828) 426.

[29] For a critical discussion of the gendering of Keats by poets and critics, see, among others, George H. Ford, Keats and the Victorians: A Study of His Influence and Rise to Fame, 1821-1895 (Hamden: Archon Books, 1962) 68, James Najarian, Victorian Keats: Manliness, Sexuality, and Desire (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Jeffrey C. Robinson, Reception and Poetics in Keats: 'My Ended Poet' (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), and Susan J. Wolfson, "Feminizing Keats," Critical Essays on John Keats, ed. Hermione de Almeida (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990).

In constructing a masculine alternative to the feminizing Keatsian narratives, Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* allows Craik to use the poet and his posthumous celebrity as Katherine's love interest. Milnes's biography begins with a frontispiece illustration by Joseph Severn of Keats in the act of composing (*Figure 1.1*). The sketch announces that the book will offer an alternative interpretation of Keats than the popular estimation of him by earlier accounts suggests, a reading reinforced by *Sharpe's London Magazine's* appraisal of the book shortly after its release; this is the image that the reviewer asks the public to decipher as masculine instead of erroneously feminine:

Figure 1.1: Joseph Severn, *John Keats*, 1819. Oil on ivory.

> 'Killed by a savage article in a review!' Look in the face of this man, and believe it if you can. Is that a weak, irritable, vanity-devoured boy? Are those the eyes likely to be filled with tears? or that the mouth to quiver with emotion because an ignorant reviewer said he was no poet? Heaven help the poor dear public! To think that it has gone about believing such nonsense these many years. And it will probably repeat the mistake on the

> very next opportunity. ("Reviews. Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats" 56)

The review article echoes Milnes's prefatory words about his own conclusions while researching Keats's life, "when, then, I found, from the undeniable documentary evidence of his inmost life, that nothing could be further from the truth than this opinion" that "he was…all but universally believed to have been killed by a stupid, savage, article in a review" (Milnes xvii). Embarking on a mission to correct the popular misconceptions about Keats, Milnes begins the body of the biography with the statement, "His Life is in his writings, and his Poems are his works indeed," calling Keats a person of "a noble nature perseveringly testing its own powers" with a "manly heart bravely surmounting its first hard experience" (Milnes 2). This idea of Keats, of a masculine hero of poetry striving for perfection and consistently working to improve his work while battling a devastating, ultimately life-taking, illness, offers to consumers a life "whose whole story may be summed up in the composition of three small volumes of verse, some earnest friendships, one passion, and a premature death" (Milnes 2), not of a man with a nature so feeble that he cannot withstand one poor review. The simple yet rich life of Keats portrayed by Milnes produces a personality in accord with nineteenth-century gender ideals and ready for youthful idolization, one readily picked up by Katherine Ogilvie in her lonely transition from child to woman.

Whether Craik is influenced by Milnes's biography of Keats is more than mere conjecture. The publication date of Milnes's work—one year prior to *The Ogilvies*—

along with the lack of other masculine portraits of Keats in the marketplace, make Milnes's book a likely source for the novel's construction of Katherine's obsession over the poet. Moreover, Craik's rhetorical style in introducing Keats to the reader too closely replicates Milnes's own to be coincidence: the narrator's description of Keats as "that poet whose life itself was a poem" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 7) mirrors the language and sentiments expressed by Milnes in his opening paragraph of the biography: "His Life is in his writings, and his Poems are his works indeed" (Milnes 2). Taking Milnes's rendering of Keats's life as the basis for her love of "this dead and buried poet" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 8), Katherine, therefore, falls victim to a market-driven characterization of a poet's life and works, ultimately making life-defining choices based on an ideal man she has never met, whose "likeness, which Katharine had hung up in her room, haunted her perpetually…watching it until she felt for [Keats] a sensation very like the love of which she had read" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 7-8). One can imagine Katherine removing the Severn illustration of Keats from Milnes's biography and affixing it to her bedroom wall, just as so many young people do today of their favorite stars. Attached to this portrait, by way of a mediated intimacy made possible by Milnes's attempts at revealing the real Keats, is a dream of her future life, with an overwrought ideal lover as its focal point.

This dream of a future life with a perfect romantic partner takes a concrete turn at Katherine's society debut at a literary soiree held by the lion hunter, Mrs. Lancaster. When her cousin Eleanor asks Katherine the morning after the event whether she had seen "'any of those celebrities'" she had been preoccupied with leading up to the party, Katherine answers in the affirmative, stating "'it was very interesting to watch them,'"

yet begins to qualify her interest when Eleanor cuts her off, assuming that the celebrities "'were not quite what [Katherine] expected'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 22). Saved by Eleanor's presumption, Katherine replies, "'Perhaps,'" taking the opportunity to discuss the disappointment of meeting celebrities in person rather than revealing her true object of interest from the previous evening's party: Mr. Paul Lynedon, a man whom, upon being admitted into the soiree, became the permanent focus of Katherine's gaze for the duration of the event (Craik *The Ogilvies* 14).

Katherine's interest in watching guests of the party instead of interacting with them personally is not unrealistic. In fact, Craik's later retelling of her own experiences as a young girl at parties, when she "remembered evenings of weeping after dances where she had been a wallflower" (Showalter "Dinah Mulock Craik and the Tactics of Sentiment: A Case Study in Victorian Authorship" 9), suggests that the event could have been one of Craik's memories reimagined. As a girl of sixteen without any prior experience in the world and already shy by nature, Katherine is thrust into an environment where notable literary stars and other social celebrities are in abundance. Lynedon, however, is not one of them. Her undeterred gazing upon the man causes Katherine's cousin—and future husband—Hugh Ogilvie to warn her that others will notice her persistent watching, a social taboo, particularly for a young woman, not just for its rudeness but also for the sexually-charged interest staring implies. Katherine nevertheless continues to look, feeling an uncanny familiarity with Lynedon, with "his face seem[ing] as if [she] knew it" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 15). Catching Lynedon with the aid of a mirror in a moment of silence, Katherine finally makes the connection:

> That face in its thoughtful repose revealed to her the vague likeness which had at once made it seem familiar and dear. In character it strongly resembled the head of Keats, which had been her admiration for so many months. As the fancy struck her Katherine's cheek flushed, and a strange thrill shot through her heart. She looked at him again,—and still the likeness seemed to increase. It was a pleasure so new! (Craik *The Ogilvies* 15)

Katherine's pleasure stems from finding in Lynedon the incarnation of her ideal lover, Keats, "and with the aid of that friendly mirror" Katherine "thus watch[ed] the living semblance of her poet…utterly unconscious that she was drinking in the first draught of that cup which is offered to every human lip: to some, of honey,—to others, of gall" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 16). In its ability to promote deception, the mirror becomes an alibi of Sin. The novel hints at this being a first moment of temptation for Katherine, a moment where her desire for the unattainable Keats is transformed into something tangible by way of mirror tricks in connecting the poet to Lynedon. With the offered cup described as "honey" or "gall" depending on its recipient's reaction, however, Katherine is still able to choose whether to be consumed by that desire or to eschew it.

With Lynedon's subsequent visit and short stay at the Ogilvie estate, Summerwood—a move predicated on his own desire for a seat in Parliament—Katherine's future is doomed to the honeyed embrace of her desire for Keats's image reincarnate as she fails to resist her fantasies. Being the self-absorbed dandy that he is

and not the Keats of her dreams, while at Summerwood Lynedon simultaneously finds himself temporarily and unrequitedly in love with Katherine's cousin Eleanor while indulging his ego with small flirtations, and even a last kiss before departing, from Katherine. Unremembered by Lynedon but cherished by Katherine, this kiss along with a farewell letter itself full of pretty nothings—another sip from the honeyed cup of desire—marks a defining moment for her, who believes it to seal their future together. Rebuffed by Eleanor, Lynedon leaves for the Continent with little notice of his effect on Katherine. She, however, fills her days, turning into months and even years, with perfecting habits and her appearance so as to please him when "that blessed time" came when "he should claim her" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 173), refusing even to marry her cousin Hugh despite her parents' and his own wishes. Without a portrait of Lynedon, Katherine returns again and again to the illustration of Keats, imbuing in it all her dreams of a life with Lynedon, no longer seeing the poet; "she only felt as though she were looking into Paul Lynedon's eyes," and because she felt so, the portrait did not hang on the wall as before, when the love of Keats was a mere fantasy, but instead was hidden away as a treasure depicting future hopes (Craik *The Ogilvies* 173). What began as an innocent celebrity crush transforms into a debilitating obsession over a man with little to recommend himself, and still less in returned affection. That the battle between biographers and poets in posthumously commodifying Keats played a role in Katherine's increasingly obsessive behavior is certain; Katherine's disclosure to Eleanor that meeting celebrities deflated her estimation of them suggests that, had she actually met Keats, her crush would have been no more (Craik *The Ogilvies* 14). But because his death precluded even the possibility of

a real-life encounter, Katherine's imagination builds upon a Keatsian narrative constructed by those with both a personal and a monetary interest in his posthumous reputation. Katherine therefore transposes her Keatsian fantasy onto the only person who resembles Keats enough to make her dream of a romance with the poet a potential reality: Lynedon.

Katherine is jarred from her visions of a future with Lynedon, however, by a mistaken rumor she overhears while at another of Mrs. Lancaster's parties, events which had now become common enough to Katherine that her shyness had dissipated and instead of being a wallflower, she, at nineteen, was now a beauty of the London social scene. Learning that Lynedon, still in Florence after many years overseas, "'is likely to be married'" to a woman he had long harbored feelings for, Katherine, "passionate in all her impulses…drank in, undoubting" the tale (Craik *The Ogilvies* 221). Reacting with rage, Katherine exacts revenge on Lynedon by deciding to marry her cousin Hugh so as to preserve her pride and make him resent his moment of weakness in indulging his own desire for adoration: "'I will live—live to make the world know, and *you* know, what I am! Yes, you shall hear of me—my beauty, and my talents!'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 225). The sentiments expressed in her monologue represent a momentary release of emotion and disappointment but also have momentous consequences. Marrying Hugh and destroying the letter and Keats's portrait, "which bore such a curious resemblance to Lynedon," does not, try as she might, "'crush [Lynedon from [her] heart'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 239), but only further embeds him there. Katherine realizes the lifelong consequences of a hasty, loveless marriage wrought against a warrantless rumor; as she

once again encounters Lynedon, whom, by Katherine's own machinations, now does fall in love with her, she remains so with him.

Katherine stays faithful to her now-husband Hugh despite learning of Lynedon's true marital status in the midst of his continued unchaste advances upon her. In a late-night interview between Katherine and Lynedon, one precipitated by Katherine's knowledge that he now does love her, Katherine rebukes Lynedon for suggesting they run away together and she forsake her marriage vows to Hugh, bidding him to "'go—go from my sight forever!'" for attempting to "'destroy [her] soul'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 407). Heeding these words fails to pass, however, as the same night of their exchange there also comes word that Hugh is dead, killed in a hunting accident, and Katherine a widow. With a seemingly other-worldly fate affixed to Katherine and Lynedon, Katherine, now free to marry again after the proper mourning period is over, is once more hounded by Lynedon and, this time, is persuaded to elope despite Hugh's death being only weeks past. Replacing the "hateful" black mourning veil for a "bridal garland" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 416), Katherine and Lynedon marry in a nearby village church, with her old nurse as their witness. Yet instead of a happy ending, on the tolling of the "near church tower" funeral bell Katherine suddenly dies of a heart ailment: "Katherine was dead. But she died on Paul Lynedon's breast, knowing herself his wife, beloved even as she had loved" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 425). Lynedon, ever fitful, is never heard from again, having gone abroad for a second time; "whether he wore out existence in anguished solitude, or sought oblivion in reckless pleasure—perhaps crime—no one then knew, and

no one ever did know," with only Katherine's tombstone, inscribed with the surname of Lynedon, being the single mark of his having existed (Craik *The Ogilvies* 431).

Concluding Katherine's saga with the look-alike Keats with a material marker of Lynedon's existence in life, especially in her life, reinforces the point that real consequences resulted from Katherine's initial obsession with the celebrity poet and his portrait. Not an ordinary reaction to a youthful infatuation, the drama that plays out is a cautionary tale against acting upon imaginary musings about unknown literary stars, in its plotting conforming to the gendered assumptions of the period that feared according women too much freedom in their reading practices.[30] Transposing ideals formed from reading an author's "deepest and purest feelings" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 22)—as expressed in their books or their biographies by others wishing to establish an inner self of the writer desirable to a reading public—upon another such as Lynedon, accessible in a way that a star author simply is not, elicits results not nearly as ideal as the author initially fantasized about. Although most celebrity obsessions do not end in such an extreme manner as does Katherine's, by the 1840s the commodification of the author makes instances such as this a possibility. While Giles and Maltby, in their 2004 study on "The Role of Media Figures in Adolescent Development," conclude that "it may be that intense

[30] Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is another fictional example, albeit humorous, of the fears associated with unregulated reading by women. See Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey (New York: Modern Library, 1995). For critical treatments of this topic, see Ana-Isabel Aliaga-Buchenau, The "Dangerous" Potential of Reading: Readers and the Negotiation of Power in Nineteenth-Century Narratives (New York: Routledge, 2004), Joe Bray, The Female Reader in the English Novel: From Burney to Austen (New York: Routledge, 2009), and Janet Badia and Jennifer Phegley, ed., Reading Women: Literary Figures and Cultural Icons from the Victorian Age to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

relationships with celebrities develop during times of stress" (Giles and Maltby 820), and that the perceived level of intimacy between a star and his or her admirer can have lifelong consequences on a young person entering adulthood, this position had already long been established and explored by writers including Craik, who herself would go on to implement a mediated relationship with her admirers through her own writing. Craik's use of Keats as the celebrity crush responsible for Katherine's inability to discern fiction from reality conveys a knowledge on Craik's part that intimate relationships are formed between readers and writers, not just through what they write but also by the images, words, and associations between text and author that arise through marketing practices that privilege the authorial persona. Katherine's experience certainly exemplifies this view; she leaves a lonely and misunderstood adolescence behind only long enough to expire in the arms of her false Keats due to an obsession based upon a persona created by the poetry she reads of the writer, the Severn image of the poet, and finally by Keats's biographer, Milnes.

Already a landmark novel for celebrity studies scholars for its discernment of mediated intimacies produced between authors and admirers through a commodification of the authorial persona in its plotting of Katherine's demise by way of celebrity obsession taken to extremes, in an equally important but much less dramatic, parallel storyline, *The Ogilvies* is also concerned with the development of a writer, Phillip Wychnor, into a literary star. Raised by his Aunt Breynton, the widowed Dean's wife, to take Orders and continue church tradition eschewed with such tragic consequences by his own father, when Phillip decides that he cannot commit himself to the Church for lack of

belief in all of its "dogmas" he is denied access to the money laid aside for him and is required to leave the family home and seek his own fortune before he can marry his childhood love, Eleanor Ogilvie (Craik *The Ogilvies* 116). Deciding upon London as his best chance at networking and finding a position, Wychnor is aided by a letter of introduction from his father's friend, Dr. Bourne, to Mr. Pennythorne, a man whose "acute, decisive character impressed ordinary people with reverence," which, with "his tact and quickness of judgment had enabled him to compel from the small modicum of talent which he possessed the reputation of being a literary star of considerable magnitude" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 131). The acquaintance provides Wychnor with an opportunity to discern hackneyed writer from true literary genius.

Seeking any prospect that would afford himself a "respectable" living, "'if not by his hands, at least by his brains,'" Wychnor nevertheless had not thought of attempting authorship, having "'never [written] anything in [his] life'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 142). At their first meeting, however, Pennythorne proposes that Wychnor give it a try, and confidentially advises him on the brainlessness of being a successful author:

> 'Genius…between ourselves, has nothing to do with the matter. It is a commodity rather unpleasant than otherwise. [. . .]. The best authors, and those who have made most money, have had no genius at all. With plenty of diligence and a good connection, a clever author may get a good living; while the poor devils called men of genius…lie down and starve.' (Craik *The Ogilvies* 142)

An admirer of genius, Wychnor painfully listens to the speech, and when Pennythorne offers to procure him some work to "'try [his] hand at authorship'" he declines, citing that "'literature has always seemed to me so high and holy a calling'" and feeling himself "'not…competent to do credit to authorship'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 143). At this initial encounter with Pennythorne, Wychnor's literary ideals clash against the reality of a marketplace eager for and valuing the performance of cleverness in creating literary stars regardless of actual talent. In this episode Pennythorne's view—based on his own experiences—raises a common complaint against popular writers, one whom, ironically, Craik will become; "try[ing] [one's] hand at authorship" suggests that the profession is just like any other, with "diligence and a good connection" more valuable than talent.

While industry and connections will be necessary for Craik's author-in-the-making Wychnor to succeed as a writer, Wychnor's path to authorial fame bolsters Craik's later assessment that imagination and a talent for articulating ideas are also necessary in becoming an author of renown (Craik *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* 50). Mr. Pennythorne's practical view of authorship, which initially dissuades Wychnor from writing, is ultimately challenged and qualified by Wychnor's serendipitous encounter with a man of true literary genius and fame. Mr. Pennythorne's secondary offer of help is to pay Wychnor a too-small sum for tutoring his youngest son, Leigh, while he thinks of other possible occupations for Wychnor to pursue. The pursuit of these occupations being paid only lip-service to by Pennythorne, Wychnor grows destitute on the pitiable income and, ill from months of physical malnourishment and mental desolation, takes the bus in lieu of walking home one day after his time with

Leigh is complete. Delirious with fever, Wychnor is helped by an old man to his rooms, where, with weeks of covert nursing by Leigh, he recovers. Wychnor later discovers that the philanthropic old man is David Drysdale, a revered scholar able to discern true literary genius and thus himself a celebrity in London's literary circles; the two strike up a friendship. Having endured trials previously unthought-of, Wychnor does begin to write, sharing his thoughts with Drysdale at their initial reunion: "'I have had some trouble in my life: latterly, very much. It has made me think more deeply, and I am now trying to work out those thoughts with my pen" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 196). When Drysdale questions whether he is an author, Wychnor displays his humble hopes at attaining the title: "'I cannot call myself by that name…I write, as many others do, for bread. But still I begin to see how great an author's calling might be made, and I long, however vainly, to realize that ideal'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 196). Significant in Wychnor's reply is the difference in character with which he approaches authorship from that of Pennythorne. Whereas Pennythorne views authorship as achievable by anyone with steady application and the right connections, Wychnor views it as a step above an occupation, a calling found in the true expression of one's innermost soul. Becoming an author means being able to transfer his most intimate thoughts and experiences onto paper that then resonates with readers. His definition is one, importantly, that supports a hermeneutic of intimacy, without which he cannot call himself an author, nor gain readers enough to sustain a popular reputation, with the byproduct being an income adequate enough to marry.

Drysdale encourages Wychnor's own attempts at writing, and as his mentor provides him with guidance as Wychnor fine-tunes his craft. Part of this tutelage comes in the form of introducing Wychnor to the necessity of publicity, found in being invited as a literary lion to the same parties thrown by Mrs. Lancaster that Katherine Ogilvie attends. In this way, Drysdale acts the role of publicist, with his formidable reputation affording new opportunities for Wychnor; even Pennythorne, personally disliking Drysdale, nevertheless curbs his generally acerbic temper when it comes to the old man. Leigh relays as much when Wychnor shares with him the new friendship: "'my father would never quarrel with such a man as Drysdale. He has wonderful influence, in a quiet way, among literary people. He knows everybody, and everybody knows him'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 200). Drysdale's "know[ing] everybody" secures Wychnor the interest of Mrs. Lancaster, as well as underscores for him the importance of making himself known in literary circles in order to attain fame. This he begrudgingly does, understanding its necessity in promoting himself as an author:

> He must keep in the society which is so necessary to his worldly prospects—he must be seen in those haunts which are to others amusement, to him business—in theatre, exhibition, or social meeting; so at last he learns to do as others do—to *act*. It is merely creating a new self as he does a new character; and perhaps in time this fictitious self becomes so habitual that never, save in those works which the world calls fiction, but which are indeed his only true life, does the real man shine out. (Craik *The Ogilvies* 350)

Wychnor's words describe why there is a disconnect between meeting the writer and the writer's works, according to Eleanor's early explanation to Katherine about the disappointment in meeting a literary celebrity: that authors "'write out in their books their inner selves—their deepest and purest feelings—and we form our ideal of them from that. When we meet them in the world, we see only the outer self—perhaps but a rough and clumsy shell'" (Craik *The Ogilvies* 22). This expression of intellectual synchronicity between the lovers Wychnor and Eleanor on the subject of literary stardom is one that, like Katherine's obsession with the poet Keats, precedes later theories of celebrity detailed by celebrity scholars such as Rojek. Like Craik, Rojek identifies a distinction between a private self and a public self in the production of stars, which can, at times, be confusing to both celebrities and their admirers who meet them "out-of-face," but which is also necessary to their crafting and selling an image, regardless of the talent they may, or may not, possess (Rojek 11, 17). While writing about the fictional effects of such encounters in *The Ogilvies*, Walford's experience meeting Craik in her *Memories* confirms that Craik was subject to these same assessments by admirers; the closest Craik devotees may ever come to knowing her, as Wychnor and Eleanor so ably articulate in their fictional engagement with celebrity culture, is by reading her work, not by meeting her in person.

Similar to most domestic novel plots of this period, Wychnor and Eleanor do marry once his fame reaches a height lucrative enough to produce a suitable, sustainable income, and after Eleanor finds herself a woman of independent means by virtue of a surprise willed fortune, capable of choosing a mate without concern for money. This

ending, which rewards, on Wychnor's part, the middle-class ethic of hard work in concert with heartfelt writing soulful enough to be called authorship, contrasts with the tragic finale of Eleanor's cousin Katherine's love life, viewed from the start as flawed by an overzealous idealization of an impossible love match with the dead poet Keats and his living replacement, Lynedon. The plots converge in more than just superficial connections between family members in producing a novel with incredible insight and concern for the effects of celebrity on literary stars and their admirers. Wychnor, needing to succumb to marketing himself in order to earn a living by making himself visible in venues where he can interact with his readers, is finally able to find refuge, and maintain a part of his private identity in a space other than in his fiction, in the creation of a home life with Eleanor away from prying eyes. This home life proves the antidote—and the recipe for other celebrities to follow—to the trivialities of public life that accompany literary stardom. Unable to escape the honeyed cup of temptation that she early falls prey to, Katherine, while herself a victim of celebrity obsession, exists as a cautionary tale for others to heed while they still have the ability to correct themselves and maintain a distinction between reality and fantasy, admiration and mania. The novel's innovation derives from its wealth of information about and concern for multiple aspects of celebrity culture, particularly respecting literary stars, a topic of clear interest to middle-class readers of the 1840s. The "fresh" style that *The Literary World* commends upon *The Ogilvies* testifies to the novel's ability to connect to a growing population intent upon viewing their favorite writers as fascinating spectacles.

The Rise and Fall of *John Halifax* and its Author

As a star author herself, it is clear that Craik understood that authorship as a literary commodity did not just exist in fiction but in real life as well, so although Craik resisted personal publicity this did not preclude her from cultivating a persona. Despite foregoing interviews and other interventions into her private life, Craik still participated in a "situated agency," a term that scholar Joe Moran ascribes to authors in order to illustrate the process of "actively negotiat[ing] their own celebrity rather than having it simply imposed upon them" (Moran 10). Craik's celebrity was achieved by marketing herself through the popularity of her novels and through association with the types of characters she developed. After the publication of *John Halifax, Gentleman* in 1856, Craik ceased to be known as the "author of" any of her other works, cultivating a lifelong tie to one of the most popular books of the nineteenth century by promoting all subsequent work as being by "the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*." Craik's contemporaries, in the acknowledgement of her use of "the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*" in lieu of her name to promote herself, substantiate the success—as well as the transparency—of this policy: "She takes the title of 'Author of John Halifax,' so it seems, rather to identify her with that particular book than as a veil behind which she can conceal her own personality. It is the work which she offers, and which the public is willing to receive, as representative of both her style and her character" ("The Author of *John Halifax*" 32). It appears only fitting, then, that Walford opens her account of meeting "the author of *John Halifax*, *Gentleman*" by sharing her own memories of reading that iconic Victorian novel in, appropriately enough, a domestic environment

where the reading was done aloud by her father to the rest of the family, for over the course of thirty years Craik imbeds in the public consciousness her connection to it as its creator, inseparable from the novel, its characters, and the experiences of its reading public.

This continuity between her own and her readers' ideals is expressed by Craik in the preface to her essay for single women, *A Woman's Thoughts About Women*, where she begins by suggesting that the following pages would strike a chord in her readers. Rather than "attempt[ing] an originality" Craik writes, "In this book…many women will find simply the expression of what they have themselves, consciously or unconsciously, oftentimes thought" (Craik *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* iii-iv). Craik's assertion is an indication of how she positions herself to the reading public. She is not a leader advocating for unorthodox thought or action; rather, Craik is simply the voice of the people, articulating ideas already held by the masses so that they can better implement them. This is the role that Craik, through her writing, would maintain throughout her career, a role which tied her celebrity to being a part of, rather than distinct from, her mass readership, and which would bind her inextricably to her most famous novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman*.

Craik's preface to *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* could just as easily have been appended to *John Halifax, Gentleman*, and expanded to include not just single women, but men, women, and children invested in the middle-class ideals of what Mitchell describes as "the holy trinity of economic individualism: self-help, self-denial,

and self-control" (Mitchell 45). Just as Craik offered her thoughts to single women in order to guide their decision-making, *John Halifax, Gentleman* served as a handbook for middle-class notions of success to Victorians, with the result being that it, along with Craik's other works, "materially changed the lives of innumerable readers in all parts of the world" (W.S. 269). The appellation in the novel's title of "Gentleman" underscores the shift in public accord as to how that address was bestowed, with John Halifax representing the transfer from aristocratic to middle-class values and influence that occurred in the early nineteenth century. The fictional biography follows the self-made rise from obscurity to wealth, domestic bliss, and social authority of an orphan, John Halifax, who, through sheer willpower and dutiful application, educates and works himself up from a collector of animal skins for a tannery to being the owner of a mill and savior of the local bank. Rather retrospectively, the scholar John Sutherland calls *John Halifax, Gentleman* "the best-known Victorian fable of Smilesian self-improvement" (Sutherland 338), referring to the 1859 runaway bestseller by Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, which advocates a strong work ethic in achieving worldly, spiritual, and emotional gains. Despite the temporal problems with Sutherland's categorization, the connection between the two texts highlights how the novel reflected the trends of the period, resonating with the masses because John Halifax's success and his ethics—valuing the poor, being a responsible citizen, and cultivating a rich home life, for instance—were those being championed in the aftermath of the French Revolution and with the revival of Evangelicalism, which spread a "Christian tint" across England well into the Victorian era as the middle class rose to cultural and political prominence (Davidoff 76, 81).

John Halifax, Gentleman was so popular, in fact, that in 1866 Henry James, in reviewing another of Craik's works, *A Noble Life* (1866), proclaims the hero John Halifax as beyond reproach. He writes:

> …Neither before nor after his successful incarnation was John Halifax to be weighed or measured. We know of no scales that will hold him, and of no unit of length with which to compare him. He is infinite; he outlasts time; he is enshrined in a million innocent breasts; and before his awful perfection and his eternal durability we respectfully lower our lance. (James "'a Noble Life'" 168)

Ironically hyperbolic in his "lower[ing] [the] lance" of criticism because the character's "awful perfection" makes judgment futile, James's words reflect how much *John Halifax's* popularity affected its Victorian audience even ten years after its publication. Although critics did review the novel and highlight its weaknesses, the moral lessons taught by such characters' trials and triumphs as those experienced by John Halifax expiated them,[31] especially in the public's view. The novel's record-breaking sales, along with readers' affinity for pilgrimages to *Halifax* sites such as Walford makes (Mitchell 52), confirm the relatively impervious nature the novel gained from the middle-class's adoption of the book and its characters as their social bible.[32]

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[31] Reviews of this type span decades and continents. See "New Novels: *John Halifax, Gentleman*," Athenaeum (26 April 1856), "The Author of *John Halifax*.", and Robert Nourse, "An Old Book for New Readers," The Dial June 1883.

[32] For an extended account of celebrity and literary tourism, see Easley, Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914.

In her lifetime, Craik, like John Halifax, was free from public calumny, in large part due to the reputation she garnered from writing such virtuous characters. As a paragon of middle-class virtue, Craik was often described in terms that mirror this assessment. *Lady's Home Magazine*, for example, relays an American woman's impression of meeting Craik in 1860 by highlighting the qualities that allow Craik to fit the feminine ideal of the period:

> 'Miss Muloch [*sic*] sustains the impression you derive from her book—modest, sensible, sincere. She is tall, slender, with fine blue eyes, light brown hair, clear English complexion, and a face lighted up by sensibility. There is nothing of the strong minded [*sic*] air about her, that indefinable, unmistakable disease with which so many literary ladies are afflicted. She is feminine, as God meant woman to be…'. ("The Author of John Halifax")

Importantly, the first words to describe Craik are those that align her with the novel she has gained celebrity from—*John Halifax, Gentleman*, thereby reinforcing an intimacy between author and reader through the process of reading. The "impression" one gathers from meeting Craik, moreover, serves to further establish the English feminine ideal, nurtured through her novel in characters such as John Halifax's wife, Ursula, as one that exists in real life, even if as an anomaly in a woman author such as herself. Ursula, described by one reviewer as "stand[ing] quite apart from ordinary heroines" for her plain looks, stubbornness, and temper, nevertheless is "a good wife and mother," and provides

"comfort [to] husband, children, [and] friends" ("The Author of *John Halifax*" 45). This affiliation with Ursula as ideal woman will continue in published accounts of meeting Craik; when a school for blind boys prepares for a visit to her home, one of them asks, "Will she be anything like [Ursula]?" (Dawson 57). That she lacks the "unmistakable disease" of a strong mind that this writer sees in so many "literary women" is a false notion, however, one that marks the lack of intimacy that exists between celebrity and admirer, in turn suggesting the limits of "knowing" any literary star through their novels or casual interaction. While Craik may have been "modest, sensible, and sincere," as a successful woman author supporting herself and at times two brothers as well as her father (Oliphant "Mrs. Craik" 82; Mitchell 16), Craik's literary contemporary, Oliphant, describes her in rather more jarring terms than does Craik's American admirer when it came to her will. While she would agree that "Dinah was always kind, enthusiastic," Oliphant also remembers Craik as "somewhat didactic and apt to teach" (Oliphant *Autobiography* 38), and that she was especially ardent in securing lucrative publishing contracts: the publisher "Henry Blackett…turned pale at Miss Muloch's [*sic*] sturdy, business-like stand for her money. He used to talk of his encounters with her with affright, very grave, not able to laugh" (Oliphant *Autobiography* 85). The discrepancy in character appraisal between a Craik admirer and Oliphant, a longtime friend and fellow novelist, follows from Craik's performing the qualities demanded of women in order to be considered feminine, the same qualities she writes into the characters of her novels, including *John Halifax, Gentleman*. Those that Oliphant depicts are, on the other hand, traits necessary in most novelists that wish to achieve financial, as well as popular,

success. While potentially incongruous, the admirer's and Oliphant's evaluations confirm the duality of a celebrity's persona, with neither description inaccurate or even pointing toward deceit on Craik's part. Craik's celebrity was tied to fulfilling a vision of femininity that precluded having a strong mind; to this end, superficial encounters with her would only confirm what her novels and other writings suggested, with only those who knew her in daily life being privy to her determined character and business acumen.

How, then, with the hardest enmity levied against Craik being that she took a "business-like stand for her money" (Oliphant *Autobiography* 85), did Craik become publicly mocked by Walford in *Memories of Victorian London*? By the end of the nineteenth century Victorian publication formats, reading styles, and expanding opportunities for women would alter significantly enough that Craik became an artifact of an earlier period, open to public scrutiny because no longer held sacred. An understanding of the novel as integral to Victorian middle-class values and practices is emphasized by Walford's memory of reading *John Halifax, Gentleman* as a family, but her anecdote also reveals how Craik's celebrity status could have shifted enough by 1912 that personal jabs against her would be acceptable publishable material.

John Halifax, Gentleman was the epitome of Victorian family reading so fondly remembered by Walford and illustrative of triple-decker publication. Originally issued in the popular three-volume, or "triple-decker," format, novels were designed for public circulation, and thereby, according to Elaine Showalter's analysis of the novelistic form, were "obliged to be respectable and chaste," as subsequent volumes were passed down

from father to mother and onto daughters (Showalter *Sexual Anarchy* 16). Triple-decker novels were family friendly, in part, because they reproduced the family model of the period, where a patriarchal figure authorized what was acceptable before allowing female members of the household to partake in the activity. Significantly, Walford's memory of *John Halifax, Gentleman* is of her father reading the story aloud to herself and other family members (Walford 200). This reading practice replicates the patriarchal deference expected of Victorian women and their children, and as a memory for Walford poses no challenge to her as a practice that in itself lacks an impetus for modifying the public perception of Craik's character.

In addition to being "physically associated with the Victorian nuclear family: father, mother, and child," triple-decker novels were also thematically concerned with issues of femininity (Showalter *Sexual Anarchy* 16, 17). These three-volume novels in content reproduced "scriptures of sexual difference" (Showalter *Sexual Anarchy* 17), marking a clear distinction between "public and private, active and passive—categories intimately linked to the radical dualism of masculine and feminine" (Kahane 287). *John Halifax, Gentleman* certainly does so in its promotion of a masculine middle-class hero and articulating a relationship with his wife, Ursula, who, through various trials, must learn to heed Halifax and his dictates from within the confines of their home. So, too, does Craik's other writing, including tracts such as her 1887 essay, "Concerning Men," which focuses more on women's relationship to men in its delineation of the "door-mat" theory rather than on men alone. Not only, then, through her novels does Craik submit to

Victorian gender prescriptions, but she also continues to support them through her non-fiction writings, linking herself even more firmly with Victorian practices and ideals.

By 1887, however, Victorian literary and cultural tastes were already in the midst of fundamental transformations that would continue to be carried out through century's end and beyond. When *The Academy's* 1887 obituary for Craik took the long view in announcing of her legacy of writing, "it may be safely prophesied that, so long as the social views and individual ideals therein faithfully represented are those dominant among our middle classes, so long will Mrs. Craik hold her place" (W.S. 269), it overlooked that publishing and reading practices were moving past triple-decker, family-friendly models, and were being mirrored in society by an expansion of women's opportunities and an obscuring of differences in gender roles—all actions that indicated a changing of middle-class standards. By the 1880s the triple-decker form began to be protested against as an "aesthetic straitjacket"—coinciding with the blurring of distinctions between masculine and feminine, as well as the emergence of the New Woman—and by 1897 the practice of publishing in this manner was practically extinct, with only four triple-deckers recorded (Showalter *Sexual Anarchy* 16). Craik, with her celebrity long associated with *John Halifax, Gentleman* and traditional femininity, no longer withstood ridicule from those such as Walford because a cultural shift occurred that saw Craik's writing style as old-fashioned and her position on women as restrictive, even *passe*. *The Academy and Literature's* review of an 1899 edition of *John Halifax, Gentleman* addresses the novel's failure to maintain its popular position because of its dated middle-class ideals: "…In a limited, temporal way, a classic it is, or was—the

classic of a period, of a particular class, of a certain set of ideas. [. . .]. We have read the book with mild interest, undisturbed by the memory of youthful perusals, and not a single chapter or incident stands forth above the rest" (E.A.B. 97). Regardless of the memories Walford shares of reading *John Halifax, Gentleman*, they are just that—memories, no longer representing a predominant cultural practice and unable to buoy up with nostalgia Walford's dissatisfaction with engaging with a literary icon who was no longer in sync with the values of the nation. By 1912 the safe harbor of being "the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*" was withdrawn.

Concluding her 1887 obituary on Craik, Oliphant perceptively writes of the potentially disparate relationship between her celebrity, current and future. She claims of Craik, "her fame may well be left to the decision of posterity, which takes so little thought of contemporary judgment. It is for us the sweet and spotless fame of a good and pure woman full of all tenderness and kindness, very loving and much beloved" (Oliphant "Mrs. Craik" 85). While she may have left posterity with little external material to posthumously evaluate her by, Craik's contemporaries viewed her as she wanted to be seen, leaving little room for interpretation. This is what Craik established in her publicity policy that refused interviews and other interludes into her private life and instead relied on fostering an intimacy with her readers through her publications, especially *John Halifax, Gentleman*, popular because of its banality and finally a relic for the same reason.

Writing Life

Closing in on what were to become her last years of life, in 1881 Craik writes a thoughtful editorial for *Harper's Bazaar*, "On Novels and Novelmakers," where she deconstructs the act of novel writing from the perspective of one who has applied herself to the task for more than twenty-five years. Craik's explanation of the novel begins by tracing its etymology, but also emphasizes a key element needed for its success: a likeness to real life:

> *Novel*—the word, coming from the Italian *novella*, implies something new…a remaking, in an imaginative shape, of the eternally old elements of mortal life…[. . .]. To make a novel [means] to construct out of the ever-changing kaleidoscope of human fate a picture of life which shall impress people as being life-like, and stand out to its own and possibly an after generation as such. (Craik "On Novels and Novelmakers" 322)

Craik's 1881 musings reflect those held by her first novel's hero created in her likeness, Wychnor, when he expresses how his own life experiences are beginning to give him material from which to write from as he develops as an author (Craik *The Ogilvies* 196). Just as Wychnor draws from his life to make a name for himself and achieve fame, so, too, does Craik in writing *The Ogilvies*. Wychnor's success at marketing himself in his works and at parties reflects Craik's early-learned skills that she applies as she enters the literary marketplace, writing short periodical pieces and juvenile fiction while mingling at, and herself throwing, writer- and artist-attended gatherings (Oliphant *Autobiography*

38-39), with Craik's talent for developing a consumable authorial persona culminating in the creation of her most famous work, *John Halifax, Gentleman*.

Given that Craik's views on the novel demand an engagement with reality, even if imaginatively constructed, it is fitting that writing herself into her fiction continues to be the mode through which Craik maintains a relationship to her audience, producing a mediated intimacy by allowing readers to imagine Craik as one of the many characters she develops that feel so much like living beings. Craik's refusal to adapt as new publicity models are introduced to accommodate the growing interest in literary stars brought on by developments in media technologies is not of itself a problem for Craik's career. Many celebrity authors, including Ouida (1839-1908), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), and Henry James (1843-1916), are also hesitant to explore and expose themselves to more intimate scrutiny. In fact, Craik's reticence to stand in the interview spotlight does produce an interest in her background, one that goes largely unfulfilled, at least until her death. The author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*'s literary life, as Walford so painfully points out, is one that suffers, not from lack of interest, but from time, with her attitudes so fully present in her writing that the works themselves do not withstand the sweeping ideological changes at the close of the nineteenth century. Craik's literary renaissance may be found now, with her novels, a staple of Victorian reading households, once again garnering attention from publishers in addition to literary and cultural scholars interested in areas as far-ranging as disability, children's literature, gender, and celebrity.[33] [34] Her

[33] In 2005, Broadview issued a critical edition of *John Halifax Gentleman*: Dinah Maria Mulock Craik and Lynn Mae Alexander, John Halifax, Gentleman, Broadview Editions

reputation for being ordinary, present in her life as well as in her work, offers those interested in understanding the popular interests of traditional middle-class Victorian readers an archive of material to cull through in their quests.

(Peterborough, Ont., Canada: Broadview Press, 2005). Other reprints of her work include Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, Alice Learmont: Or, a Mother's Love (S.I.: General Books, 2010), Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, Concerning Men: And Other Papers (S.I.: General Books, 2010), Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, The Fairy Book (S.I.: General Books, 2010), and Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, Laurel Bush (S.I.: Arc Manor, 2009).

[34] With a dearth of Craik scholarship after Mitchell and Showalter, many scholars, including myself, are now working and publishing on her vast oeuvre. See, for instance, Bourrier, "Narrating Insanity.", Karen Bourrier, "Physical Disability and Masculinity in Mid-Victorian Narrative," Dissertation, Cornell University, 2009, R. Chandler, "Dinah Mulock Craik: Sacrifice and the Fairy-Order," Contributions in Women's Studies 200 (2003), Lily Philipose, "The Politics of the Hearth in Victorian Children's Fantasy: Dinah Mulock Craik's *the Little Lame Prince*," (1996), and June Sturrock, "Catholic Anti-Heroines: Craik, Sewell, and Yonge," Women's Writing 11.1 (2004).

Chapter Two

Reading *Love Letters* in a "Low-Necked Dress": Florence Marryat on *Tom Tiddler's Ground*

> An author is no longer a lion to be stared at for his celebrity.
>
> –Florence Marryat, *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 4

Florence Marryat's (1833-1899) pronouncement in 1886 that literary lions were all but extinct signaled a departure from methods of marketing that authors such as Dinah Mulock Craik (1826-1887) utilized. These methods were dependent upon creating a mediated intimacy with admirers through the act of reading, along with attending small gatherings of likeminded artists, writers, and admirers to gain and retain a following as depicted in Craik's 1849 novel *The Ogilvies*. Instead, Marryat's argument that a writer could "no longer be stared at for his celebrity" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 4) suggests that engaging admirers through more direct means was necessary for her in order to sustain their enthusiasm for herself and her work. Indeed, while she applied publicity methods used by literary stars such as Craik and also gave interviews—some accompanied by photographs—to top journals, newspapers and periodicals, Marryat's performance of her celebrity persona also extended onto the literal stage in order to prolong her fame.

In addition to publishing more than seventy works including plays, fiction, and non-fiction, Marryat was also an actress, editor, spiritualist, and singer. Interviews with

Marryat report that she began her professional career with the publication of her first novel, *Love's Conflict*, in 1865 as a means to help distract her from the solitary care of her children, of whom she had eight with her first husband, Captain Ross Church (Black 86); scholar Beth Palmer points out that economic need also played a role (Palmer 118). Marrying and then separating for a second time by 1880 to Colonel Francis Lean, Marryat used the intervening years to continue publishing books as well as to embark on a related career in journalism, even editing the monthly magazine, *London Society*, from 1872-1876. In 1873 Marryat was introduced to spiritualism while attending her first séance (Palmer 117); her lifelong commitment to it is reflected by publishing first-person accounts of the practice—the best known being *There is No Death* (1891)—as well as incorporating spiritualism into her fictional work.[35] Marryat added playwright and stage entertainer to her list of achievements in 1880 after a prolonged illness prompted doctors to suggest she take a break from writing literature (Black 90).

Marryat's occupation as an entertainer was what brought her to America in 1884, where she traveled as far west as Illinois and north into Canada up to Montreal to stage her one-woman show, *Love Letters*, written by herself and the actor, satirist, and composer George Grossmith. Marryat journeyed as a lecturer under contract with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau and its manager, George H. Hathaway. Lyceums, or lecture societies, were a distinctly American tradition begun by Josiah Holbrook in 1826 and

[35] Novels incorporating spiritualism include Bessie Davies and Florence Marryat, The Clairvoyance of Bessie Williams (Mrs. Russell Davies) (London: Bliss, Sands and Foster, 1893), and Florence Marryat, The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs (London: Hutchinson, 1896).

could be found in no fewer than 3,500 Northeastern and Midwest towns, large and small, by the 1840s (Scott 791). They initially offered free or low-fee public lectures and were given by local, unpaid orators on a range of topics, but by the 1880s lyceum hall lectures had largely transformed into lucrative fee-for-entry performances by well-paid national and international celebrities (Scott 792). Redpath Lyceum Bureau was formed in 1868 shortly after its founder, Scottish immigrant and journalist James Redpath, noted the hardship that Charles Dickens (1812-1870) experienced in managing his lyceum bookings and travel accommodations for his second tour of America that same year (McKivigan 118). An agency acting on behalf of the traveling lecturer, by the early 1870s Redpath could boast that it could offer local lyceums and lecture halls the most well-known performers in the business (McKivigan 121). For a percentage of the profits Redpath guaranteed performers that their fee would be paid in full by the venues they performed at regardless of attendance and that their lectures would be publicized; in return, venues were ensured that their speakers would appear, with only illness or weather preventing them from doing so, and Redpath arranging "rescheduled performances or a suitable substitute" in those cases (McKivigan 119-20). As a Redpath performer Marryat had one of the most professional and profitable agencies supporting her, and in traveling to America as a lecturer Marryat joined the male-dominated ranks of British literary celebrities who had also done so, including Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), William Thackeray (1811-1863), and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Marryat's recitation tour for *Love Letters* is the context for the

publication of her second memoir, the travelogue *Tom Tiddler's Ground* (1886);[36] her sojourn in America and the record of her recital of *Love Letters* form the foundation of this chapter.

Author and actress, Marryat's distinctive relationship to celebrity casts in stark relief the large role that performance had in generating star status for Victorian writers. While Victorian authors adopted personas and can be said to have performed for their publics,[37] Marryat's unique position as a writer and stage entertainer clearly illustrates this point. Performing as a celebrity for a public necessarily entails a careful construction of one's identity. For Victorian female stars this meant outwardly adhering to dominant class and gender codes, especially those connected to sexuality, which demanded that the middle-class publicly repress and censor sexual expression (Lystra 6). Prescriptions for appropriate middle-class feminine behavior reinforced this view, with one 1884 American etiquette guide maintaining that women were "the conductors of social politics" and required well-defined laws in order to fulfill their duty (Sherwood *Manners and Social Usages. Revised and Corrected.* 14). Articulating gender as a performative—rather than natural—act, pre-determined by society's "rigid regulatory frame" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 25), Judith Butler points out that in its "repeated stylization of the body" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 25), "gender is a project which has cultural survival at its end"

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[36] Marryat's first memoir, *Gup*, chronicles her time abroad as a military wife. See Florence Marryat, Gup : Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character (London: R. Bentley, 1868).

[37] For a comprehensive study of authorial self-fashioning, see Marysa Demoor, Marketing the Author : Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves, and Self-Fashioning, 1880-1930 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

and that "as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" should one "fail to do their gender right" (Butler "Performative Acts" 273). Social class, too, has its performative prerequisites, and one's gendered behavior must correlate to the dictates of the social group one wants to belong to. Marryat, along with many of her contemporaries, embraced the survivor's instinct in conforming to middle-class Victorian women's roles, if not privately then at least publicly.[38] Because celebrity status compels writers including Marryat to self-consciously construct a public persona, their public face, when evaluated, is revealed as artificial, reinforcing Butler's claim that identity is an act. Star author and actress, Marryat was both subjected to the strictures of middle-class Victorian gender in adhering to its codes in order to endure as a relevant cultural icon and also its studied performer, acting out its dictates in person, in print, and on stage, and condemning some of its prescriptions in the process.

In attempting to develop an appropriately gendered, middle-class public profile Marryat relied upon facts about her private self that were of interest to admirers to further her popular success. Not one to shy away from the limelight, Marryat exploited her personal life for financial gain. She even admits as much when she confides in an 1892 interview to Helen C. Black, "'The most successful of my works are transcripts of my own experience" (Black 90). *Tom Tiddler's Ground* is no exception to Marryat's claim. *The Academy's* review of the travel memoir allows that if taken as "the record of a lady's impression of the towns she visited with a special purpose in view, its gossip, and more

[38] Beth Palmer makes a similar point in her analysis of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Marryat, and Ellen Wood. See Beth Palmer, Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture : Sensational Strategies (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 12.

or less professional antidotes," the book is "readable enough"; "As a responsible account of America," however, "it is absolutely without value" (Brown 253). Marryat, though, does not claim to write a comprehensive, objective view of America in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*; rather, she only hopes to "record…the truth of what [she] has seen and heard" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 1). While a pretext of her own experience, ghosts of famous men with whom she can claim a connection haunt the book. This is not limited to *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, but instead is a feature of much of her writing, where she invokes time and again both her father, the famous novelist and naval officer Captain Frederick Marryat (1792-1848), and his acquaintance, one of the literary world's most famous writers, Dickens. Marryat's publicizing of her connection to her father and Dickens in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* exemplifies her reliance throughout her career on paternalistic fame in order to market her own celebrity.

While managing her public image through patriarchal connections offers Marryat additional publicity focusing on the ways that she modeled suitably gendered, middle-class behavior, the scandal that her costume choice for *Love Letters* produces while touring North America suggests the difficulty Marryat had at times in maintaining an acceptable profile, particularly as it regarded her sexuality. *Love Letters* was a musical act where Marryat performed as Violet Amor, reading letters from past admirers while preparing for a marriage of convenience to one Mr. Cuthbert. Marryat commissioned a special dress to be worn during her recital tour, one which was, as she explains in her memoir by way of humorous anecdotes, attention-grabbing in its décolleté style (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 99-100). The attention, however, largely was negative;

Marryat did not account for the more conservative American fashion trends or American sartorial expectations for female stage performers. *Tom Tiddler's Ground* devotes several pages to detailing the fiasco, playing down the seriousness of the reaction against Marryat's costume. Although Marryat maintains that she presents the truth of her exploits while on tour for her one-woman show, Marryat omits from the memoir that the tour manager sues her for wearing the low-cut dress during performances. Hathaway asserted that wearing such a revealing costume caused the bronchial illness that forced Marryat to cancel shows at the conclusion of her tour ("A Low-Necked Dress"). The dress scandal raises questions about Marryat's claims to respectability, claims that Marryat carefully had to control throughout her career. Taken alongside the subject matter of *Love Letters*, with its comedic effect relying on the audience's understanding of Amor as morally upright, the affair of the revealing dress highlights Marryat's precarious balance of her public persona and private self, with virtue always a topic of concern.

Seemingly inexhaustible, Marryat mined her celebrity at a feverish pace. Born from literary greatness, Marryat parlays that circumstance to generate her own creative successes. Yet in writing sensational novels and with her personal life one outside the norms for reputable middle-class Victorian women, Marryat had to be especially calculating in her public presentation. This chapter considers how Marryat shapes her persona into one amenable to Victorian consumers of popular entertainment. Marryat's diverse creative output and lengthy career necessitated multiple reincarnations of her public personality. By focusing on her North American travel memoir *Tom Tiddler's Ground* and the tour for *Love Letters* that allows for the documentation of her journey I

will examine the patriarchal subtext underlying her own fame as well as the chink in her respectable star armor: the discord that develops between herself, her tour manager, and others over her decision to wear a low-necked dress during performances of her one-woman show. This analysis will reveal how Marryat's time in America bears witness to the exceptionally precarious position of female celebrities, whose every move, including sartorial decisions, is under scrutiny. Marryat seems particularly aware of this and yet, despite her careful construction of her public profile, including tethering herself to her father and Dickens, she is incapable of withstanding the effects of that scrutiny once her performance costume is blamed for failing to meet contract obligations. Marryat is, however, able to mitigate them. One way is through telling her version of events coded as memoir. By manipulating a genre that ostensibly claims to record the memory of an event, Marryat reveals her skill at managing her public persona and the shrewd choices necessary in maintaining it as a popular woman writer.

Retreading Familiar Territory in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*

Marryat's undertaking of an American lecture tour in 1884-5 for her one-woman show, *Love Letters*, and the memoir written as a result in 1886, *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, follows in the tradition of other famous British writers who journeyed to America and wrote about their experiences, including, among others, Marryat's own father and

Dickens.[39] While Captain Marryat conducted his American exploration without lecture obligations attached, publishing his *Diary in America* in 1839, Dickens, like Marryat, worked as a contracted performer; his 1842 reading tour was followed that same year by *American Notes*, a critical travelogue. In appraising *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, it quickly becomes apparent that Marryat wanted readers to associate her memoir not just with the collective work of British author-travelers, but particularly with Captain Marryat and Dickens. Affiliating *Tom Tiddler's Ground* with Captain Marryat and Dickens allows Marryat to draw on their principled middle-class reputations, marketing, as it were, herself through these famous male connections.

Marryat was already married when she successfully solicited Richard Bentley, publisher of works by Captain Marryat, to print *Love's Conflict* in 1865. Rather than sign her novel as Florence Church, or anonymously or pseudonymously, Marryat's decision instead to use her maiden name establishes that from the start of her professional career Marryat planned to promote her familial connection to gain advantage in the literary marketplace. She candidly admits as much in an 1891 interview in *Myra's Journal*, when she suggests that Bentley was "probably glad to have the name Marryat again on his books if they had any merit at all" (Dolman 2). Marryat maintains this connection, not just through the use of her given surname rather than her married one for her public

[39] See Charles Dickens, American Notes (New York: Modern Library, 1996), Anthony Trollope, North America (London: Chapman & Hall, 1862), Frances Milton Trollope and Pamela Neville-Sington, Domestic Manners of the Americans (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1997), Frederick Marryat, A Diary in America (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1839), and Harriet Martineau and Linda H. Peterson, Autobiography (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2007) 329-92.

persona, but also by writing Captain Marryat's biography and mentioning him at some length in nearly every interview she gives; contemporary journalists follow suit when writing profiles about her.[40] By publicly aligning herself with Captain Marryat, Marryat is able to rely on her father's reputation to curry interest in her work in the nascent years of her career; Andrew Maunder makes this point in his 2004 "Introduction" to *Love's Conflict* (Maunder and Marryat ix), as does Greta Depledge in an introduction to Marryat's 1876 novel, *Her Father's Name* (Marryat and Depledge iii). Marryat's fostering of her father's memory, however, even once she achieves literary success, suggests a more significant motive: to deflect criticism deriving from the sensational subject matter of the novels she publishes and to inhibit inquiry into her own unorthodox life.

Scholars have recently explored Marryat's strategy of countering criticism of her work and character with her father's reputation at some length. Palmer has argued, for instance, that on top of publishing under her maiden name in order to imply an inherent morality, Marryat also dedicated *Love's Conflict* to Captain Marryat in an attempt to offset fears that the novel's subject matter—which contained imperfect marriages, murders, and explicit sexual desire—was unsuitable for family reading (Palmer 121). Maunder has likewise suggested that, despite being a divorcee, an actress, and an author of sensation fiction, the family name endured as a "signifier of class and respectability,"

[40] See, for example, "Florence Marryat," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper November 8 1884, "Miss Florence Marryat, Daughter of the Famous Writer, Has Always Made Literature a Profession," The Daily Picayune Saturday, May 13 1893, and Frederick Dolman, "Miss Florence Marryat at Home," Myra's Journal: The Lady's Monthly Magazine XVII.5 (1891).

conveying the same to Marryat and her work (Maunder and Marryat xix). This contention finds support in an early review of *Love's Conflict*, with the critic commenting in his assessment of the novel, "The name of Marryat rings pleasantly in the ear of all novel readers" ("Rev. Of *Love's Conflict*" 223). Moreover, Catherine Pope has concluded that separating her personal and professional identity through the use of her maiden name proved beneficial during Marryat's divorce in 1879, as news accounts at the time of the separation failed to link Mrs. Ross Church to the already-famous Florence Marryat (Pope). Relying on her father's reputation did not entirely obfuscate perceived flaws in her own, however; the *Saturday Review*, for instance, called Marryat vulgar and "want[ing] cultivation" in its appraisal of her 1866 novel, *For Ever and Ever* ("Rev. Of *for Ever and Ever*" 432), with vulgarity suggesting a publicly indecent sexuality and a lack of cultivation pointing to Marryat's falling short of middle-class standards of culture. Nevertheless, using "Marryat" as her signature did lend an appearance of decorum and in some instances, such as during her divorce case, the paternal name assisted Marryat in hiding her private foibles.

It is not surprising, then, that *Tom Tiddler's Ground* features many of the tactics that Marryat employed in her other published work and when giving interviews, using Captain Marryat to instill a sense of propriety to the travelogue cataloging her solo journey through America. Although not dedicated to her father, Marryat still manages to imbue her chronicle of America with reminiscences of him. While in Boston she stays at the Tremont House, "the home of [her] father during his stay there," and "one of the nicest in town" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 44-45). She follows this point

of fact by sharing that her grandmother—who was American—favored her second son, Captain Marryat, "the one of whom she had the most reason to be proud," and also his children, including herself, who were "most remembered in her will, although she left over seventy [grandchildren] behind her" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 46-47). Several more small asides and even larger anecdotes related to Captain Marryat are peppered throughout the memoir; collectively, they paint a picture of a devoted daughter of good standing staying in highly regarded establishments as her journey retraces portions of that which her father took nearly fifty years earlier.

Weaving Captain Marryat into her travel memoir modifies the ostensible purpose of Marryat's journey; rather than a record of her stage tour, in relaying stories about him *Tom Tiddler's Ground* becomes in no small part a pilgrimage with Marryat standing as proxy for her celebrated father's admirers. Viewing the memoir in this way obscures its origins. Marryat's lecture circuit becomes the vehicle, in this narrative, for admirers, including his own daughter, to learn even more about their favorite naval hero and author. What is more, mediating the relationship with Captain Marryat for admirers excuses Marryat's habit of talking to men with whom she has no other connection aside from their having known her father, making a daughter's duty out of a potentially questionable act for a middle-class woman. She claims that introductions by gentleman made on the pretense of being acquainted with Captain Marryat "always ha[ve] the deepest weight with [her]"; barely remembering her father herself, it gives Marryat a "thrill to hold the same hands that he held, and listen to the same voices," confident that "a man who was personally acquainted with Captain Marryat, must necessarily be one of age and

experience, and worth listening to" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 126). Much like the readers that followed Captain Marryat's adventures, real and fictional, Marryat, too, forges an intimacy with her father by imagining that these encounters bridge the space between her own life and his, which is revealed as being connected through the memories of third parties. The "thrill" of a touch or the sound of a man's voice who once spoke to her father amplifies these memories, sublimating the eroticization of the encounter into one that is socially sanctioned, even encouraged. Setting out on a tour for profit, *Tom Tiddler's Ground* recasts Marryat's American journey. It turns performance stops into an opportunity for Marryat and her readers to round out their knowledge about her famous father. By following Captain Marryat's footsteps Marryat affixes a respectable dimension to the memoir, adding value to an account of America deemed entertaining, if superficial, at its best and coarse and meritless at its worst.[41]

Not content to claim her father's fame, Marryat also invokes Dickens in her travelogue to boost her own visibility. Although Dickens's reputation in America was tarnished by his harsh criticism of the country and its people in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843), this taint had subsided by the time that Marryat chronicled her own journey some forty years later.[42] Moreover, *Tom Tiddler's Ground* was written

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[41] For responses to *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, see "A Grumbling Woman's Book. Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*," The New York Times October 18, 1886, Robert Brown, "Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*," The Academy 30.754 (1886), "Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*," Hazell's Magazine: A Monthly Journal of Literary Effort, Notes, News, and Gossip 1887: 7-11, "Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*," The Nation October 7 1886: 292, and "Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*," The Westminster Review 127 (1887): 227.

[42] By 1868, the year of Dickens's second American tour, Dickens and American audiences had reconciled. See John R. McKivigan, Forgotten Firebrand : James Redpath

primarily for a British middle-class audience; Dickens's status in America, while recovered in the U.S. by the time of her tour, would not have been Marryat's primary concern, instead privileging his reputation at home. Marryat often relied upon Dickens in marketing and developing her professional persona. At a basic level, she dedicates, for instance, her novel, *Veronique* (1869), to him. The dedication preferences Dickens's relationship with her father—which began in 1841 (Hawes 41), when Marryat would have been seven years old—over his own status as a celebrated novelist. "'I thank you sincerely for permitting me to write your name upon the dedication page of "Veronique,"'" Marryat writes, and "'I lay her at your feet, with greater pride in the remembrance that you were one of my dead father's nearest friends, than that you are the greatest living novelist of the age'" (Florence Marryat *Veronique*). Palmer points out that this dedication follows Dickens's private critique of Marryat's latest novel, *The Confessions of Gerald Estcourt* (1867) just a year earlier, where he, like the *Saturday Review's* 1866 review of *For Ever and Ever*, perceived a "'coarseness'" in her work and cautioned her against writing about taboo sexual subjects (Palmer 126). Any private communication between the two questioning her propriety, however, would remain so. Dickens's unpublished censure would have no impact on her readers, while the personal association with Dickens that Marryat emphasizes capitalizes on the curiosity of the Victorian public for even the slightest knowledge about their favorite authors. This is a point that Marryat makes clear by pairing her familial connection to Dickens with a

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and the Making of Nineteenth-Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008) 118. For a thorough consideration of Dickens in America see Robert P. McParland, Charles Dickens's American Audience (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010).

reminder to readers of Dickens's popular repute. Beyond dedicating fiction to Dickens, Palmer also asserts that Marryat looked to his editorial style and stage techniques for guidance while editor of *London Society* and as she established herself as a theatrical performer (Palmer 30). This informal tutelage came by way of adopting, for *London Society*, fiction serialization and the creation and promotion of a celebrity author-editor (Palmer 30); like Dickens and *Household Words*, Marryat used her existing relationship with readers of *London Society* as a celebrity author-editor to reframe and market her image for stage entertainment (Palmer 147), inclusive of the character she assumes for her one-woman show, *Love Letters*.

Resembling the more nuanced and subtle adoption of Dickens's editorial and performance practices and in lieu of writing about Dickens's time in America by drawing parallels to her own, Marryat uses homage in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* to align herself with the famous author. In fact, she only names him once in the body of the travel memoir, mentioning that in addition to Captain Marryat, Dickens also stayed at the Tremont House (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 44). The book's title is how Marryat reminds readers of their connection. *Tom Tiddler's Ground* is a facsimile of a title Dickens used for a short story in 1861; he also drew upon the children's game moniker in his novels *Nicholas Nickelby* (1839) and *Dombey and Son* (1848).[43] Never explicitly making clear the connection to Dickens's work, Marryat rather inscribes the children's

[43] See Charles Dickens, Tom Tiddler's Ground (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Books, LLC, 2004), Charles Dickens, The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby (London: Chapman and Hall, 1839) 322, and Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1848) 364.

chant associated with the game onto the memoir's title page as well as onto the first page of Chapter One: "Here we are on Tom Tiddler's Ground/ Picking up Gold and Silver" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground*). The game calls for children to run onto a piece of land that another child, designated "Tom Tiddler," "owns"; Tiddler must try to capture the pilferers or keep them off. Ebenezer Cobham Brewer has remarked that the name, *Tiddler*, is "a contraction of 'the idler'"; *Tom Tiddler's Ground* became synonymous in the nineteenth century with "the ground or tenement of a sluggard" (Brewer 1235). Because the opening pages of *Tom Tiddler's Ground* assert that America is no longer a place open for plundering (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 1-2), with Marryat even admitting that she "bided [her] time" in coming to America so as to avoid the perception that she was one of those that "invaded their country with an eye to their dollars and with no better claim to their indulgence" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 4), Marryat makes the title moot as a reference to the game itself. As an allusion to Dickens, however, it remains apt. It is not the looting of idle America's riches that Marryat wants to convey about her performance tour in the label, but rather that it was a success in the way that Dickens's was: ingratiating herself with admirers that spend their hard-earned money on valued entertainment. Unlike Marryat's more overt gestures of reverence to the author represented by *Veronique's* dedication, in order to advance her celebrity Marryat markets *Tom Tiddler's Ground* by recalling Dickens and his performance tour of America through tangential association. The memoir counts on subtlety to promote itself to Dickens's readership base, utilizing the cultural capital of his admirers to do so. With only the one note relating that Dickens, like herself, stayed at the

Tremont House (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 44), alert readers would have to rely on their knowledge that he used the title phrase in multiple works of bestselling fiction in order to draw out the connection between the two authors. Using this subtle form of homage to Dickens tempers the more obvious type Marryat deploys for Captain Marryat, while both serve to strengthen a perception of Marryat as a respectable middle-class woman writer indebted to famous men of the profession.

Whereas Marryat might benefit financially from Dickens's readers choosing to pick up her work based on their insight into the title's connotative significance, using *Tom Tiddler's Ground* as the title also signals a deference for a patriarchal literary tradition, playing out the larger gender conventions of middle-class Victorian culture which demanded that women defer to men, particularly in the public realm and in cultural production.[44] As in *Veronique's* dedication, when Marryat submits herself to Dickens in offering the novel up "as but a common flower…to lay…at [Dickens's] feet" in remembrance of, first, his friendship with her father, and second, his status as a celebrated writer (Florence Marryat *Veronique*), in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* she likewise situates her travelogue as one steeped in the heritage of great male writers past. Packaging *Tom Tiddler's Ground* as a travel memoir with nostalgic ties to her father and a Dickensian association furthers Marryat's well-documented history of patriarchal reverence as she forges her own literary career. She manipulates the literary marketplace by conceding to middle-class Victorian gender standards in the construction of a literary

[44] See, for example, the 1865 treatise by John Ruskin and Deborah Epstein Nord, Sesame and Lilies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

persona that embraces the roles of dutiful daughter and literary ingénue even while the subject matter of her novels and her private life suggests that these roles do not adequately represent her.

The choice at the start of her career to use her maiden name as her handle and to incorporate her father—as well as Dickens—into her work and promotional materials codifies Marryat as a female author whose success is not won strictly by her own labor. Rather, it is one resulting from the benefit of patriarchal connections. Marysa Demoor maintains that "once a 'persona' was created, it was all but impossible to change or replace it" (Demoor 15), and this appears true for Marryat. In some ways, then, Marryat's strategy of paternal piggybacking fails; daughter of the famous Captain Marryat, the link she builds early on makes it difficult for Marryat's contemporaries to view her as a separate entity, with space given in nearly all reviews and interviews to reminding readers of that familial connection. *The Academy's* assessment of *Tom Tiddler's Ground* makes it clear, in fact, that reviewer Robert Brown understands Marryat's marketing technique by including an aside which mentions that "she always speaks of herself under this name" (Brown 253). While building a reputation out of her father's allows Marryat to weather negative publicity, sometimes even avoiding it, it also stymies Marryat's chances at singular acclaim. Doing so does prove useful though in permitting her, as a popular novelist and performer, to seek financial gain through celebrity. Perhaps, for Marryat, the opportunity to achieve star status and reap its reward is enough validation of her success. But while an astute business move, it also may speak to a lack of confidence. Resorting to a paternalistic handicap intimates that others would

have no interest in her work if she did not recall her father or emulate Dickens. This is one perspective that Maunder would endorse, himself believing that "above all [Marryat] wanted to be popular, partly as a means of continuing her father's legacy, but also for the sake of her own self-esteem" (Maunder and Marryat xi). Alternatively, given the need to support up to eight children as well as herself and knowing the limited professional opportunities available for middle-class women, more than a self-esteem boost or even fulfilling a familial legacy, Marryat's patriarchal dependence in developing her persona might be based on the fact that celebrity began to be a requirement for popular literary success, and invoking Captain Marryat and Dickens provided a built-in admirer base and a model for fame that she could capitalize on at the same time that it signaled conformity to middle-class Victorian gender codes.

Fashion, American *Faux Pas*, and Creative Storytelling

Marryat secures her celebrity status by situating herself and her professional accomplishments within the framework of patriarchal deference. Although doing so bespeaks conformity to middle-class Victorian gender conventions that convey respectability and virtue, she also complicates this image by touring North America for *Love Letters* while wearing a dress her financer claims was too low-cut for her audience. As American historian Donald Scott points out, lyceum committees charged with hiring their performers did so with the "good of the audience and society in mind"—that is, "a lecture was expected to be serious and moral 'in its tendency,' though wit could certainly

be used and immorality discussed" (Scott 793). This prescription remained even as, by the 1870s, lyceum lectures transformed from primarily instructing to entertaining their middle-class audiences, which included men from such varied demographics as professionals, clerks, mechanics, and artisans; lyceums also were an appropriate and popular public venue for women (McKivigan 119; 131). *Love Letters* ostensibly met this dictate. Violet Amor reads aloud from letters written to her by past suitors on the eve of marrying Mr. Cuthbert, a kind and older man whom Amor hopes will alleviate her loneliness. Amor makes it clear in the comedy sketch that she did not return her many admirers' affections. Each letter that Amor reads identifies her as a victim of types of men that no one cares to marry, much less be courted by, and she is as surprised as anyone when they do profess love as their advances, when she recognized them as such, were always rebuffed. The humor hinges on learning about these men and how Amor handles letting them down. On paper, *Love Letters* passes the morality test.

Marryat's performance as Amor in a low-necked dress, however, risks transforming the show for its North American audience into one that is inappropriately suggestive. As even Marryat points out, high-necked dresses were standard stage costumes for American women lecturers (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 99). Although her costume, as Marryat claims, was *de rigueur* for middle-class English ladies, worn at such mundane events as dinners at home, American women did not alter their neckline except for evening balls or operas, and visiting entertainers such as Marryat were expected to follow suit (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 99, 106-07). The high neckline of American women's fashion reflected the Protestant values of self-

restraint and aversion to public displays of sexuality that characterized the hegemonic ideology of middle-class North America, with "simplicity and plainness" evident in the fashion choices of the "real" lady (Sherwood *Manners and Social Usages* 243). Wearing a dress that did not conform to the proprietary standards of her employers and the audiences they represented signifies a cultural and social class breach on Marryat's part, which results in Marryat making herself a visible specimen for scrutiny. This scrutiny forces Marryat to confront class and gender bigotry against her veridical, or genuine, self even as she attempts to perform as a character onstage whose persona requires that audiences view her as appropriately moral in order for the act to remain decent.[45]

Marryat's desire to be viewed by the public as a person of class and propriety begins long before her performance of *Love Letters*, as do charges against her that she was not so, with literary critics—and Dickens, although privately—lambasting her for coarseness in her novels.[46] Claims of Marryat's vulgar subject matter focused on her inclusion of illicit topics such as premarital sex and seduction (Palmer 119); her reputation for writing on these themes even bars Marryat from being able to publish Sunday School fiction on the pretense that people would not buy it if she was known to be the author (Maunder and Marryat xii). For Marryat, however, being respectable and virtuous did not mean being puritanical about matters relating to sexuality. Marryat's viewpoint was not exceptional. Selling sixty thousand copies in its first two years of

[45] For more on the veridical self and celebrity, see Chris Rojek, Celebrity, Focus on Contemporary Issues (London: Reaktion Books, 2001) 11-12.
[46] See, for instance, "Aunt Anastasia on Modern Novels," Tinsley's Magazine 1 (1867), and "Rev. Of for Ever and Ever," Athenaeum 44 (6 October 1866).

publication (Degler 194), Victorian physician George Napheys's *The Physical Life of Woman: Advice to the Maiden, Wife, and Mother* (1869) shares her perspective: "it is a false notion and contrary to nature that this [sexual] passion in a woman is a derogation to her sex. The science of physiology indicates most clearly its propriety and dignity" (Napheys 96). Napheys's popular American text aimed at the female audience supports a more complex view of Victorian sexuality, one that does not dismiss the desires of women as immoral.[47] [48] Karen Lystra's research into American middle-class men and women's private lives in fact supports Napheys's assertions about sexual desire as well as Marryat's. According to Lystra, "Victorian approbation of purity did not reflect a simple anti-sexual stance," with "middle-class Americans actually [holding] an extremely high estimation of, indeed almost reverence for, sexual expression as the ultimate symbol of love and personal sharing" in romantic, companionate marriages (Lystra 5). What was considered unacceptable to the American middle-class, however, was acknowledging this view publicly (Lystra 6). Public prudery, expressed by such acts as censoring sexually discursive topics and limiting fashion choices to those that covered the erotic features of the body, functioned as a mechanism to control sexual expression. Sexuality and sexual desire was acceptable so long as they were privately articulated, and only then in

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[47] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles E. Rosenberg provide a good overview of the nineteenth-century biological position of scientists on women's bodies and social roles. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," Women and Health in America: Historical Readings, ed. Judith Walzer Leavitt, 2nd ed. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) 111-30.

[48] Michel Foucault's study of the "repressive hypothesis" in his *History of Sexuality*, along with his detailing of "scientia sexualis" in the Victorian period, offer a great perspective on the complexities of nineteenth-century sexuality. See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge (London: Penguin, 1998).

marriage. Marryat exposed by wearing a décolleté gown a sexuality fiercely guarded as a reward of middle-class intimacy. A difference in custom between America and Britain, the low-necked dress that Marryat wears while staging *Love Letters* and its backlash reveals a contradiction in middle-class values, embracing sexuality privately but publicly repressing it and admonishing those that did not also do so.

Marryat's insistence on wearing the low-necked dress throughout her performance tour reflects her opposing view on public displays of sexuality, one that she staunchly upholds in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*. *Hazell's Magazine* picks up on Marryat's stance when reviewing the memoir, stating that "Miss Marryat has a righteous horror of being a prude, and tries her utmost to prevent her readers having even a lurking suspicion on this point" ("Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*" 10). Continuing, the reviewer hones in on Marryat's distaste for "American modesty" by printing excerpts from "one of the raciest pieces of writing in the book" ("Rev. Of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*" 10). The titillating prose *Hazell's Magazine* refers to relates to the costume Marryat chooses to wear for her North American tour of *Love Letters*. Marryat describes the ruckus over her attire as follows:

> An amusing incident occurred after my appearance at Concord. My manager approached me with bated breath. The committee were entirely satisfied with everything, but—but—some comments had been made upon my wearing a low dress. I wished to know *what* comments. My entertainment dresses were such as any English lady would wear at the

> dinner table, and I could not understand in what way they could possibly have offended my Concord audience. "Oh no, not offended!—nothing of the sort, only American artistes wear high dresses as a rule and the committee considered it preferable." […] "I am…an English gentlewoman, who has been used to mix in the high society, and I know exactly what is the proper thing to wear." (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 99-100)

Beginning the anecdote with the comment that she found it "amusing" prepares readers to consider the ordeal in a similar manner; Marryat uses her talent for comedy by indicating that her manager, George H. Hathaway, approaches her with "bated breath," stumbling on his words as he begins an awkward conversation about her toilet. Displaying a confidence in her knowledge of etiquette and decorum—based, Marryat states, on being an Englishwoman regularly mixing in high society—Marryat laughs off the Concord committee's request that she discard her low-necked dress in favor of a high-necked costume more suitable for her American audience. This debate makes the Boston papers, which Marryat includes in her memoir by way of emphasizing her dismissal of charges of indecency related to her attire. Reporting that Marryat "flatly declined to accept the suggestion" to assume a more austere costume, the paper claims Marryat "said that if the people there couldn't stand a *decolletee* [*sic*] dress, she would take the responsibility of leading them to destruction" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 100). Reprinting the news account and sharing her own recollection of her conversation with Hathaway indicates frankness on Marryat's part in conveying criticism about her attire, as well as

her dismissal of American customs by way of relying on English conventions as international measures of conduct. By comically deflecting the serious concerns of American businesspersons to her memoir-reading audience Marryat controls their interpretation of the request, thereby mitigating implications of inappropriateness on her part.

Had Marryat stopped at poking fun at American audiences for what she saw as their prudery, the incident of the low-necked dress would carry very little signification in the memoir beyond justifying her sartorial decisions and insisting on their respectable connotations. Clearly, Marryat and American middle-class society did not agree on the etiquette of low dresses. But Marryat devotes several more pages in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* to further detailing the offenses that her dress produced in those that were aware of it, suggesting a more considerable subtext: her status as a publicly sexual being. Marryat discloses that a manager from Plymouth was interested in "engaging [her] for his society" but that "he could not think of it, unless [she] would wear a high dress. He said there were a good many *youths* in his district, and that it would be better they should not be initiated to the fact that a woman had a pair of arms!" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 101-2). Marryat receives a similar reaction while in Canada: "An old man of past eighty, who had never seen me…but who had read a notice in the papers which mentioned my 'magnificent arms and bust,' had the impertinence to send me a letter requesting that I would not wear a low dress for the future…Poor old boy!"; she concludes sharing the account of the elderly letter writer by "wonder[ing] what harm [she] did him, second-hand, through the medium of a newspaper! Why did his mother let

him read such naughty things?" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 101-2). Marryat's tales about her wardrobe display an awareness of the class and gender bigotry being levied against her: respectable middle-class female performers, these reports infer, do not tantalize male audience members by making a show of desirable body parts. While she addresses the issue through comedy, Marryat's point nonetheless is a serious one.

Because Marryat is a celebrity featured in public venues—on stage and in print—the uproar over her attire conveys an anxiety surrounding women's participation in the public sphere, particularly in their bodily display. Kerry Powell maintains that Victorian men viewed actresses as potentially dangerous—both to themselves and to the social codes of gender that their performances challenged (Powell 13). Beyond "trespassing on the territory of men" and challenging gender codes (Powell 14), Marryat's performance in a low-necked dress also poses a sexual threat. The "squib" in the Boston paper references the "rigid social atmosphere" of Concord in relating Marryat's dress snafu, while both the Plymouth theater manager and the eighty-year old Canadian man focus on exposed body parts, intimating similarly conservative views (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 100-2). All three incidents, which emphasize the negative impact of revealing too much skin, imply that Marryat's sartorial choice of a décolleté dress for the staging of *Love Letters* represents a sexual danger, particularly to men. This hazard is not confined to theater audiences; the elderly man experiences a reaction to Marryat's display of skin through the act of reading, thereby also indicting newspapers and other media reporting on *Love Letters* and Marryat's fashion choices in spreading that threat. Whether

an article's author or its focus, periodical accounts involving women were "publicly viewed as a breach of moral nature and convention" (Fraser, Johnston and Green 174). This perspective is one that scholars Hilary Fraser, Judith Johnston, and Stephanie Green have established was dominant in the nineteenth century, despite the increasing presence of women as both writers and subjects (Fraser, Johnston and Green 174). Periodicals that featured Marryat, therefore, were instruments of moral harm to unsuspecting readers who happened across stories on her. Marryat's body, revealed by a low-necked dress, becomes a sexually communicative disease, a synecdoche representative of the hazards of women and their bodies generally, especially when on public display.

Marryat does not just infect men with desire, but recruits other women to help, ostensibly tainting their virtue, and by association, the health of their progeny as well. Following Marryat's inclusion of the Boston news story that quotes her as taking "the responsibility of leading [audience members] to destruction" in performing before them in a low-necked dress, she introduces another piece from a New York paper, which, she points out, was published less than a month after the costume fiasco publicity (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 100). This story responds to witnessing women at a charity ball in décolleté gowns: "the fashion reporters say that the women dressed their necks lower this year, but that must be a mistake, for *there is necessarily a limit*" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 101). Marryat conveys that she believes herself accountable for the new fashion trend by placing the two stories back-to-back in her memoir, yet she dismisses her critics by viewing the whole ordeal surrounding her costume choice as humorous. Making light of the episode indicates that for Marryat the

charges against her costume choice, and by association, the decision of other women to wear revealing gowns, are insignificant. Nevertheless, the outrage the writer expresses when exhorting that there must be a limit to the low necklines of ball gowns communicates an anxiety over women reaching that limit—and then moving beyond it. The choice these society women make in wearing plunging necklines rouses the writer because while seemingly an innocuous fashion faux pas the decision represents a risk to the nation's future. In their research into the physiological and anatomical arguments for middle-class women being relegated to domestic and childbearing roles in the nineteenth century, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles E. Rosenberg stress that scientists believed that "a woman who lived 'unphysiologically'—and she could do so by reading or studying in excess, by wearing improper clothing, by long hours of factory work, or by a sedentary, luxurious life—could produce only weak and degenerate offspring" (Rosenberg 114). They further assert that nineteenth-century scientific thought held that "appropriate female behavior was sanctioned not only by traditional injunctions against individual sin in the form of inappropriate and thus unnatural modes of life but also by the higher duty of protecting the transcendent good of social health" (Rosenberg 114). These scientific theories informed the traditional, gendered, social roles of middle-class Victorian society, on both sides of the Atlantic. Marryat's call for leading her audiences to destruction and the subsequent report on women seemingly following suit by wearing décolleté dresses at a ball suggest, therefore, that for her critics Marryat is a scourge on North American society, tainting not only her present audience, but those not yet even born with behavior that could topple the middle-class. Her inclusion and treatment of the

anecdotes in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* are a bold commentary on the inherent biases and restrictions against women, in and out of public life. She offers a broader view of women and their role in society in defining her position against the regulations demanded by contractors and other men even as she braves their censure by refusing to change her costume for her stage performances of *Love Letters*.

The publicity—negative and positive—Marryat receives over her costume for *Love Letters* is an indicator of celebrity's impact on everyday lives in Victorian society. In including select press reports on the dress scandal Marryat can alter the significance of it for readers of her memoir. By spinning the story to one that is more light-hearted and humorous, Marryat skillfully presents herself as a victim of what she believes to be America's antediluvian fashion scene while also providing a more substantial subtext commenting on the restrictive and bigoted class and gender schemas that equated sexuality and bodily display in women with social delinquency and immorality.

Marryat on Civil Suits and On Stage

Selecting specific news stories about her tour costume and commenting on them is one way that Marryat manufactures an account of herself in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* which preferences a view of the author as good natured and a model of middle-class Victorian femininity: virtuous and respectable but not a prude. Another method Marryat deploys is deception through omission. Marryat's narrative about her low-cut dress leaves out altogether a significant component of the story: that the manager who steps in

on behalf of Concord's theater committee sues her for breach of contract because of the dress, believing that it brought on her bronchial illness which forced her to cut the American tour short. Although news of the lawsuit was also published in the papers, these reports, along with Marryat's description of the suit, are missing from the memoir. Eliding these significant details from an event she otherwise covers in depth sees Marryat playing with an autobiographical genre so as to alter contemporary and historical summations of her life.[49] Writing on autobiography and Victorian literary women Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898) and Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), Mary Jean Corbett considers that such sleight of hand is necessary "if one conceives of the public sphere…as the realm of inauthenticity and compromise"; Corbett continues, "self-representation becomes its writer's last performance of a role she writes to protect herself against the deformations of publicity and celebrity, the final mask that will survive her, a mask that can shield the private individual from public view" (Corbett 255). Corbett's observations on the role of autobiography in literary women's lives convey how star authors could utilize the genre's links to veracity in order to deflect the intense interest that develops in nineteenth-century admirers for insight into celebrity writers' private lives. Corbett explains that women achieved this legerdemain by "subordinating their histories of themselves to others' histories" thereby "avoid[ing] self-exposure and attain[ing] a narrative stance closer to the fiction writer's," representing, "not her story… but the story of others as she sees them" (Corbett 255). On one level Marryat conforms

[49] For a discussion of memoir as an autobiographical genre, see Julie Rak, "Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity," Genre XXXVII.Fall/ Winter (2004): 483-504.

to the model of Victorian women's autobiographical writing that Corbett details; "noting down [her] impressions of America" by "record[ing] the truth only of what [she] has seen and heard" offers Marryat the opportunity to write a history of her time in America without revealing substantive information about her interior self (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 1). However, unlike many contemporary women writers also authoring memoirs, their favored form of autobiography (Corbett 257), Marryat does not privilege a subjectivity that renders her an "unequal and selfless subject" in relaying her dress debacle even as she adopts the generic form that allows her to "tell [her] stor[y] between the lines" (Corbett 257). Fortunately, for her, Marryat's manipulation of genre convention in omitting any mention of the lawsuit stemming from her wearing a décolleté dress seems to have gone unnoticed by Victorian readers.

While Marryat neglects to mention the lawsuit in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, she is unable to prevent newspapers from doing so. The facts learned by reading the papers do not nullify Marryat's take on the dress debate, but rather augment her narration of the event. On March 24th, 1885, the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* prints a report that offers little objectivity in its broad overview of the case:

> [Florence Marryat] insisted upon giving her readings in [a low-necked dress], spite of the protest of shocked country managers, until the exposure made her so ill that she had to abandon her engagements. And now her own manager is trying to get back from her his unearned wages on the ground that undue love of personal display [was] the cause of all his and

> her woes…Mrs. Church might certainly be expected to exhibit a little more sense and less bosom. ("Florence Marryat")

Conveying the same gender bias that Marryat points out in her memoir, the *Democrat* reporter relies on Hathaway's claims in order to suggest that Marryat lacks sound judgment, and even more, is not behaving as a married middle-class woman should; calling Marryat "Mrs. Church" in the same sentence that the writer admonishes her for exposing her "bosom" reminds the reader that Marryat's actions are inappropriate, in the business world and as a married woman. As in the news stories Marryat includes in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, the article blames Marryat's bodily display for the tour's ending early, indicting her sight unseen for charges of indecency leading to illness. The *Democrat's* blatant prejudice against her confirms the scandal of her sexuality that Marryat attempts to deflect in her memoir by avoiding discussion of the suit and any accounts that mention it.

Not all descriptions of Hathaway's lawsuit expressed such obvious bias. Ten days before the *Democrat's* one-sided report San Francisco's *Daily Evening Bulletin* provided a story with more detail, and without the presumption that Hathaway was correct in linking Marryat's illness to her wearing a low-cut dress. "Ill in [New York]," the paper explains that Marryat "got [acute bronchitis] while on a tour through this country. [It] was the result, so her manager says, of wearing a low-necked dress; and that such article of apparel was the cause of a breakage of contract between the two parties"

("A Low-Necked Dress"). The report continues by way of offering Marryat's side of the story:

> She says that some of her experienced friends, including D'Oyley Carte, Howard Paul and Oscar Wilde…advised her to bring as fine a wardrobe as she could afford, and therefore she invested in an exceptionally beautiful and costly dress: It was an 'evening gown,' as she expresses it, and suitable for a ball or reception toilet—that is to say, the bodice was as low as fashion permits for such occasions. She admits that she counted on exciting admiration for her raiment, whatever the audiences might think of her entertainment. ("A Low-Necked Dress")

Reading as a legal brief, Marryat's explanation, unsurprisingly, is one that falls back on the authority of famous male acquaintances in order to justify her decision to wear a décolleté gown even as she suggests that she knew its style was pushing taste limits. Hathaway claims that he "predicted that she would be disliked in such garb by the kind of audiences before whom she was to perform during her tour" ("A Low-Necked Dress"). Although admitting that she was not treated as she had expected to be, Hathaway and Marryat differ on the account of her reception: "[Marryat] declares that he sent her to amuse uncultured hordes" while Hathaway "assert[s] that she was sadly ridiculed by the astonished assemblages," with "stories of insults by ejaculating fellows and giggling girls" ("A Low-Necked Dress"). Marryat invokes an elitist class and cultural bias in blaming her audience, dubbed "uncultured hordes." To her understanding, middle-class

men and women did not behave as these audiences did. Doing so displaces all responsibility of her reception onto those in attendance. Her presentation, the words imply, was acceptable for the members of society she thought she was booked to entertain. Hathaway, on the other hand, directs all culpability for the discord between Marryat and her lecture attendees onto her attire. The phrase, "astonished assemblages," conveys none of the class bias in Marryat's account and instead suggests in the audiences' surprise that they, and not Marryat, are arbiters of culture and representatives of the middle class. American lyceum audiences, in fact, helped to shape middle-class culture. According to scholar Angela G. Ray, "lyceum participants established ideals of group membership…demonstrating by expressed word and enacted practice what being 'American,'…could and did mean" (Ray 6); for Marryat's audience, it was not a woman wearing a low-necked dress on a public stage. Because of this negative reception in some of the towns and Marryat's insisting on keeping her costume, Hathaway "refused to continue the journey. Then [Marryat] got bronchitis…and the tour included only thirty-seven of the proposed fifty entertainments" ("A Low-Necked Dress"). The *Daily Evening Bulletin* ends its reporting on the case by sharing that Hathaway's "claim will be that, in refusing to clothe herself in accordance with the usage of women lecturers in this country, she failed to do her best to give satisfaction, and thereby also needlessly incapacitated herself by exposure in cold halls"; Marryat's proof will be the dress itself, one "no lower of corsage than is common at balls, dinners, and the opera in [New York]," a point with which the reporter agrees ("A Low-Necked Dress").

The news stories printed by the *Democrat* and *Daily Evening Bulletin* provide a more complete depiction of the dress fiasco than what Marryat shares in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*. While supported by the *Daily Evening Bulletin* reporter's aside collaborating that her dress was appropriate for certain events of city life, the information relayed also suggests that Marryat was more insolent in her refusal to change costume than comes across in her memoir, especially once it was clear that her lecture tour was one consisting of smaller towns not used to the fashions of large metropolises. Marryat's resolute stand, however, speaks to her insistence that she was a respectable and appropriately decorous woman in the public sphere. The stories of the dress debacle that Marryat does share in her memoir function as a defense of her position on the subject. What is more, omitting the lawsuit from *Tom Tiddler's Ground*—while relevant to the scandal—allows Marryat to reshape history to fit the celebrity persona she had long since developed. Had she broadcast Hathaway's allegations against her in her memoir, she would have conveyed misgivings about her respectability to her readers, many of whom may not of heard of the suit. The memoir, then, serves as a platform for Marryat, one that affords her the ability to manipulate facts in order to tell a tale commensurate with her public self.

Whatever settlement, if any, Marryat would ultimately make with Hathaway would be contingent on the terms of their contract and be a limited loss, but a loss of reputation by not taking a stand—even by way of omission in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*—against claims of impropriety would be hard and long felt. Marryat's unyielding insistence about the appropriateness of her attire, both in the lawsuit and in her memoir, is tied to her reputation on and off stage. Performing a suitable version of femininity,

even if sometimes marginally so, was a requisite for popular success; the backlash against Marryat's costume for *Love Letters*, especially the lawsuit seeking remuneration for breach of contract and condemnation in such public venues as the *Democrat*, makes clear the stakes involved if one did not assimilate to hegemonic gender standards. Ultimately, Marryat's American lecture tour was a financial, not an artistic, endeavor; Marryat's testimony reported by the *Daily Evening Bulletin*, when "she admits that she counted on exciting admiration for her raiment, whatever the audiences might think of her entertainment" ("A Low-Necked Dress"), underscores this point. Because Marryat's one-woman show continued the stage perception that an "actress['s] virtue was always at issue" (Nussbaum 44), "sexual behavior"—or the thought of it—"could contaminate an actress's performance and determine her success" (Nussbaum 9). Marryat's ability to render believable the character of Violet Amor—and thereby produce a financial "hit"—hinged upon whether her audience viewed both herself and Amor as properly feminine.

Love Letters is a comedic musical focused on Amor and her ability to attract peculiar admirers. At thirty, Amor is a spinster nearing the end of her appeal on the marriage market. Having given her maid the evening off, the musical act opens on Amor announcing her intention to spend the evening alone reviewing letters from past lovers before she disposes of them, an act, she says that is "more honorable" than keeping them, being betrothed to Mr. Cuthbert, an "old man" that will provide for her regardless of her lack of love for him (Florence Marryat *Love Letters* 2-4). It is only on the presumption of her virtuosity, partly confirmed by Cuthbert's choice in her as a mate, that Amor's long list of suitors does not reflect poorly on her character. Amor's task of sorting through the

letters is one that she enjoys, allowing her to revisit memories that, for the most part, provide her with moments of private laughter at the expense of ardent admirers. Meeting at social gatherings appropriate to her single status, she was unfortunate enough to earn their regard, sometimes not even knowing she had done so until a letter arrived. By way of reading private correspondence from them Amor conveys stories about the men that drive home their unsuitability as mates. The Hon. Bertie Fitz Beryl, for instance, was too fastidious in his attire and overzealous in the estimation of his desirability (Florence Marryat *Love Letters* 6-7), whereas Captain Harold Faithful, "who didn't speak soon enough" (Florence Marryat *Love Letters* 25), failed to assert himself by not declaring his love for her while he was still alive, waiting instead to tell her in a letter delivered upon his death. Lord Eustace, meanwhile, considered it the worst of offenses—far worse than infidelity or gambling—for "a woman to ride in an omnibus or to wear worsted gloves in winter" (Florence Marryat *Love Letters* 22). Each man signals a specific failure of middle-class masculinity: too much of a dandy, too cowardly, and too corrupted by riches gained from idle hands. In contrast, Amor's decision to marry so as to avert poverty and loneliness is a small fault, easily forgivable if not also generally accepted by the middle class as an appropriate alternative to spinsterhood. The performance ends with Amor reading the one letter that causes her pain, that from a female friend who reports on Amor being jilted for another by her then-fiancé, Colonel Rashleigh, while he was stationed in India. This turn in tenor quickly gets resolved, however, when Amor spies a letter her maid had misplaced, which conveys upon opening that Rashleigh's marriage to another woman was an act of honor, and, now over, he would be returning home to beg

Amor's forgiveness. Heartily doing so and blaming herself for her lack of patience, rather than marry Cuthbert for convenience Amor leaves audiences expecting her reunion with Rashleigh, with true love conquering all obstacles (Florence Marryat *Love Letters* 38-43).

Amor's box of letters attests to her active social life and the one-sided romances that develop from it. Cuthbert and Rashleigh are the only men from whom she accepts marriage proposals, and Cuthbert's only after being jilted by Rashleigh. Cuthbert and Rashleigh's proposals represent an opposing perspective on marriage, with Amor in the end favoring romantic love over convenience. Choosing Rashleigh signals Amor's willingness to subject herself in marriage to her husband. While blaming herself for being "too rash" altogether overlooks the fact that Rashleigh married, presumably for life, chastising herself as she does at the play's conclusion is a way of signaling that Amor pushed the limits of feminine decorum in poking fun at her erstwhile lovers. Selecting Rashleigh means that any character flaws that might have been allowed to reign in her marriage to Cuthbert are cut short in her desire to become a dutiful and patient wife to one whom she truly loves.

In print, Amor appears appropriately feminine; performing the role of Amor in a low-necked dress, however, confounds the audiences' ability to interpret the character Marryat plays in *Love Letters*. Detailing G.H. Lewes's (1817-1878) treatise, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875), Lynn Voskuil relates that, according to Lewes, "it was the actor's task to draw on common nature and imitate the 'well-known symbols'—the

familiar gestures, poses, and behaviors—that spectators would mutually and universally recognize by means of their shared humanity" (Voskuil 619), with the "player's actual body functioning as the instrument of representation" (Voskuil 618). Marryat would have to perform a femininity that audiences could recognize as conventionally middle-class in order to accurately portray Amor as a woman of virtue regardless of her amatory history. While the content of the play reinforces Amor's virtuous female behavior, the low-cut dress that Marryat dons in playing Amor produces a discord in that representation. Because the body figures as the representational apparatus, visually Amor does not connote middle-class virtue. To her American audiences at least, the dress, while appropriate when worn by society women at city balls and other public venues, was not one regularly expected in the country, where the majority of Marryat's performances took place. Moreover, Amor sits at home alone for the evening. Although technically onstage, to buy into the character the audience must be able to imagine that they are offered access to Amor's private moment; in wearing a dress meant for another venue Marryat's Amor does not allow them to do so. Rather, the dress shifts the emphasis on Amor from one focusing on her humorous past suitors to the physicality of her body. This highlights the sexuality of the character and produces the lewd responses from audience members that the *Daily Evening Bulletin* reports upon and which Marryat blames, not on her dress, but on their upbringing ("A Low-Necked Dress"). Marryat's performance as Amor is rendered inauthentic by pairing a décolleté dress with a character whose scene does not warrant its wearing, and finally in performing in front of audiences that view that dissonance as vulgar.

Marryat, though, wanted audience members to be titillated by what they saw on stage. This is what she admits to when she says that she "counted on exciting admiration for her raiment, whatever the audiences might think of her entertainment" ("A Low-Necked Dress"). A novelist and magazine editor before becoming a performer, Marryat's strategy seems to draw upon those she developed for her most successful works in order to maintain a devoted following of readers. Marryat's style of writing, which privileged "sensuality and emotion" so as to "elicit an engaged response from the reader" (Palmer 147), also exploited conventional femininity, according to Palmer, in order to reveal its artificiality (Palmer 147). Likewise, Marryat's performance as Amor in *Love Letters* while wearing a low-cut dress challenges the middle-class presumption that an overtly sensual woman is not virtuous. Transcending character, this reading also extends to one of Marryat herself; both Amor and Marryat, however, are revealed in the civil suit to fall short of this challenge. Although her sensational strategy works for her novels, the same cannot be said about her staging of *Love Letters*. It is only in Marryat's revision of the tour and the dress debate in *Tom Tiddler's Ground* that her performance in a low-cut dress makes the feminist stand that her memoir fashions it into by asserting that sensuality does not negate one's respectability or virtue. However her audiences may have interpreted her initial performance of *Love Letters*, restaging its reception in Marryat's travelogue ensures that her reputation as an appropriately feminine star remains intact.

Playing to the Crowd

Assessing Marryat's management of her star status through concurrent evaluations of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, her North American lecture tour, and *Love Letters* produces a complex understanding of her celebrity persona. With a private life and published novels that depart from prescribed class and gender roles, Marryat consistently worked to keep her public image within the limits of feminine behavior. Marryat presented herself as properly feminine despite her occasional lapses in behavior or clothing choice by revering Captain Marryat and Dickens; framing press accounts of her ruckus-inducing décolleté costume as humorous and omitting the more serious allegations about her attire while on the road in America; and concluding *Love Letters* by blaming Amor's impatience and not Rashleigh's marriage as the reason for her nearly missing an opportunity for lifelong happiness with the military officer. Together, these suggest a strategy of performing femininity so as to maintain popular success. Writing on Mary Elizabeth Braddon's (1835-1915) *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Voskuil finds that Victorian critics understood that, "like actresses, real women assume roles" to meet society's gender expectations (Voskuil 615). But even these roles can be overdone, so that in attesting to fitting the middle-class gender paradigm for femininity, one can mark oneself as not doing so. This is what Marryat risked on her lecture tour of America and in its subsequent chronicle. *Hazell's Magazine* recognized Marryat's insistent nature in its review of *Tom Tiddler's Ground*. Although liking the travelogue, the reviewer "[thought] she took too much pains to emphasize the fact" that she was not a prude, even mentioning that "certainly one or two examples of it might have been omitted" ("Rev. Of

Tom Tiddler's Ground" 7). In her performance tour for *Love Letters* and in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, Marryat reveals how hard she worked at constructing and preserving her image of middle-class femininity. At the same time that she tries to keep within its confines, Marryat also attempts to expand them, in effect bridging the gap between her private self and her public persona. Although not entirely successful in doing so, an examination of the ways that Marryat tries to accomplish this conveys the precarious nature of female literary stardom, one that hinges on popular success and one that requires the submission of private beliefs to the principles of the populace.

Marryat's celebrity, unlike her status as writer of literature, did not hinge on critical acclaim. Acknowledging this point in *Veronique's* preface, Marryat knew that that public opinion was what "[made] or [marred] [her] fortune" (Florence Marryat *Veronique* ix). Representing a moment when Marryat clashed with her public, the incident of the low-necked dress, when understood in its entirety, makes known that despite Marryat's general pandering to public sentiment and gender conventions, she had a strong will and would not be shaken in her conviction that middle-class respectability and virtue were not negated by bodily display. The incident as reported in *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, however, also reveals that Marryat would and did manipulate events so that her public would be more likely to accept her viewpoint. Although deceptive in relaying the incident, Marryat's feelings on the matter are truthfully conveyed. Suggesting that the dress debate was still a sore point with her, in 1887 Marryat transforms it into a scene in her novel, *A Daughter of the Tropics*. In an exchange between Mrs. Arlington and Colonel Escott, the dress features as a point of conflict when Mrs. Arlington is asked by

her employer, Mrs. Kerrison, to change into something less revealing, claiming it "unsuitable for a family party" (Florence Marryat *A Daughter of the Tropics* 136):

> '[Mrs. Kerrison has] dared—yes, actually *dared*—to criticize my dress, and to tell me I must alter it.'
>
> '*Your dress!*' repeated the Colonel, gazing with admiration at the creamy-white arms and shoulders that were displayed before him. 'What fault could she find with *that?* Why, it is just perfect!'
>
> 'I know it is. I suppose the cat is envious because she cannot afford to wear a low-cut dress herself, and so she says it is not *suitable* for my position! I am not going…to be told what to wear!'. (Florence Marryat *A Daughter of the Tropics* 138)

Reinforcing her position taken during her lecture tour, the exchange between Mrs. Arlington and Colonel Escott focuses once more on the respectability of a woman, who is made, here, even more feminine because of her low-cut dress. As in the actual dress debacle, Mrs. Arlington refuses to view the admonishment over her dress as having anything to do with virtue, but rather to do with class and wealth. Combined with identifying her sojourn at the Tremont House as staying at "one of the nicest" hotels in Boston and calling those audience members who jeered at her while on stage "uncultured hordes" (Florence Marryat *Tom Tiddler's Ground* 45; A Low-Necked Dress"), the scene in *A Daughter of the Tropics* bears out Marryat's consistency in her perception that she and her dress were above repute. This resoluteness of character is what allows Marryat to

build such a varied and profitable career across the arts. Her strong convictions, aptitude for creative manipulation and storytelling, and public savvy conspired to develop a celebrity profile amenable to a large public who sought her out in print and on stage, ultimately, regardless of what she wore.

Chapter Three

"The Penalties of a Well-Known Name": Ouida, Celebrity, and a Sensational *Friendship*

> I wonder at Ouida's novels, and I wonder still more at Ouida. [. . .]. What manner of woman can Ouida be? –Max Beerbohm, *More* 108

When a collection of "biographical sketches" of women writers was published in 1893, including interviews with Florence Marryat (1833-1899) and Edna Lyall (1857-1903), *The Spectator* commented in its review of the book, "It will be said at once that a book which deals with the notable female authors of the day, and which does not contain biographies of Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Miss Yonge, and Miss Braddon, hardly deserves so very ambitious a title as the one it bears" ("Rev. Of *Notable Women Authors of the Day* " 545). Helen C. Black's *Notable Women Authors of the Day,* a collection of interviews 'At Home' of more than twenty-five woman writers of the Victorian period, indeed leaves out some of the most popular writers of the era. Glaringly absent from both Black's book and the reviewer's critique, however, is the name of the author Ouida (Maria Louise Ramé, 1839-1908). Having published, by this date, more than thirty-five works of fiction, Ouida was hailed just three years earlier by the family literature and art magazine, *Bow Bells*, as "the leading female writer of England" (Interviewer 72), and the critic Max Beerbohm calls her "the miracle of modern literature" by the end of the century (Beerbohm 115). Her works often were adapted for the stage, and her name circulated in the most-read journals and periodicals of the day through reviews of her work, gossip, advertisements, articles, poems, and letters. Why,

then, the omission from such a collection, and from the book's review in *The Spectator*, of such an obvious cultural sensation?

A simple answer to this question would be that Ouida, along with the authors *The Spectator* reviewer highlights, did not sit for an interview in a series that originally ran in *Lady's Pictorial: A Fashion and Society Paper for the Home*. An investigation into who Ouida was suggests that more complex reasons for her absence from the list of notable writers are located in Ouida's relation to celebrity, both in her life and as a persistent theme in her writing, including but not limited to her novel, *Friendship*, the short story, *Fame: A Sketch*, and the play, *Afternoon*. The sensation that is Ouida—her actions and the critical public response—reveals the paradoxes inherent in trying to control a very public private life. Moreover, Ouida's self-presentation reflects her ambivalence with the prescribed gender roles of the period, roles amplified and transgressed through the characters of her fiction. Ouida represents a unique example of the female literary celebrity, and as she draws forth the dynamics of her life into her fiction, her work, too, develops as a distinctive form of sensation literature.

While a media sensation in her own time, Ouida's attempts to control how her image circulated often placed her at odds with the recent celebrification of the artist. In her disdain over publicity, however, Ouida was not alone. *The Spectator* reviewer, for instance, speculates that the acclaimed women writers left out of Black's collection were "among the number" of writers that are "retiring or old-fashioned enough to detest and shun this Paul Pry development" of the "so-called New Journalism" ("Rev. Of *Notable*

Women Authors of the Day " 545). Likewise, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), although acquiescing to one, "could not see the interview's right of survival" ("A Day with Mr. Rudyard Kipling"). Henry James (1843-1916), who once wrote about Ouida that he wished he were not so "fastidious" so that he "might innocently swallow her down and think her as magnificent as she pretends to be" (James, Edel and Wilson 1195), adds to this negative view. He derisively describes the latter half of the nineteenth century as the "age of interviewing," where "the great (the distinguished, the celebrated) artist…who is tremendously made up to, *fêted*, written to for his autograph, portrait, etc." is asked to be featured in news articles by people who do not have any "acquaintance" with his work (James *The Notebooks of Henry James* 147-48). Although Ouida was James' example of modern, superficial literary celebrity, they share the same perspective on the New Journalism technique of interviewing.

James' observation illustrates the concern that so many, including Ouida, felt—that their work was ignored by the press in order to focus on their person, negating the value of their art and publicizing the author instead as the object of interest. Like James, whom one reviewer advises "was only a Ouida in a frock coat" (Rexroth), Ouida also finds distaste with interviews, a journalistic form that the media began using in the 1860s, and that was common practice by the 1880s (Salmon "Appealing to the Crowd" 160). Ouida cannot find the good in an interview, much less an interviewer, and it is the latter interpretation of James's quote in his first interview that her words recall. She writes of those in the profession: "the little…have found out that they can annoy, harass, torment, and turn to profit, the great" (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 376).

Indeed, Ouida's disdain for interviews results in her only granting a handful throughout her life. Even then, if "Ouida is feeling well and likes you, she may chat pleasantly about the decadence of England, the degradation of Italy, and the general decline of the picturesque" but "about herself she has generally little to say[,]…not yield[ing] at all to public curiosity to know the most of her history and life" ("'Ouida's' Florentine Palace; World Biographies. 'Ouida.'"). Ouida's concerns with the New Journalism represented in the interview and the vitriolic response to its practitioners develop out of her thoughts about the role of women in public life and the social function of an artist.

Ouida's desire for privacy reinforces a traditional view of women in refraining from public life, yet Ouida's practice of commenting on current affairs rather than on herself also suggests an attempt at claiming the typically masculine role of public intellectual and artist. These two ideas structure how Ouida presents herself to the world, and how the world interprets her. Rather than straightforwardly participating in the emergence of literary celebrity in this period by giving interviews, Ouida achieved a far greater celebrity through her strategy of withholding herself from the public eye, resorting instead to the use of calculated, ostensibly private spectacles meant to reflect her aesthetic commitment to authorship as a high-cultural pursuit. These spectacles, most notably her hosting of a weekly *salon* while living in Florence, and, later, in publishing a scandalous *roman à clef*, *Friendship*, complicate Ouida's relationship to celebrity culture and her disavowal of the practice of the public promotion of the artist. As an effect of writing into fiction her real private life, moreover, Ouida inadvertently contributes to the development of a particular style of sensation fiction, one that develops out of mass

culture's fascination with celebrity. In this chapter I will be evaluating Ouida's life and her 1879 novel, *Friendship*, in order to argue that Ouida's media policy conflates gender norms of the Victorian period, and that this particularly gendered style of literary celebrity positions Ouida as a media sensation in her own right as well as a writer of a unique subset of sensation fiction.

Ouida in the World

Female education in the nineteenth century emphasized womanly ideals leading to social conformity, leaving little space for individual expression. For middle-class girls of Ouida's generation education was not intellectually rigorous, but rather focused on social skills to ready them for "the marriage market" (Burstyn 11, 22). Ouida received this education, too, being "a pupil at the usual 'Young Ladies Seminary'" where she "…attended classes in needlework, painting and deportment," but she also learned history, literature, and math, and began a lifelong love of animals and nature with the aid of her tutor father (Bigland 16). Ouida's hours spent studying books rather than playing with other children (Lee 20) signifies a departure from the gender norms of her period and provides her with the same sort of imaginative beginnings found in another great Victorian writer, Charles Dickens (1812-1870), whose young David Copperfield read Henry Fielding (1707-1754) and Daniel Defoe (ca. 1659-1731)—writers of satire and adventure (Dickens *David Copperfield* 54). Ouida's counterpart in her *roman à clef* *Friendship*, the artist and writer Etoile, finds inspiration in the Greek poet, Sappho (ca.

630-ca.570 BC), and the French scholar with a romantically tragic life, Héloïse (ca. 1090-1164) (Ouida *Friendship* 27). Significantly, these women writers, anomalies of their time, are the young writer's role models; their unique positions and tragic stories are proof that an alternative to conventional understandings of reality exist, and this point becomes one that Ouida insists upon as she develops as a woman and a writer. Born in 1839, Ouida wrote in a diary she kept from 1850-53, "I must study, or I shall know nothing when I am a woman" (Ouida qtd. in Lee 19). Ouida's early pronouncement signifies a comprehension of herself as different from what English society prescribed for females at the time. Regardless of the traditional education Ouida received, she indicates by her own words that study itself was necessary for her ideal of womanhood, an ideal that favored knowledge as a means to successful female achievement.

Ouida's cultivation of the intellect more closely resembles the training of male royalty for a life at court than the life available to her based on her gender, her beauty, and her class position. Many biographers, critics, and interviewers describe Ouida, aside from "beautifully shaped" hands and feet, as "plain" and "ugly" (Bigland 15), and, alternatively "essentially feminine" and "masculine" (Beerbohm 109; C. Robinson 511). While perhaps not as physically attractive as other women, the ambivalent gender descriptions, with "accounts [that] differ materially as to her personal appearance" ("World Biographies. 'Ouida.'" 75), imply that her behavior, and not simply her looks, contributed to these contradictions. This is because Ouida modeled her literary education and self-development on her father's version of adventuresome masculinity, which played a large role in forming her personality (Jordan 77). Hinting, when he did spend

time with the family, that he was "a great friend of Louis Napoleon" (Bigland 14), Louis Ramé would do more than tutor his daughter in history and math; he "loved to identify himself with great people and stirring happenings," telling Ouida stories about "Paris *salons*, beautiful princesses, fascinating counts, gallant warriors, thrones well lost for love, and machinations of wicked courtiers" (Bigland 17). These stories not only provided Ouida with "masculine codes of culture and thought" for her fiction (Yates 245), but also informed how Ouida would develop her celebrity image, an image formed with "all royalty…that of the king, the hero, [and] the genius" in mind (Ouida "Vulgarity" 346).

The lessons Ouida learned from her father prepared her for writing imaginative fiction that catapulted her to nearly immediate wealth and fame, allowing her to "shock the conventional world with her manners" as much as she "offend[ed] it with her books" (C. Robinson 511). Startling the "conventional world" begins with Ouida's assumption of her *nom de plum*. The stir over the identity of the author writing as Ouida resides in part on the nature of her work, but also because, as one columnist writing on *nom de plume's* for the *Daily News* in 1898 observes, "when a writer desires to assume a certain individuality, without betraying his identity, his choice of a signature is not the mere matter of chance that some may imagine" ("The Science of Anonymity"). The question, "Who is Ouida?", leads many newspaper and journal stories about the author beginning in the 1860s. Her mother, Susan Ramé née Sutton, records in her diary that "she is said to be Miss Evans, the author of *Adam Bede*, on whom great scandal rests" (Sutton qtd. in

Bigland 37). Knowing that Ouida is the writer of "certain novels," in 1868 *The Pall Mall Gazette* published a creative story to identify "the person who writes under this name":

> The *Gaulois* the other day announced that 'a celebrated mask had just been dropped on the altar of Hymen;' in other words, it was explained, Mdme. Montgomery Atwood, who is no other than the famous 'Ouida,' has been married to an English gentleman at the British Embassy in Paris. But a letter has since been published in one of our contemporaries, signed 'Ouida, the First,' repudiating the alleged marriage, and also Mrs. Atwood's title to the authorship of 'Strathmore,' and other books by 'Ouida.' ("Occasional Notes. Who Is Ouida?")

Not any closer to knowing Ouida, in 1890 another article describing who she is appears, this time offering the name's origin story, one among many that mythologizes her unusual name: "The lisp of a little girl…calling her by the first name as 'Louisa,' sounded it as 'Weedie,'" giving the author the hint that she then took up "on a whim" as her pen name ("The Science of Anonymity"). Yet another article in 1898 identifies the origin of Ouida as the "nearest approach that an infant sister was able to make to the utterance of the novelist's Christian name" ("The Science of Anonymity"); Ouida was an only child. One news story does get it right. The 1894 column in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne regional paper, "Questions and Answers," in which readers write in with questions and other readers respond with answers, accurately tells the story of Ouida's name, one that biographers and modern critics continue to record: "that she adapted the *nom de*

plume 'Ouida,' in memory of her childish pronunciation of her own name 'Louisa'" ("Questions and Answers"). The story of Ouida's name, that it is derived from an infant mispronunciation, suggests eternal whimsy and youthfulness, qualities consistently attributed to the author in glamorous reports about her.[50] Moreover, Ouida as a single appellation refuses a patronymic and lacks ties to gender, nation and family (Jordan 76). These facts figure significantly in the construction of Ouida's celebrity identity and the sensation that she causes. In donning a name that refuses identification Ouida obfuscates a public knowledge of who she is but at the same time generates a frenzy in the press to find out.

A self-made woman, Ouida's refusal to engage with the world as anyone other than Ouida boldly dares the world to discover who she is. Once her identity is discovered, Ouida decidedly resists the use of her complete name, writing to her German publisher, Baron Tauchnitz, to cease using her given name in advertising her books:

> I just see in your catalogue that you append another name to Ouida. (Louise de la Ramée.) Please take it out. I have no other name in Literature. And it should not be put in inverted commas. […]. Besides, I *love* Ouida. It is my *very own*, as the children say. I don't care for any of the other names I bear. (Ouida qtd. in Bigland 226)

The detachment that Ouida betrays in calling her given name "another name" conveys the sentimental attachment that she does have to her childhood moniker, one that is her "*very*

[50] See, for example, "'Ouida's' Florentine Palace," Birmingham Daily Post January 6 1890.

own," originating from no other source but her imagination. That she should have "no other name in literature" is significant, because it embodies her commitment to a reality unfettered by tradition and rather reliant on sensation. To "*love* Ouida" is to love herself as she is, not "car[ing] for any of the other names [she] bears," names that represent compromise with social standards that demand a woman come from somewhere and someone. Asking to remove the "inverted commas" around her name endorses the reality of sensation, and promotes the imaginative making of the self over one made by society.

Ouida's obtuse insistence on her exclusive right to define herself actually had the opposite effect, thus triggering the media sensation. Despite the attention her name and fiction inspire, she claims no interest in letting the public in. Ouida says as much in an 1882 letter to Baron Tauchnitz: "The public has no business with what my name is or is not. Ouida is all they have a right to know" (Ouida qtd. in Lee 17). Ouida's refusal to provide the public with access to her world except through her fiction maintains an interest in her, but an interest that at times turns her into a notorious figure and the subject of gossip. The *Manchester Times* reports that "probably no woman writer of fiction has created more food for speculation and gossip than…'Ouida,'" and continues in its column to debunk the rumor "that she herself is of the type she loves to portray—an impossible creature, half adventuress, half angel, and startlingly beautiful". Rather, the paper states, "Ouida is a plain-looking woman…who overdresses shockingly" and whose own excuse for the rarity of her photograph is that "she lends herself so unwillingly to the artist that only the hardest lines on her face come out on the developing plate; and these she generally refuses to have perpetuated" ("Gossip About Interesting People"). In an

even more disparaging account of Ouida, one Portsmouth paper gleefully reports on a supposed conversation Lord Rathbone had with the novelist during a particularly difficult dinner, where Ouida apparently refused to speak. In asking if "there was anything we could talk about to interest" her, Ouida, it is said, replied: "There is one thing that would interest me very much. Tell me about the Duchesses. I have written about them all my life, and never met one yet" ("Ouida and the Duchesses"). Readers of this exchange would have understood that the column was playing off of some literary critics' claims that Ouida was "a silly and ignorant woman" (Murray 935),[51] as well as the general consensus that Ouida often got details wrong in her characters, who were "not real," but "abstractions…men and women…of shadows" (Beerbohm 110). Had Ouida had her way, this type of caricature—albeit in words, not pictures—would have been outlawed. She writes, "it is scarcely fair that, because a personality has interest and eminence attached to it, every draughtsman who can draw a line can make that personality hideous or ridiculous at pleasure" (Ouida "Unwritten Literary Laws" 197). Ouida's attempts at public evasion and self-creation could not outwit critics and gossip columnists. As much as Ouida might have liked to imagine herself notorious for her lack of notoriety, it is in fact her romantic life and her presentation that newspapers, critics, and biographers undertook to exploit.

[51] See also Mary Calverley, "'Ouida's' Knowledge of Italian Life," Contemporary Review 40.July/ Dec. (1881), Malcolm Elwin, "Wallflower the Ninth: Ouida," Victorian Wallflowers (London: J. Cape, 1934), Henry James, Leon Edel and Mark Wilson, "Ouida. Rev. Of *Signa*," Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers (New York: Library of America, 1984).

News stories about Ouida highlight the uneven development of celebrity culture, which, like so many other cultural phenomena, cannot be so neatly traced. These reports, rather than adhering to the model that critics attribute to the *fin de siècle*, which sought a paradigm with an aim of finding commonalities between the famous and the general public (Berlanstein 81), instead could and did focus on scandal and difference in female celebrities such as Ouida, not simply reporting on paragons of the 'angel in the house' like Alice Meynell (1847-1922).[52] Ouida's self-fashioning and media savvy garnered attention because they went against the gendered standards of female passivity favored by the period. Ouida instead developed an aestheticized 'dandy in the house' persona, as well as literary style, that had inordinate influence over her novelistic successors, including Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Henry James, Edith Wharton (1862-1937), and Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957) (Schaffer 155). At the same time, Ouida was also very conventional, and it is this conflict between subverting and conforming to gendered tradition that results in Ouida becoming a spectacle of her own, and the media's, making.

Image, Spectacle, and the *Salon*

The invasion of Ouida's private life, one imagines, might have been on a smaller scale had she treated reporters with less contempt and cooperated with media outlets in providing the type of publicity emergent and popular in the period; Ouida knows this,

[52] For a detailed discussion of Alice Meynell and her public image, see Talia Schaffer, The Forgotten Female Aesthetes : Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England, Victorian Literature and Culture Series (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

admitting that “writer[s] tell [their] confidences to the newspaper hack” because “they are afraid of creating the enmity and the unpopularity which would be engendered by their refusal” (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 370). “It is true,” Ouida acknowledges, “that celebrity has its pleasant side. To possess a name which is an open sesame…is not only agreeable, but is often useful” (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 369). But in conceding the benefits of celebrity, Ouida’s traditional views on living a public life nevertheless negatively color fame, which, as one gains it, makes one vulnerable to “vulgar, intrusive espionage” and the “malignity of petty natures and inferior minds” (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 370). Privacy was essential to Ouida. She writes of it that it is “the necessity of good and great art, as it is the corollary of dignity and decorum of life” (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 371). Expressing this view reveals herself as quite in line with opinion at the time with respect to a woman’s role in the world. As much as Ouida was extraordinary in her dress and her personality, she was quite traditional in her relationship to the larger public sphere, and this extended to her interaction with her admirers. Rather than rely on autobiography, interviews, and photographs to present her self to the world, Ouida used older, non-technological ways to develop her image that kept her out of the public view but still in the public consciousness.

Instead of allowing others to control her image, Ouida attempted to do so herself; like many of her literary contemporaries, including Oscar Wilde, Alice Meynell, Arthur Symons (1865-1945), and Augusta Webster (1837-1894) (Vadillo 23), Ouida hosted regular *salon* gatherings. An important feature of *fin-de-siècle* literary culture and “more

than just social events," *salons* were a mediated space that "linked the private with the public" and in so doing afforded women writers in particular a space to discuss politics and art and conduct business all while remaining within the confines of a private home environment (Vadillo 24). After her grandmother's death in 1866, Ouida soon established regular entertainment, "giving dinner-parties and musical evenings" for guests who, aside from her mother and Lady Burton, were exclusively men (Elwin 300). Florence Marryat gossips in an interview given to the London correspondent of the *Philadelphia Times* about these parties and Ouida's time in London: "…when she lived in England she was not received by anybody. It was quite her fault. She never went out and never allowed anybody to visit her at home, except men, and she had the house full of them" ("A Strange Coincidence"). These events at the Langham Hotel in London have been covered extensively by her biographers, critics, and modern Ouida scholars,[53] and my goal in returning to them, and more specifically, her "Mondays" in Florence, is not to revisit the stir that these *soirees* caused, either for her permissive attitude toward smoking, the tenor of the conversation, or the lack of female attendees, whether Ouida's choice or due to the "prudence…of her own sex" (Elwin 300). Instead, I would like to explore how Ouida, perhaps encouraged by the tales of French *salons* relayed to her by her father (Bigland 17), modeled her social gatherings on just such a tradition, with features mirroring those of prior centuries: "a luxurious space, feminine governance,

[53] See Eileen Bigland, Ouida, the Passionate Victorian (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951), Elwin, "Wallflower the Ninth: Ouida.", Yvonne Ffrench, Ouida a Study in Ostentation (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1938), Elizabeth Lee, Ouida: A Memoir (London: T.F. Unwin, 1914), Natalie Schroeder and Shari Hodges Holt, Ouida the Phenomenon : Evolving Social, Political, and Gender Concerns in Her Fiction (Newark; Cranbury, NJ: University of Delaware Press ; Associated University Presses, 2008).

[and] a select company" (Kale 3). The salon accommodates Ouida's tendency toward independence and control as well as her conformity to gendered expectations and technophobia. Because the *salon* was "linked in the public mind to widely accepted 'feminine' characteristics," including the "self-effacement and devotion to propriety" of the hostess (Kale 3), it was a space for Ouida that in theory did not contradict her belief that women should refrain from public life (Ouida "The New Woman" 212). At the same time, however, Ouida's insistence on remaining in bed during some of these visits (Bigland 64-65), while acceptable in the *salons* of seventeenth-century France (Jebb 179-80), was contrary to conventional codes of feminine behavior in nineteenth-century England, not only for its blatant courting of prurience, but also because Ouida was conducting the particularly masculine act of business.. That Oscar Wilde could eat out for "quite a time" on sharing the story of his and Wilkie Collins's (1824-1889) meeting with Ouida in just such a fashion suggests that the practice was no longer common in *fin-de-siècle* England (Bigland 65), reinforcing Ouida's ambivalence in both adhering to and thwarting gendered norms of the period.

Ouida's insistence on using the *salon* as the basis for her social interaction for over twenty years implies that the institution served a purpose for Ouida, and was not just a particularized, ostentatious display of wealth and artistic eccentricity—although it may have been as well. While Ouida may have conducted business matters in bed, accounts of her *salon* while in residence at Villa Farinola in Florence are that she hosted these standing Monday receptions in the large banquet hall and adjoining rooms. As a famous writer fashioned on Ouida's image of herself, Etoile's motivation for hosting a similar

event in Ouida's *roman à clef*, *Friendship*, identifies why Ouida might have done such a thing: "it is not easy," the narrator writes, "to escape publicity, when you have a public name." Etoile adds, "'as they must come sometime, let them all come together, and not spoil the week,'" naming "Sundays for her martyrdom" (*Friendship* 113). Just as Etoile attempts to control the public's access to her, Ouida's long tradition of hosting *salon*-style gatherings was also her way of managing publicity, an attempt that sought to control the gaze of the public and limit the media's capacity to report on it. In some respects, Ouida was successful. Part of the draw of the female celebrity was the same as watching an actress perform on stage—you could look at her, and in so looking in some measure fulfill the desire that fame elicits.

In hosting a *salon* Ouida, at least, could dictate who could look. And she was quite selective. Ouida refused entry to "any person known to be" an interviewer, and "no matter how famous they were, casual callers were usually dismissed by whichever servant opened the door" (C. Robinson 511; Bigland 98). "Foreigners passing through Florence" who were "lucky enough to succeed" in obtaining an introduction, however, would be "amply repaid, for she [was] and always [had] been a very striking person in appearance, manner, and dress" (C. Robinson 511), not the least of which was because Ouida adopted the characteristics and costumes of the heroine of whichever novel she was then writing (Schaffer 156). Although the critic Malcolm Elwin derides Ouida's role-playing, describing her as "an instinctive *poseuse*, for ever acting a part, into the playing of which she eventually believed in the illusion of her own creation" (Elwin 291), it is this very ability to see reality in fantasy that distinguishes Ouida as a celebrity

sensation, and is what made so much of her writing bestsellers in the marketplace. By limiting her guest list and receiving them in this way Ouida was able to create an environment that both inhibited "the general public" from having their "curiosity satisfied as to the habits, ways and scandals of those who are conspicuous in any way" (Ouida "Vulgarity" 329), and gave her free reign to make real her very active imagination.

Ouida's *salon*, however, did not protect her from becoming the spectacle that she attempted to avoid. This is in part because Ouida, while embracing the *salon* model, performed a carnivalesque version of the institution, which was less democratic and rather more royal in tone. Aligning genius with royalty in her writing (Ouida "Vulgarity" 346), Ouida's interactions with her guests weekly reinforced this view. Bigland writes, "at these splendid affairs [Ouida] received her guests regally, always dressed in white or pale coloured satin…seated in a red armchair …[with] tiny feet daintily crossed on a red footstool" (95). Lionizing herself in this manner positions Ouida's guests as voyeurs, with Ouida as the object of fascination, a situation that only amplified her disdain for public interaction and serves to further highlight the commodified nature of the celebrity. A biographical anecdote suggests that Ouida was all too aware of the circumstance, when, in the midst of one of these "Mondays," Ouida

> Suddenly…drew herself up, frowned at the general company who were standing back deferentially to allow her to pass, and said…'People look on me as a curiosity, like Jumbo, but there is a great difference between us,

> for people give Jumbo cakes, but I have to give cakes to people.'
>
> (Bigland 97)

The "Jumbo" Ouida refers to is the African elephant that saw so many visitors during his more than fifteen-year tenure at the London Zoo from 1865-1882. Comparing herself to a trapped elephant, Ouida expresses how, rather than freeing her from the media circus that sought her out, her *salon* "Mondays" instead augmented the effect that she tried to avoid. That Ouida would be distressed at the position she finds herself in is no surprise, given that she laments over fame's causing her "never to stir unchronicled and never to act uncommented" (Ouida "The Penalties of a Well-Known Name" 371). But what fame does, too, is it gives power to the spectacle that she, as a commodified figure, becomes. Guy Debord writes, "the spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the *total occupation* of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world" (Debord 42). Becoming a spectacle disrupts Ouida's imaginative self-making, making her self a vision for consumption instead of allowing her to exist apart from the world. Although performance requires an audience, Ouida fails to anticipate the effects that an audience has on her ability to remain a private figure. Once Ouida's fantasies are materialized for all to see, whether at a *salon* visit or in her writing, Ouida must bear the scrutiny of those unwilling to view her vision of the world as real.

Romance as Realism and the Generic Commitments of Ouida

Ouida's reaction to her guests in imagining herself as Jumbo emphasizes her repulsion for spectacle. That spectacle depicts a moment "where the real world changes into simple images" and where "vision becomes the privileged human sense" means that imaginative creation no longer reigns in life or fiction (Debord 18). Ouida in her life and in her fiction does not privilege sight over other forms of sensory perception, which places her out of reach of much contemporary literary praise.[54] In asserting that "the wildest fancy" is just as real as mundane events, more real, in fact, than an "uneventful and unimpassioned life" ("Romance and Realism" 280), Ouida positions imagination and feeling as primary to lived experience. In "Romance and Realism," an editorial initially published in *The Times* in 1883, Ouida defends her position on romance, arguing that, "because passion has never touched with its fire and its glory the prim life of the aesthetic prig or the rotund Philistine, it is not for that reason perished off the face of the earth" ("Romance and Realism" 278). Moreover, as a topic, passionate feeling and action "seems…much more fitly a subject for the novelist…than the fictitious 'realism' of the spineless common-place" ("Romance and Realism" 279). But she bristles at the notion that romance is sensational; Ouida begins "Romance and Realism" with the true story of an Italian man who shoots himself once he discovers his lover to be unfaithful. This event, Ouida contends, "were it embodied in a romance that were printed and published the English reviewer would find his history 'sensational' or pronounce it impossible" ("Romance and Realism" 279). In the form that sensation takes in this passage,

[54] See, for instance, Calverley, "'Ouida's' Knowledge of Italian Life."

"'sensational'" marks the event as unrealistic, and this is why Ouida objects to naming an experience full of emotion as sensational. She continues, "all that is heroic, all that is sublime, impersonal, or glorious, is derided as unreal" ("Romance and Realism" 285). Realism, for Ouida, should not be confined to describing the everyday experienced by "the English middle class" ("Romance and Realism" 284); Ouida does "not object to realism and fiction; what [she] object[s] to is the limitation of realism in fiction to what is commonplace, tedious, and bald…in a word, of insisting that the potato is real and the passion-flower is not" ("Romance and Realism" 282). Ouida finds support from *The Times* readers in her contention that "'truth is stranger than fiction'" (Byron qtd. in "Romance and Realism" 283); no less than two men wrote in to confirm her remarks.[55] Reviewers would be less forthcoming, but by century's end, critics, including Max Beerbohm and G.S. Street, also admired her for her imaginative strength.[56]

Ouida's comments on feeling, romance, and realism demonstrate her unique relationship to sensation. Because Ouida defines sensation as that which is unreal and, more importantly, refuses the appellation for her own novels, she complicates understanding her work as belonging to the sensation fiction genre ("Romance and Realism" 279). Ouida's refusal to identify her fiction as sensational exemplifies her commitment to understanding the world as a rich and varied place where reality can manifest itself from the most imaginative of circumstances, that, if even fanciful, are

[55] See the editorials "A Strange Coincidence," The Times October 30 1883, and "A Still Stranger Coincidence," The Times November 2 1883.
[56] See Max Beerbohm, "Ouida," More, Third ed. (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1899), and G.S. Street, "The Truth About Ouida," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (July 1887).

nonetheless real. But her refusal, too, rests on the negative connotations the generic term held for contemporary reviewers,[57] and overlooks the aspects of the genre that identifies her novels as such.

Ouida's position reinforces the notion that the genre was difficult to identify, and destabilizes Winifred Hughes's assumption that sensation fiction "appeared blatantly recognizable […] hardly in need of official critical definition" to those of the period (Hughes 18). Today, an understanding of the genre is no less clear, but attempts have been made at defining it. Hughes writes that the sensation novel "is usually a tale of our own times," indicating that temporal and spatial proximity between the reader and the novel's plot is important (Hughes 18). Moreover, these tales are often described as being ripped from the headlines, and can involve "the apparatus of ruined heiresses, impossible wills, damning letters, skeletons in cupboards, [and] misappropriated legacies" to expose "criminality and passion beneath respectable surfaces" of middle-class and aristocratic households (Terry 74; Kalikoff 120). The devices employed were developed around transgressive women, with Pamela Gilbert asserting that "sensation novels as a genre are perceived as feminine, despite their murders, plots, and generally very active characters" because "the core of the sensation novel is the activity of the text in producing a physical sensation" (Gilbert 74). Gilbert also skillfully points out that "what is sensational and reprehensible about a novel written by a woman becomes realism in the case of a man" (Gilbert 75), not only highlighting the gender hypocrisy in genre construction, but also

[57] For evidence of this viewpoint in her work, see Ouida, "Romance and Realism," Frescoes and Other Stories (Leipzig, Germany: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1883) 279.

pointing to how Ouida might rightfully take umbrage at reviewers' reception of her work as sensational rather than real due to her more 'feminine' themes of romance and domestic intrigue.

A brief survey of scholarship on Ouida's relationship to sensation fiction produces mixed results. Elaine Showalter claims Ouida as one of the sensationalists of the 1860s (*A Literature of Their Own* 334), "value[ing] passion and assertive action" in her writing in lieu of the traditional subjects suitable for women of the period (*A Literature of Their Own* 154). Initially, Natalie Schroeder also viewed Ouida as a sensationalist, and in close readings of her novels, *Folle-Farine* (1871) and *Strathmore* (1865), argued that, though Ouida was "forced to bow to convention and punish aggression and self-assertiveness, the predominately female reading audience was regaled with women's potential for power, a power that ironically flourishes in a patriarchal society" through "feminine self-love" ("Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism, and Self-Assertion: M. E. Braddon and Ouida" 90). But in a later evaluation of Ouida's work, Schroeder concedes that, "although critics at first branded Ouida a sensation novelist, her early works are, for the most part…derive[d] from the silver-fork novels of the 1820s and '30s" (Schroeder and Holt 21). Like Schroeder, Gilbert also challenges the categorization of Ouida's novels as sensation fiction, positing instead that "her writing is much closer to what we refer to today as society novels" (Gilbert 87), and suggests that "if the sensation novel may be seen as a structuring for anxieties focused on the domestic, perhaps the novel of high life was indeed a sort of adventure story for women" (Gilbert 88). Considering her entire oeuvre, which includes the dandy hero Bertie in *Under Two*

Flags (1867), both Schroeder's and Gilbert's judgments of Ouida's work are appropriate. But does this mean that Ouida's work is not sensational, as Showalter contends? Are not elements of sensation present in her novels?

Despite Ouida's resistance to the label, and although critics have debated Ouida's generic commitments, her novels are indeed sensational. Ouida's novels meet the standard criteria for sensation: a ripped-from-the-headlines story located in spatial and temporal proximity to the reader; a transgressive female critical to the narrative; exposure of criminality and immorality in middle-class and aristocratic households; and the production of a physical sensation in its readers. But Ouida's novels also move beyond these standards. In her novel, *Friendship*, the manner of sensation rests on a sometimes-incautious interplay of fact and fancy, underscoring that, for Ouida, realism is not in the details of everyday events, but in the feelings that arise from those events. *Friendship* embodies this ideal, and, as a metacognitive exploration of herself in the spotlight, an *exposé* of celebrity, its subject matter is nothing if not pulled from the headlines, producing a unique form of sensation fiction predicated on celebrity culture.

A Sensational *Friendship*

"A tireless self-creator, and consummate performer of her identity as an artist" (Gilbert 140), it is no wonder that Ouida never wrote an autobiography. In a personal letter written in May 1907 to the British Consul at Leghorn, Italy, who asked that she write a memoir, Ouida dismisses his request, indicating that "memoirs, even those

delicious memoirs of France, are base betrayals of others, and show great vanity in the writers" (Ouida qtd. in Lee 219). This response comes after an 1888 editorial in *The Belfast News-Letter* on "The Pretentiousness of Autobiography," in which Ouida exhorts,

> The inclination which moves editors, authors, actors, artists, everybody who has made, in ever so slight a measure, a small celebrity for themselves to put into print all their own sayings or doings, and those of all other people who have the misfortune to be known to them, is not one either…intelligible or…excusable. (Ouida "Pretentiousness of Autobiography")

Apparently, however, a *roman à clef* was a perfectly appropriate form of self-exposure for Ouida, one both "intelligible" and "excusable" in its coverage of her own domestic drama that unfurled in the late 1860s and into the 1870s. The interview published in the 1890 *Birmingham Daily Post* that describes only "having had an impression" of Ouida instead of having "seen the real Ouida" misses the point ("'Ouida's' Florentine Palace"); knowing Ouida is only possible through impression. It is fitting that the closest we come to an autobiography from Ouida is through a *roman à clef* because romance and fancy, for Ouida, define the real. That events in her life are imprecisely portrayed in her 1879 novel, *Friendship*, only serves to highlight "how poor and pale" are the reproductions of the "visions that [artists] see" (Ouida *Friendship* 170). The "vision" that Ouida attempts to translate into her novel, *Friendship*, is the unraveling of her ten-year's long relationship with the Marchese della Stufa, an Italian aristocrat with little money, who also continued on an affair with the married Mrs. Janet Ross during this same period.

The plot of *Friendship* develops a similar rise and fall of the Parisian artist Etoile's relationship with Prince Ioris, a financially devastated Italian noble involved in an *imbroglio* with the married Lady Joan Challoner. Etoile is a celebrity because she produces art that is inspired by her ability to see the world as others cannot, and yet she shies away from publicity and offends admirers. Etoile makes a prolonged first visit to Rome after having been advised by her physician to do so for her health. While there, she meets Lady Joan Challoner, an Englishwoman from a good family who married her below her aristocratic status because of her wild ways, which includes being acquainted with many men whom she calls "brothers" and "friends." A businesswoman who runs schemes ranging from bridge building to selling art reproductions as originals, Lady Joan has seduced Ioris and, after six years, has also reduced his financial circumstances to the point that he risks losing his cherished family estate, Fiordelisa. When Ioris meets Etoile, a woman who has never loved, he is determined to court her, and successfully does so, yet cannot manage to break off his affair with Lady Joan. With Etoile refusing to play society games in order to secure a future with Ioris and Lady Joan all too willing to do so in order to remain mistress of Fiordelisa, Etoile ends her yearlong romance just as Lady Joan readies for her summer stay at Ioris's home.

In the first book-length study of Ouida's fiction, Natalie Schroeder and Shari Hodges Holt distinguish *Friendship*, along with Ouida's other novels, *Moths* (1880) and *Wanda* (1883), as texts concerned with female empowerment and male emasculation, and, more significantly, novels where "Ouida's social criticism of commodity culture becomes exceptionally scathing" (Schroeder and Holt 173). They go on to identify that

in *Friendship* the "*appearance*" of propriety is paramount (Schroeder and Holt 177). The whole of Roman society in *Friendship* not only know that Lady Joan and Ioris are lovers, but admit them to social gatherings as friends, keeping up the pretense of decency. As an "independent" woman who honors actual propriety and as a representation of "an alternative to the hypocrisy of commodity culture," Etoile becomes a "victim of the antifeminist attitude to female artists" within a society that chooses not to see immorality in those they deem social leaders, as is the case with Lady Joan (Schroeder and Holt 177). The novel's unveiling of hypocrisy and making a spectacle of the commodity-obsessed English abroad emphasized by Schroeder and Holt recommend *Friendship* as a sensational novel in the way that middle-class and aristocratic households are revealed to be rife with criminality and sexual intimacy inside and out of the marriage, consumed by a desire to appear decent and worldly, and seeming so by purchasing favor through giving and attending parties and buying 'art.' But what is missing from Schroeder and Holt's excavation of the text is a discussion of the place of celebrity in *Friendship*; one that situates the transgressive female, ironically, as the sole figure that upholds traditional values, and who is then persecuted because of it.

Etoile is introduced in the novel in a way that identifies her as always already a social outcast. Etoile and her equally famous friend, the opera singer Dorotea Coronis, ride through the Roman streets in a carriage, oblivious to the crowd that begins to whisper about their presence. As the crowd demands, "Who is Etoile?"—not because they do not recognize her, but because they want to know what she is about—they are answered with silence. "They don't seem to see us," comments one lady, as "the carriage

swept by again, and both the women looked at the sunset, and not at the crowd" (*Friendship* 11). The narrator continues,

> The carriage paused, and its occupants bought Parma violets. The crowd was disposed to think there must be some motive for the action […]. It is one of the privileges of celebrity that the person celebrated can never wash his hands or open an umbrella without being accredited with some occult reason for his proceedings. […] [Etoile] did not see [the crowd]. She had a sad habit of not seeing those who surrounded her. When, recalled to a sense of her negligence, she begged the pardon of others for having overlooked them, she was not readily forgiven. People would rather be insulted than be unperceived. (*Friendship* 11)

Not only does Etoile not view society in the same fetishizing way that society views her, but she does not see society at all, instead focusing on the brilliance of "the sunset" and the beauty of "Parma violets." In a cautionary tone forewarning the reader of the danger that awaits Etoile in society, the narrator advises, "to be wise in this world one should always be blind to the sunset, but never to the people that bow" (*Friendship* 12). An artist and writer of poetry and drama, Etoile possesses artistic intelligence but not the education needed to interact with the public as they demand. The narrator reveals that while in Paris in her youth, Etoile "uninterruptedly pursued both art and study" with few friends, or little care for them, making a friend by chance in the famed painter, David Istrion, who pushes her into the spotlight and lives long enough to see her "sun rise" but not long

enough to "protect her from the dark shadows that slink in the path of all triumphs" (*Friendship* 27-28). Her mentor encourages her creative side and makes possible celebrity, but dies before tutoring her in worldly affairs. Because she is unique and possesses extraordinary vision people want to know her, to gain insight into how it is that she alone can achieve such a feat. Refusing to be known by maintaining a very private life opens Etoile up to calumny. When she does not acknowledge society, what begins as a question about "why…she turn[ed] the back of her carriage to them [to] buy Parma violets?" (*Friendship* 14), becomes a question that challenges whether she is an artist at all or merely an imposter (*Friendship* 228). In fact, the question, "Who is Etoile?" echoed so often in the book soon takes on a scandalous edge. "To the world in general the name seemed strange, suspicious, uncomfortable, indicative of that string of asterisks on a page which replaces what is too shocking to be printed" (*Friendship* 23). Not engaging with the world as Etoile does reinforces an already-there suspicion, and allows a jealous Lady Joan, who is "envious of Etoile" and hating her "for her glance, for her words, for her modes of life, for her scarcely veiled contempt" to sully her reputation with hints of impropriety ranging from plagiarism to prostitution (*Friendship* 281).

As Etoile's foil, Lady Joan serves to underscore the hypocrisy of a society that will turn a blind eye to misdeeds so long as outwardly a person pays service to "Mrs. Grundy," yet scorn a celebrity who refuses to pander to the public but who is also privately above reproach. With so little made of Lady Joan's "play[ing] poker with the Ten Commandments" by society (*Friendship* 49), the sensation of the text rests in how much is made of Etoile, who is "not ignorant of evil, but innocent of it" (*Friendship* 290).

Although the novel spends more time detailing Lady Joan's indiscretions in a society that "adored her as one of its leaders" (*Friendship* 120), it does so to highlight the injustice of persecuting Etoile for living by her own code of honor, her actions, like her friend Dorotea Coronis's, "not shaped by what people believe" (*Friendship* 111). Entering society "ever and again broke the charm of th[e] spell which falls on every artist and every poet" visiting Rome, and yet Etoile initially compelled herself to do so because "she had celebrity, and it had curiosity, and it buzzed about her and would not be gainsaid" (*Friendship* 113). But when Etoile shuns decorum in favor of honesty in not acknowledging women like Lady Joan, whom Etoile finds possess "a vulgarity that is not even redeemed by mere decency" in action and thought (*Friendship* 131), Etoile positions herself as an enemy of society.

Fatefully, Rome also has Ioris. Despite thinking that "the artist, like the saint, should keep himself 'unspotted from the world' as far as possible" because "it only dims our sight and dwarfs our aims," Etoile allows herself to be seduced by Ioris (*Friendship* 170). An unhappy man in his relationship with Lady Joan, Ioris makes it his mission to love and be loved by Etoile, believing "happy he for whom [she] shall awake" (*Friendship* 173). Yet it is the conquering of the renowned artist that excites him, and not the woman, even admitting that he "lov[ed] that ring of light about [Etoile's] head that men call fame," and that "perhaps [he] never should have looked at [her] had [she] been only a mere woman—not Etoile!" (*Friendship* 324). As Etoile falls in love with Ioris, her "dreams" become his "captives" (*Friendship* 301). Ioris, like an Achilles' heel, halts Etoile's creativity. "The passion of other men had annoyed, revolted, or wearied

her…but his…did not alarm her" (*Friendship* 245-46); it should have. Warned by her good friend Voightel, Etoile is told that when she finally does love, "as an artist all will be over with you" (*Friendship* 248). Once Etoile loves Ioris, she loses her creative vision, her ability to feel the world and interpret it for others. It may be no coincidence that Ioris's nickname, "Io," means "I" in Italian, and that Etoile's artist eye is compromised once she loves him. Ioris overwhelms her vision, and the recurrent image of Ioris in unfinished busts and paintings and sketches in Etoile's studio reflects how love has cost Etoile her artist's sight. But it does not cost Etoile her virtue, and when she realizes that Ioris will never leave Lady Joan, Etoile ends the love affair.

Celebrity causes the novel's sensational events, yet its power is never appropriately analyzed. Celebrity in *Friendship* features prominently in that it is the catalyst for all of the events that occur in the novel, from the public's initial curiosity for Etoile to Lady Joan turning her into a notorious figure to Ioris loving and being loved by Etoile. But celebrity itself is never blamed by Etoile nor by the narrator for what happens to her; "fame brought Etoile its sweet and bitter fruits together" (*Friendship* 29). Although there is "an unpleasantness" associated with being a celebrity (*Friendship* 392), it is society that is to blame for that, and not the woman who achieves fame, which functions as "the *tunica incendialis*" that the "torches of slander" set afire with jealousy (*Friendship* 128), when, "unfortunately for her reputation, no one could find out that [Etoile] had as much as one vice" (*Friendship* 29). Moreover, like the novel itself, Etoile never blames her failed romance on its making her a notorious social figure, but she does rebuke fame for its inability to combat such a powerful foe as Lady Joan, whose talents

are the very vices, and more, that society believes are Etoile's. In the moments that end her romance with Ioris, Etoile "feels ashamed of [her] own feebleness, of [her] own lack of power, of [her] own incompetency to save" him from Lady Joan, demanding, "what use are fame, and praise and power: I have to give place to *her*!" (*Friendship* 412). Yes, Etoile is a celebrity, but in a novel of society such as *Friendship*, celebrity for the celebrated proves unsatisfactory if one is moral because, even with its seeming power, those like Lady Joan, who unabashedly manipulate society and direct public sentiment, have more. As something of which one can never have enough, celebrity becomes the novel's blindspot.

Etoile is a celebrity who does not conciliate society by engaging with it; she stands as a symbol of feminine virtue, one that privileges privacy over publicity. As the world that Etoile inhabits grows more accustomed and forgiving of transgression, as well as more demanding of the knowledge of the private lives of others, Etoile serves to remind readers of the need for self-regulation and limiting public scrutiny. Despite, and because of, its salacious content, Ouida's *Friendship* reaffirms the traditional aim of sensation fiction, which D.A. Miller argues is not subversive, but rather plays a role, as in other forms of fiction, in eliciting social control and conformity from its readers. One critic cites "immorality" as "probably the best thing about 'Ouida's' books," because, he states, "after we have waded through the average thirty-six chapters, we are thoroughly nauseated and do not want to hear of anything of the kind for a year at least", with the "effect" of reading the book "superior to the intention" ("A Modern Author. --'Ouida'"); to read of scandal tires the reader too much to want to partake in immoral activity. In

asserting that "the novel's critical relation to society…masks the extent to which modern social organization has made even 'scandal' a systematic function of its routine self-maintenance" (Miller xii), Miller would agree with Ouida's humorous but accurate contemporary. Rather than disrupt social power, the novel instead further entrenches its readers in the social machine. Miller continues, "the mechanisms of discipline seem to entail a relative relaxation of policing power. […] this manner of passing off the regulation of everyday life is the best manner of passing it on" (Miller 16). Because *Friendship* is so determined to reveal how society allows impropriety so long as "Mrs. Grundy" is appeased, what Ouida's readers would traditionally view as scandal is passed off as normal in the novel. But the heroine Etoile does not abide by this society's rules, and being outcast by those readers are not supposed to admire only serves to reaffirm traditional values held by Etoile and condemn those condoned in the novel by the majority of its characters.

Sadly for Ouida, *Friendship* failed to become the worldwide sensation she expected. As Bigland explains, it did cause a sensation, but only in Florence, where an "'uncivil war' broke out" between those who supported Ouida and those that thought her outrageous for exposing so obviously della Stufa and Mrs. Ross (Bigland 140-41). The book sold poorly, and Ouida blamed her publishers, Chatto and Windus, for its lackluster reception, suggesting that it was their presentation of the novel, and not her writing or its content, that caused the book to suffer in sales (Bigland 146). But reviews of *Friendship* do not mention presentation; they instead focus on its failures in plot and characterization and its links to her private life. *The Birmingham Daily Post* places its opinions of

Friendship in its "London Gossip" section, and determines that the novel "is the first real literary *fiasco* which has ever befallen that lady," with "the heroine decidedly more wicked than any of her former female characters, and, what is worse, she is dull and unpleasant too" ("London Gossip"). *The Academy* claims, "whatever hopes" of "better things" from Ouida that people had "are now sorely dashed, if not altogether destroyed" by the plot, with "the whole nasty topic…paraded and dwelt on and raked over…till the atmosphere becomes loaded with evil odors, and a permanent bad taste is left in the mouth" ("Rev. Of Ouida's *Friendship*" 262). The strong language delivered by these two reviews mark the general consensus of her contemporaries, with even G.S. Street, who so fiercely defends Ouida, commenting that "the foibles of modern society are no subjects for her dissection or her satire" (Street 256). Although *Friendship* never became a best-selling sensation, nor received critical acclaim, it was sensational, and is the only semi-autobiographical work that admirers and critics have from Ouida, whose ambivalent relationship to stardom shines through in this text.

A Curtain Drawn?

Ouida would have liked to have been known and admired for her genius alone, but the media age she rose to fame in made it impossible. And it is very likely that without media assistance her work would never have reached the audience it did, allowing her to embody the imaginative dreams of her childhood. The media's awareness of its role in her stardom is evident, even then. *The Pall Mall Gazette* reports

in 1889 on Ouida's celebrity that had it not been for Lord Strangford's review of *Cecil Castlemaine's Gage* (1867), she would not have become the phenomenon that she did. The paper cites Mr. Tinsley of *Tinsley's Magazine* as stating in its February issue, "'Lord Strangford's savage attack upon some of Ouida's earliest novels…gave the lady more notoriety than she gained from any other notice, good or bad, of her work. […]; the remarkable review of Ouida…even though it was of the most scathing kind, brought her many thousands of readers at once" ("How a Novelist Makes His Name"). Strangford's review, which recommends the novel to those of the middle class who "might enjoy these professed revelations of the sphere just beyond their reach," emphasizes the "titillating" aspects of Ouida's writing that garnered so much attention throughout her career (Strangford). Calling it "a very pretty book, especially because it appears to be of feminine authorship" (Strangford), his praise is at once teeming with sarcasm and marks the beginning of the mass public's desire to ask the question, "Who is Ouida?"; the thought was that for any one, especially any woman, to write such a book criticized for teeming with "fashionable vice" (Strangford), she must be immoral as well.

"Who is Ouida?" is a question those reading and working on Ouida still ask, especially as her writings are considered anew. Describing Etoile's image, *Friendship*'s narrator concludes that society "felt exasperated [by her], and thought her ostentatious" because she provided "no amusement whatever to anybody" with stories of her love intrigues or gender-bending outfits (*Friendship* 20). Like Etoile, Ouida's calculated moments out of the public spotlight only served to garner more scrutiny for when she did grant access. While her first biographer, Elizabeth Lee, did attempt to write a critical

study of her life and work, she nevertheless, as one reviewer put it, "failed to understand the spring from which welled up those wonderful romances" (Prothero 507). Ironically naming her book *Ouida: A Memoir* (1914), Lee's biography markets itself on the very curiosity the public had in accessing a spectral celebrity figure. Later historiographers continued to sensationalize Ouida, with Yvonne Ffrench, Monica Sterling, and Eileen Bigland naming their biographies *Ouida: A Study in Ostentation* (1938), *The Fine and the Wicked: The Life and Times of Ouida* (1957), and *Ouida: The Passionate Victorian* (1951), respectively, thereby capitalizing off of the stir that she and her books caused in the Victorian period. Modern scholars still rely on these accounts, in addition to others, in developing Ouida for today's readers, even going so far as to continue to use the word "ostentatious" to describe her material proclivities (Schroeder "Introduction" 11). Refusing to write an autobiography and with much of her personal correspondence lost in the various moves Ouida endured during the final years of her life, Ouida left it to the world to interpret her through fictional impressions rather than formal interviews such as those compiled by Black, and as people continue to wonder at the woman that could cause such a sensation they also continue to make her so.

Ouida's media policy reflects an ambivalence specific to her era, one of the last times when authors can refuse interviews and photographs and become even more popular by refraining from the spotlight of public curiosity. As a more systematic, mediatized society develops in the twentieth century, celebrities like Ouida, whose material claims to fame were not canonized, were lost to the public demand for other, more intimately accessible and timely idols.

Chapter Four

Edna Lyall, New Journalism, and Reputation Management at the *Fin de Siècle*

W.T. Stead's (1849-1912) arrival in September 1880 in London to act as assistant editor—and, in 1883, editor—of *The Pall Mall Gazette* changed the face of journalism. His approach to news, later antagonistically dubbed "New Journalism" by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) in "Up to Easter," gained attention for its personal tone in addition to the use of such American journalistic conventions as interviews and illustrations (Baylen 370), among other techniques. Scholar J.O. Baylen remarks that his New Journalism was "really not so new," but that under Stead's direction "it possessed a 'moral thrust,' social conviction, directness of language, and political ambition which were decidedly novel" (Baylen 375). Stead saw this form of journalism as necessary in evoking political change, which he writes about in "Government by Journalism," with the effect that mass culture gained unprecedented influence in Britain at the *fin de siècle* (Baylen 385). By making public realities facing the British people, such as he does in "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," Stead legislates for liberal policy change.[58] He uses the personal story to generate an intimacy between the reader and the account or person in question to appeal to private individuals and rally them into one mass public capable of political transformation.

[58] Stead's "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" was an extraordinary instance of New Journalism's political clout, with far-ranging ramifications. For details, see Judith R. Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London (London: Virago Press, 1992) 81-134.

While Stead's New Journalism did have a political agenda, this type of reporting also sought to entertain in sustaining and growing a newspaper's readership, and thereby its advertising revenue (Salmon *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity* 119). Consequently, literary celebrities, like government policies, were also subject to expanded scrutiny under New Journalism, with their lives becoming as commodified as the texts they produced in periodicals' usage of the popular staple of the personal journalistic style, the celebrity interview ("Pall Mall Gazette (1865-1923)" 478). Literary stars had to decide whether to engage in the practices of illustrated interviews and expanded celebrity coverage to promote their writing or to resist this encroachment into their personal lives. New Journalism's focus on a literary author's private life, instead of on his or her work, required that authors manage their public image in order to develop a reputation consummate with their professed identity. New Journalism made this both easier and more difficult to do; easier in that images and interviews could showcase the authors in their desired light, and more difficult because gossip and negative twists on the same images and interviews meant to bolster their reputation could serve to harm it. If writers refused to sit for or respond to journalists' queries, rumors of their private lives could go unchecked, with both their professional and personal reputations left open to interpretation by the media and its reading public.

In the same collection that makes visible Dinah Mulock Craik's (1826-1887) and Ouida's (Maria Louise Ramé) (1839-1908) near-complete absence from New Journalism's key reporting method and highlights Florence Marryat's (1833-1899) reliance on it, in *Notable Women Authors of the Day* Helen C. Black draws attention to

one of their contemporaries, the liberal activist and writer Edna Lyall (Ada Ellen Bayly) (1857-1903). In the course of the 'At Home,' Lyall discusses her private life and shares personal opinions on contemporary political and social matters in addition to the plots and inspiration for her novels. Lyall did not always sit for these interviews, however; in fact, for nearly half of her career she remained cloaked in mystery, without even her legal name being known to her admiring public, much less more personal details. Like Ouida, Lyall, a popular writer of 'novels with a purpose' who saw mass success at the *fin de siècle*, attempted to refrain from public exposure in her rise to becoming an author of renown. Born into a barrister's family, Lyall was the only one of four children not to marry, and lived her life among family, for the most part residing with her sister and her clergyman husband in Eastbourne, England when she was not travelling. She published her first novel, *Won by Waiting*, in 1879, which made very little impact on the reading public. Her second and third novels, *Donovan* (1882) and *We Two* (1884), brought her fame, but she still continued her private life away from the spotlight, relying on reviews and advertising as the means of marketing her work. In 1888, however, Lyall—ten years after her first book was published—decided to court publicity and modified her attitude towards the practice, beginning with divulging her legal name. From 1888 until her death in 1903, Lyall regularly provided candid 'At Home' interviews, photographs and illustrations, and first-person accounts of her life to the top newspapers and journals of the day.

The reason? At first glance, impersonation, an instance of which *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* describes at the time as "a fraud familiar enough to well known

writers" ("London Letter. Miss Bayly"). Edna Lyall explains the ordeal in an interview with Black:

> 'On returning from one of our delightful Norwegian tours, I was greeted on every side by a persistent report that had been set afloat to the effect that I was in a lunatic asylum! We found out at this time that an impostor had been going about announcing that she was 'Edna Lyall,' and that in Ceylon, and during her voyage home, she had deceived many people. The only possible explanation of the lunatic asylum slander seems to be that this woman was in reality mad.' (Black 141-42)

Lyall was hounded by gossip that she had been institutionalized, but as she makes clear in her retelling of the event, she was out of the country during the tenure of her impersonator's escapades and therefore incapable of being in an asylum. In this summary of the incident, she betrays little about the specifics of the case: when precisely it occurred, who this impostor ended up being, how she deceived people, and whether or not the impersonator was prosecuted are all questions left unanswered. Lyall's description of her impersonation leaves out much information, and retellings of the event, in the media and in biographies, provide no more detail. While her reticence in sharing such a traumatic event is in accord with English decorum of the period, particularly for middle-class females, the lack of facts is startling nonetheless because she does decide to go public with the event in the first place, and other media reports of female

impersonation during this and earlier periods do contain specifics of the crimes in question.

While Lyall may not have personally wanted to impart minutiae of the case, periodicals generally did not share her discretion. "Alice Grey," for instance, received press coverage for her swindling of men across the country by bringing them up on false charges and then being remunerated by the various courts for the men's "crimes" against her ("A Daring Female Impostor"). In an even more astonishing case, two female impostors, one Ellen Lowther, aka "John Clifford," and another known only by her pseudonym, "Pablo Paddington," rode in Cooke's cavalry division disguised as black men, until Lowther gave birth and was discovered. "Pablo," so the story goes, was apparently never detected while in service, and even courted a Miss King ("Two Female Impostors and Courtship Extraordinary"). When so much detail is shared about female impostors in these and other cases of the period,[59] Lyall's own instance, in its dearth of information, compels the question, what does publicly acknowledging it at all do for Lyall? For the media, it is a case of impersonation against a celebrity, and that alone merits publication, especially when it leads to the unveiling of a popular writer, even if there is a lack of sensational detail. That so little is revealed about Lyall's impersonator implies that the case itself was immaterial to Lyall; its use, however, in admitting her into the public sphere from a relatively isolated life proves invaluable.

[59] An additional sampling of such news stories about female impostors include "The Strange Detection of a Surprising Female Impostor," The New Wonderful Magazine and Marvelous Chronicle 3.25 (1794), "The Curious Case of a--R--, a Female Impostor," Chambers's Edinburgh Journal 404 (1839), and "The Female Impostor, Eliza Tremaine," Leader 8.364 (1857).

The anonymity of Lyall up until this point in her career makes possible this successful impersonation, which serves as the given impetus for her entry into public life. But an examination of rumors that appear after she publishes her early novels as well as reviewing how she leads a public life after her debut suggests that motives beyond a personal desire to counter the gossip circulating about her impersonator's behavior drive her to do so. In this chapter I argue that Lyall's liberal politics, previously expressed only through her novels, coalesce in this strategic entry into public life, and as such Lyall's drawing publicity to herself as a literary celebrity can be viewed as a political act. Her entry into the marketplace of New Journalism celebrity coverage signals a shift in how she negotiates her status as a woman and professional writer, manipulating media to showcase her 'novels with a purpose,' cultivating a reputation at once progressive and properly feminine, and finally finding inspiration from her and others' experiences as a celebrated public figure to publish bestselling popular fiction, including *The Autobiography of a Slander* (1887) and *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* (1891). In her use of the press and its accompanying publicity, Lyall distinguishes herself as a new type of female literary star, one unafraid of the spotlight in its ability to promote a liberal agenda, and one made possible by New Journalism at the *fin de siècle*.

A Slanderous Debut

Initially, Lyall's use of a pseudonym provided her with privacy but still allowed her to write 'novels with a purpose' to guide her readers, intending that the work she

published be the platform for the change her novels so often sought in its readers. Lyall's first book, *Won by Waiting*, was released in 1879 with little fanfare, and her second book, *Donovan*, published in 1882, only sold 302 copies in its first printing (Black 143). According to Lyall, the novel, which follows a secularist's return to faith, was conceived following her own crisis of faith and in reading of the atheist Charles Bradlaugh's trials in attempting to take his seat in Parliament without swearing the religious oath required to do so (Black 137; Payne 27). Although a devout Christian, her faith was not narrow in its practice, and her adherence to Liberalism also meant that, despite differing views religiously, politically she was a Bradlaugh supporter. A letter written at this time reveals her sympathy with Bradlaugh, and her interest in following the case in the papers: "'It makes me *mad* to see and hear the unjust way in which people treat him. Oh! I *hope* he'll have strength to act conscientiously about the oath. I am looking forward quite anxiously to Friday's paper'" (Escreet 34). Later revelations from Lyall highlight her continued use of news stories following the Bradlaugh affair in inspiring her work. *We Two*, the 1884 sequel to *Donovan*, was "'really suggested by a line which appeared in the *Daily News* about the time Mr. Bradlaugh was imprisoned in the Clock Tower: "Mr. Bradlaugh has telegraphed for his daughter"'" ("Edna Lyall at Home"), which instilled in her the idea of a devoted daughter at a moment of crisis (Escreet 44). Although *Donovan* achieved some initial critical success, it was not until after *We Two* was published to critical and popular acclaim that Edna Lyall's name was thrust into the public spotlight, "plac[ing] her in the front rank of the religio-social order of novelist" because the novel "appeared at an opportune moment, when the Bradlaugh dispute was engaging public

attention" and gossip was circulating that her novels were based on the case ("Chronicle and Comment. The Late 'Edna Lyall'"). Even with these two successful novels, the public still did not know who Edna Lyall was, as she continued to refrain from media inquiry; periodicals and newspapers up through an 1887 "World Biographies" brief revealing her name mention her pseudonym along with reviews of her work, but do not provide personal details.[60] More than just gossip about her books' links to the Bradlaugh case was spreading, however.

Rumors of her own atheism began to be bandied about, and at this time Lyall wrote to many friends attempting to deny them and reaffirm her Christian faith. In 1886 Lyall writes a letter in reply to one admirer's inquiry into the gossip:

> 'Thank you very much for kindly giving me the opportunity of contradicting the slander as to my personal belief. Curiously enough, the very same story was brought to my notice last week at an "At Home" in London, and I can't imagine from whom it can have originated. I am not an Atheist, but a member of the Church of England. […]. I shall be very grateful if you will contradict the story, for I confess that it has pained me. Not that it matters much what people think of me individually, but it seems a little hard that what is false should be interfering with the influence of the books.' (Escreet 61-62)

[60] Examples of these include Julia Wedgwood, "Fiction," Contemporary Review 46 (1884), Julia Wedgwood, "Fiction," Contemporary Review 47 (1885), and "Lyall's (Edna) *Autobiography of a Slander* (Book Review)," The Academy 32.796 (1887).

The letter-writer, a Mr. Buxton Moorish, had felt compelled to send Lyall the report after her novel, *Donovan*, was vetoed by a book club based on her rumored atheism (Escreet 61). While Lyall protests in her reply against any personal interest in the gossip, that is what she exhibits in writing letters to a number of friends and strangers alike disputing the claims. Failing to imagine where stories of her atheism derive from reveals a naïveté on Lyall's part; publicly supporting Bradlaugh and writing novels that are sympathetic to secularism easily translate to curiosity over her own religious beliefs, especially since she writes pseudonymously.

Not only does writing pseudonymously about events of political and religious concern open Lyall up to gossip over her own religious practices, but doing so also allows for an impostor to lay claim to Lyall's identity, which occurs during the same period that religious rumors abound. In commenting on Lyall's impersonation, *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post's* "London Letter" report highlights the frequency of such an occurrence. Stories of impersonation were not uncommon in nineteenth-century news accounts, with the Tichborne case most prominent in the minds of Victorians.[61] *The BMDP* and other nineteenth-century news reports indicate, moreover, that in the literary world women writers were particularly subject to acts of impersonation. *The BMDP* reporter "can recall two similar cases in England, the victim being a woman in each case" ("London Letter. Miss Bayly"), while *The Pall Mall Gazette* reports, when writing on the Lyall instance, that "an impecunious impostor [Joseph Liggins] enjoyed to

[61] For a non-fiction account of Arthur Orton, the Tichborne claimant, see Bram Stoker, Famous Impostors (New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1910) 201-24.

the end of his days the reputed authorship of 'Scenes from Clerical Life'" and that "there have been many such cases" ("Occasional Notes"). These cases of impersonation arise more markedly for women writers of the period in part due to their habit of writing anonymously or pseudonymously. While doing so allowed for more freedom in pursuing a writing career, it also restrained them from an active public profile that would give them the visibility to discourage impersonation.[62] The pseudonym, Edna Lyall, "an inexact anagram of the authoress's full name—Ada Ellen Bayly" ("The Science of Anonymity"), does not, like George Eliot (1819-1880), attempt to deny her female gender. Rather, Lyall, by all accounts a shy woman, "prefer[red] to be of the quiet order," believing that "women—with some remarkable exceptions" should work from within the home to "provide lasting service to the country" instead of performing public acts that force them into the spotlight (Cooper-Oakley). The opinion that Lyall expresses regarding a woman's role follows the general Victorian middle-class gender ideology of domesticity and retreat from the public sphere. The fact that she makes these remarks in a published interview, however, suggests that promoting causes from within the home or through her novels was not enough to change minds or maintain a superior reputation as a female representative of Christian, middle-class values, and that publicity in the form of personal interviews was needed to help forward her agenda. Being impersonated only furthers the need to make her identity public.

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[62] For discussions of women's anonymous and pseudonymous writing that detail reasons for doing so and its effects see Alexis Easley, First Person Anonymous : Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-70 (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), and Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

Despite her desire to remain incognito, Edna Lyall, like George Eliot, does reveal herself to the public, resulting in a shift in how she negotiates her exposure in the media and the methods she uses to relay her moral messages. The rumors of her atheism bother her so much that, coupled with the slander instigated by her impersonator's behavior, she finally discloses her identity—first in 1887, to a smaller literary audience through *The Literary World* "World Biographies" summary, and then in 1888 to the masses by *The Times* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* announcements—in order to salvage her reputation and her career as a best-selling author so that the political and social causes she lobbied for could retain an audience. In October of 1888, Lyall's publishers, Hurst and Blackett, wrote to *The Times* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* to ask them to print a report relaying the details of the impersonation and an authoritative account of Edna Lyall and her background. Both papers transcribe the letter in its entirety:

> 'We are informed that an impostor has lately visited Ceylon, and has passed herself off as Edna Lyall…possibly this person may have something to do with the very extraordinary reports which for some time have been afloat with regard to Miss Lyall; and since these reports are of a very annoying nature, and have been extensively circulated, the Press would be doing Miss Lyall a service by promulgating the following facts: --Edna Lyall (Miss Ada Ellen Bayly) is the youngest daughter of the late Robert Bayly, of the Inner Temple, barrister-at-law. She was brought up as, and has always remained, a member of the Church of England; and for the last few years has resided at Eastbourne. We are happy to say that

> Miss Lyall has always enjoyed excellent health, both mental and physical.' ("Edna Lyall.-Messrs Hurst and Blackett; The Authoress of 'Donovan' and 'We Two'")

While no media outlets report on the gossip regarding Lyall's religion and sanity prior to Hurst and Blackett's letter, Lyall's personal correspondence and subsequent interviews on the matter suggest that, privately spread by word of mouth, the stories had begun to enact some damage on her public reputation. Although *The Literary World* had published her identity in its "World Biographies" section a year earlier, the publication of Lyall's biographic details in *The Times* and *The Pall Mall Gazette* disseminated the information to a much broader audience and with a direct intent. The printed declaration by her publishers reflects the need for an authoritative statement attesting to Lyall's reputation, one that is called into question by the instance of the impostor and other "very extraordinary reports." Not naming the "reports" is strategic—the atheism rumors Lyall refers to in her letters are contained insomuch as they are orally conveyed. Not printing the rumors means that the larger reading public may not hear of them; those that had would know the reference.

If there was a time to enter into public life for Lyall, then openly combating the slander against her by taking advantage of New Journalism's interest in the private lives of celebrities was it. The gossip that Lyall and her publishers claim circulates during the impersonation puts at stake her reputation as well as her livelihood, with her novels' appeal directly linked to public perception of Lyall's persona. The glaring lack of detail

in the published accounts accords Lyall publicity without sharing the substantive information about the impersonation or the rumors of her atheism, instead using the incident to introduce the 'real' Lyall, Ada Ellen Bayly. The 1888 letter by Messrs. Hurst and Blackett uses the impostor incident as an opportunity to convey personal information about Lyall meant to establish her Christianity and middle-class status. These facts include being a lifetime member of the Church of England and the daughter of a lawyer, signaling to Lyall's fans that she is a middle-class woman in conformity with the country's religious doctrine. While brief, the 1888 announcement strategically provides a sensational story that simultaneously gains Lyall sympathy with her readers, establishes her Christian ties, and provides her with a way to passively and reputably enter into public life.

In debuting Lyall to the masses, Lyall immediately uses the introduction to begin giving interviews. Only two months after her publishers' letter attesting to her mental and physical acuity and in one of the same publications used by her publishers to assert her reputable status, Lyall grants her first 'At Home.' That she chooses to begin giving interviews by doing her first with *The Pall Mall Gazette* is no surprise, provided the paper's—and Lyall's—liberal political views. The temporal proximity of this interview to the publishers' open letter indicates a calculated publicity campaign, one that uses the impersonation to debut Lyall to the masses so that she can better manage her personal and professional reputation. Lyall's entry into public life, moreover, signals a shift in political strategy and a clear perspective on the 'Woman Question.' Those opposed to women entering the public sphere believed that women's influence over men was risked

when they did so; remaining private individuals conserved women's "abstract principles of right and wrong" that guided public men (Lewis 52). In deciding to sit for interviews that discuss, not only her writing, but also her personal views on topics as varied as education reform, woman's suffrage, and religious practice, Lyall becomes a public figure of influence with concrete objectives. While she may not stand at a literal pulpit, Lyall takes advantage of New Journalism's focus on celebrities to forward specific political goals while crafting a non-threatening public image so that her reputation remains free of the calumny levied against her while a private individual. With reputation intact Lyall can better represent the issues that she writes about in her 'novels with a purpose.'

'Novels with a Purpose'

Tracking news stories on Lyall before and after her publishers' 1888 mass letter to media outlets reveals an increasing celebrity presence of the author in the press. While no personal interviews with the author exist prior to this date, for the duration of her life Lyall not only sits for interviews 'At Home' with various journalists, but also contributes autobiographical articles about her writing process, shares photographs or sketches of herself as a child and as an adult, and even writes letters directly to the press. Because her novels are directed at moral and social improvement, Lyall constructs a public identity that corresponds to the novels' messages, in effect marketing her books and championing her causes through her persona.

Like *Donovan* and *We Two*, Lyall's commitment to liberal ideals is a consistent presence in her novels, through which her political and religious views on contemporary Victorian issues are aired. Lyall, first a secretary and then a vice-president of her local Women's Liberal Association, actively lobbied for causes that her books developed. *Doreen the Singer* (1894) supports the cause of Irish Home Rule, for example, while *The Hinderers* (1902) is a peace story written in protest of the Second Boer War; *Autobiography of a Truth* (1896) is a tale Lyall was asked to write during the 1894-1896 Armenian massacres in Turkey, with all proceeds from the book going to aid suffering Armenians through the Armenian Relief Fund (Escreet 155). The political and moral relevancy of her novels are what some of her contemporary critics regard as the reason for their success, but these 'novels with a purpose' are also what reviewers and detractors of Lyall railed against. Georgia Corrick, an independent researcher working on a critical biography of Lyall, concludes that the divided nature of her reviewers' opinions are due in part to Lyall's particular moral code, which, while acceptable and even lauded in today's political climate, was often at odds with the prevailing Victorian ideology (Corrick "'You Will Blame...'" 477). A sampling of reviews on *We Two* and *Donovan* reveals the divided judgments that her writing inspires. The *London Quarterly* contends that these two novels "deprave the moral sense" and "are among the most erroneous and most dangerous that [they] have ever read" because they do not accurately portray the lives of "actual men and women" in rendering secularists as moral individuals ("Two Modern Novels" 18), a category reserved for Christians. Julia Wedgwood, however, writing for *Contemporary Review*, cites *We Two* as "a landmark…in the history of

religious thought" and as an "accurate…expression of contemporary feeling" (Wedgwood 757), and attests a year later as well to *Donovan*'s popularity by "gladly recogniz[ing] that the public is ready to welcome an attempt to bring serious purpose into fiction when it is allied with imaginative power" (Wedgwood 748). While Lyall's novels' moral purpose is what wins and repulses some Victorian reviewers, others, while conceding that the books might highlight a good cause, believe that focusing on ethical issues detracts from the literary quality of her work. The reviewer for *The Ladies' Home Journal* writes: "Those [novels] by Miss Ada Ellen Bayley [*sic*], better known as 'Edna Lyall,' are certainly good in one sense; they have a distinctly moral purpose. But this very purpose makes her books hopelessly inartistic" ("Edna Lyall and Her Books" 11). Ironically, under the same article title, a year later *The Ladies' Home Journal* describes Lyall as "a ready and graceful writer," suggesting that "perhaps the secret of [her] success lies in that fact that her books combine truth and purity with an interesting story." The writer concludes the piece by noting that "The Journal can supply its readers" with Lyall's books "either singly or in a set" ("Edna Lyall and Her Books" 20). Clearly, *The Ladies' Home Journal's* finances were more important than maintaining a consistent opinion in reviews of Lyall's work, especially when that work could produce revenue for the publication.

Lyall was not unaware of the critical ambivalence that her popular novels inspired, and her media interviews disclose a strategy of handling criticism of her 'novels with a purpose.' In her earliest engagement with media outlets, two months after her publishers' exposure of her identity, Lyall defends her writing in the genre when asked

by *The Pall Mall Gazette* interviewer to confirm that she "believe[s] in 'novels with a purpose' as they are called?" Her response conveys her conviction in a novel's ability for change and the knowledge that her literary quality has been attacked due to her novels' moral tendencies:

> 'Yes; I think every novel should have a purpose, provided it is not too prominently thrust forward. […] I trust there is a clear purpose running through each [of my books], but at the same time kept subordinate to the story. It is now generally admitted that the novel can be made a great means of good, and that thoughts may be more attractive when clothed in the garb of fiction.' ("Edna Lyall at Home")

This 1889 interview, her first 'At Home,' expresses Lyall's unwavering justification for 'novels with a purpose.' While she never fails to defend her writing on this ground, Lyall continues to fine-tune her response to the question that interviewers repeatedly pose to her. These responses have particular resonance due to their alterations in intent. In an 'At Home' with Isabel Cooper-Oakley, Lyall responds to the question about 'novels with a purpose' personally: "a special motive and a strong desire to express some particular idea were the incentives without which she could not write a line" (Cooper-Oakley 502). Lyall's reply situates her writing as spiritually inspired, a vocational calling with an intimate connection to her daily life. With accusations of atheism only recently past, reflecting on her writing as religious work reinforces her Christian ties. Continuing her religiously-inspired claims in writing 'novels with a purpose,' Lyall approaches the

subject covertly in her endorsement of and preface to *The All Father* (1891), a book of sermons written by her cousin, Rev. P.H. Newnham. An 1895 illustrated interview excerpts Lyall's preface in order to explain her religio-literary influences: "No surface teaching can prepare the mind for 19th century life. […]. We need living words, not dead formalities; fresh thoughts, not empty phrases; the straightforward facing of doubts and perplexities, not the weak and lazy shelving of the subject" (Lyall qtd. in Velvin 19). Lyall's forceful assertions for 'novels with a purpose' do little to combat the literary world's derision of her novelistic style, evident in the continued questioning of her on this topic. Finally, Lyall accedes to the critiques of 'novels with a purpose' in her interview with Black, where she softens her stance on the subject in an attempt to recategorize her books as motive-, not purpose-, driven. Lyall states, "'I dislike 'novels with a purpose' as much as anyone…but at the same time it seems to me that each book must have its particular *motive*'" (Lyall qtd. in Black 140). The distinction between the two words is slight but important. *Purpose* primarily refers to a "determined purpose or aim," but it can also mean "the reason for which something is done or made" ("Purpose, *N*"). *Motive*, while similar to purpose, draws on "inner impulses," in defining the word as an "impression or apprehension that prompts a person to action" ("Motive, *N*"). *Purpose* lacks the spiritual or moral inspiration that *motive* conveys in its definition; as a term, *motive* reinforces Lyall's Christianity at the same time that it constructs her novels as expressions of deeply held personal beliefs conveying apprehension over the contemporary state of political, religious, and social affairs.

Lyall's rhetorical attempts to move away from being viewed as a writer of 'novels with a purpose' fails; obituaries consistently report on this facet of her work when summing up her life, using words like "earnestness" and "high purpose" to describe her oeuvre ("Chronicle and Comment. The Late 'Edna Lyall'" 113). Given Lyall's personal letters on the matter, despite her public protestations of disdaining "'novels with a purpose' as much as anyone," privately she expressed pleasure at the success of her purpose-driven books: "'And if publicity has pains it certainly has pleasures, for I am constantly hearing from people who have found help and comfort from the books, and it does make me very happy to have been used as a messenger'" (Escreet 64). Lyall's answers to persistent questions about her novels' moral tones, especially in her interview with Black, conveys Lyall's exasperation at being grouped with a type of novel-writing synonymous with poor literary quality due to its pedagogical goals. Collectively, Lyall's retorts also reinforce her belief in a novel's ability to promote political and social goals; she never denies that they attempt to do so, and ultimately, these aims are what earn her a popular following, if not also a lack of lasting critical acclaim.

Framing a Public Image

In Lyall's responses to queries about her novelistic style, appealing to religious inspiration mitigates the effects of using an assertive tone in defending them. Lyall's active role in politics, including her entry into the debate over the 'Woman Question,' makes her vulnerable to criticism beyond just the nature of her novels. Barbara Leah

Harman explains that through the end of the nineteenth century, those opposed to extending women's civil rights depict the public sphere, and public life, as encouraging in women traits antithetical to the very foundation of society: "indecorous self-display, illicit sexuality, infidelity, and the destruction of the family" are all themes repeated in anti-suffragist rhetoric (6). As an ardent suffragist, Lyall would have been aware of these arguments. How she portrays herself in public life reflects an attempt to counter these claims as she presents herself as a role model for other women. As a prototype for the sort of woman possible if larger rights are extended to women, Lyall uses her celebrity and its associated publicity to showcase the fact that allowing women such freedoms would not "alter the existing aspects of culture" (Harman 6), but instead enhance an underrepresented group's participation in upholding it.

Lyall's interviews cautiously navigate her public image, with Lyall using these public conversations as an opportunity to bolster her reputation as a gentle, feminine representative of traditional middle-class Christian values who also happens to lobby for causes important to her, including advocating for a woman's right to vote, while she worked to support herself and her extended family. By expressing moral concerns in tandem with more progressive ideological views, Lyall marks herself as a feminist, but not as a New Woman.[63] The scholar Mary Louise Roberts explains the distinction between feminist and New Woman at the *fin-de-siècle* in moral terms, with the feminist

[63] Sarah Grand, a contemporary of Edna Lyall, first uses this term. See Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," North American Review 158 (1894). For a scholarly evaluation of the New Woman, see Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy : Gender and Culture at the Fin De Siècle (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1990).

supportive of sacrifice, self-denial, and traditional domesticity, and the New Woman more concerned with her own development as an individual. Moreover, although some New Women lobbied for political and legal rights for women, this was not their focus, whereas feminists not only saw these as critical goals, but also rationalized them through a mother and wife's ability to influence (M. L. Roberts 21). As Roberts points out, while feminists and New Women might have shared some similar concerns, New Women, with their obvious refusal to adhere to prescribed gender roles—including their wearing of bloomers, smoking of cigarettes, and disinclination to marry—were seen as a bigger threat than feminists seeking change from within these roles, such as Lyall. Lyall's interviews, along with the images she releases for public consumption, make clear her feminist position in the debate over the 'Woman Question.' Her responses to questions highlight her political activism, but not beyond the bounds of approved feminine behavior, which posed portraits of her reinforce (*Figure 4.1*). Likewise, her sartorial choices denote a lifestyle both active and unfettered by traditional female accoutrements such as a tight corset, but nevertheless remain within acceptable womanly fashion (*Figure 4.2*). Finally, while the term, *feminist*, was already in circulation in the 1890s,[64] Lyall never uses the word to describe herself in published correspondence; therefore, while she certainly was one by contemporary standards, Lyall's silence on this matter suggests a hesitation at publicly aligning herself with a group that was often confused with the more extreme New Women. Named after Charles Dickens's (1812-1870) Ada in *Bleak House* (1852-1853), Edna Lyall never fails to inhabit the role of the kind, sweet,

[64] For its etymology, see "Feminist, *N*," OED Online, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1989), vol.

and "gentle heroine" (Escreet 4), personality traits that compensate for her many liberal views potentially disagreeable to the reading public because her demeanor still adheres to those prescribed feminine qualities desirable in women.

As a single female who champions women's suffrage and access to professions and vocations, Lyall uses maternal metaphors in describing her work, offsetting the threat of being 'unwomanly' in her promotion of women's advancement. Lyall's autobiographical essay, "How I Became a Novelist," concludes with ruminations on "dream children," or characters in her novels.[65] She writes that she cannot comprehend how people exist without "dream children," stating,

> They cost one much suffering, and bring many cares and anxieties; they are not what we could wish, and we are conscious of their faults. Still they *are* our 'dream children,' and when they cheer the dull, or interest the overworked, or help the perplexed, there comes a glad sense that it has all been worthwhile, and we are thankful that the gift was given us. (Lyall "How I Became a Novelist" 31)

Conceiving of her work as a maternal process legitimates and feminizes her role as an author. Describing her novels and the characters within them, moreover, as capable of

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[65] Lyall's use of "dream children" references the prefatory poem in Lewis Carroll, Hugh Haughton and John Tenniel, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There (New York: Penguin, 1998) 5-6. The essay was published multiple times, with versions printed in—but not limited to— Edna Lyall, "How I Became a Novelist," Good Words 37 (January 28, 1896), Edna Lyall, "My Early Literary Influences," Ladies' Home Journal 13.2 (1896), and Edna Lyall, "How I Became a Novelist," The Review of Reviews 27.159 (March 1903).

producing philanthropic results aligns writing for a public audience with acceptable careers for middle-class women. By doing so Lyall also engages in the debate over the cultural role of the author, which Alexis Easley describes as being in flux mid-century and beyond due to women entering political and social debates through their writing; historically a masculine sphere, cultural authority could now be accessed by women, which challenged the notion of separate spheres (Easley *First Person Anonymous* 5). By stating just prior to the passage on "dream children" that "writing has become so much a part of my life that it is difficult quite to understand what life without a vocation would be like" (Lyall "How I Became a Novelist" 31), Lyall underscores the importance of work in a woman's life at the same time that she moves the debate about cultural authority forward. That she subsequently uses the pronouns "we" and "us" to discuss "dream children" in detail is important, in that Lyall aligns herself with a group of authors, one unfettered by gendered signification, with the passage slipping easily from a personal "my" to "us" in moving from specific thoughts on vocation to the larger impact of imaginative creation. Reflecting on Lyall's life, one contemporary reviewer remarks, "In taking up the pen she regarded it not as a means of amusing people or making money, but as a weapon, the only one she could take up, to be used on the side of justice and truth" ("'Lyall, Edna, Life of,' J.M. Escreet (Book Review)"). The reviewer highlights the impact of Lyall's novels on her contemporary society, doing so by aligning Lyall with an icon of masculinity—the warrior. As an established celebrity writer of religious-, political-, and social-problem novels, Lyall had already made her mark as a figure of

cultural authority and as a moral protector. It was not whether or when women would enter the public sphere, but what rights the public would accord them.

An advocate of women's rights, Lyall is very careful in how she represents the cause. Rather than take an extreme position in extending equal rights to the female sex, Lyall is cautiously optimistic and does not fail to express her subscription to feminine ideals at the same time that she embodies a movement beyond their limits. Velvin reports that "Edna Lyall looks upon woman suffrage as an act of right and justice, and although she admits that it is not likely to be just yet, cannot understand any women being indifferent to the subject, who takes even the smallest interest in her country"; Lyall adds, "'as for being unwomanly…I fail to see anything unwomanly in voting, although *canvassing* for votes is perhaps another matter!'" (Velvin 23). By positioning an Englishwoman's indifference to the vote as unpatriotic, Lyall evokes nationalism as an alibi of women's civil rights. Continuing with her gynocentric line of questioning in *The Windsor Magazine* interview, Velvin also asks Lyall what she "think[s] of the present novels on the Modern Women Question," with Lyall responding that she "'can't answer questions about [her] fellow novelists.'" Velvin pushes Lyall, continuing, "But don't you think that women as a rule are very cruel to women?" Lyall answers, "'No! […]. That I certainly do not! Women's cruelty to women seems to me a thing of the past. I should have said the modern tendency of women is to be decidedly severe on *men*. Really to hear some women talk you would think that 'righteous men' are pretty nearly extinct!'" (Velvin 23). Although Lyall goes on record with her own views on the 'Woman Question,' Lyall's unwillingness to gossip about her fellow women novelists bolsters a

conception of her as properly feminine. This is reinforced by taking what some readers would view as a surprising position—given her support of women's rights—that women are too hard on men. Consistent with her published opinions, however, Lyall's words encourage a public image that renders support of women's access to activities in the public sphere as a non-threat to men and masculinity. Her political goals include promoting females, but not at the cost of men's rights; Lyall subtly dismisses any notion that men's rights would ever be compromised by women's equality in this response to Velvin's endeavor to gossip.

Many of Lyall's interviews also include visual accompaniments—sketches or photographs depicting Lyall at various ages in a variety of poses; like the words she uses in her interviews, the illustrations and photographs that accompany them continue tacit support of a public persona that complicates a contemporary understanding of the female activist in her support of traditional femininity and increased women's rights. As curator of a 2002 exhibition, *Beyond Oscar Wilde*, Margaret Stetz identifies these public portraits as an attempt by artists or writers to distinguish themselves as figures of importance, and as a way to market their work (Stetz 5). The exhibit, held at the University of Delaware's University Gallery, offered a new interpretation of the prevalence of portraiture in the late nineteenth-century British press, arguing that the increase in public interest in portraits, particularly of artists and writers, marked the onset of the "modern age of celebrity, which was ushered in by the fascination with public faces" (Stetz 5). Focusing on Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) as "a subject and interpreter of portraiture" for his aptitude in "exploit[ing] both the commercial and social possibilities" of the art (Stetz 5), the

retrospective also featured: Matthew Arnold and his wife, Francis; J.M. Barrie (1860-1937); George Egerton (1859-1945); and George Eliot, among others. By tracing how portraits of authors and artists were circulated, Stetz provides an in-depth analysis of how celebrity portraiture was carefully constructed and disseminated to a mass audience eager to gain insight into these famous figures' lives and genius. Like those featured in *Beyond Oscar Wilde*, by visually presenting herself to the public Lyall is able to extend the audience's reading of her character beyond the interview text and further forge a perception of intimacy. Stetz contends that one of the central reasons for women writers to circulate their image was to salve conservative concerns that a female writing on political issues such as women's rights was herself still "conventionally attractive and feminine in appearance" (Stetz 48). This certainly applies to Lyall, yet that she allows herself publicly displayed in the first place indicates that Lyall also does not see publicity and femininity as diametrically opposed.

Readers of Lyall's illustrated interviews could interpret her through physiognomic interrogations, as well as through the viewing of her appearance, dress, and surroundings. John Lavater, the leader of the physiognomy movement begun in the eighteenth century, argues that "the moral life of man, particularly, reveals itself in the lines, marks, and transitions of the countenance" (Lavater 8). Although physiognomy had become regarded earlier in the nineteenth century as a pseudoscience, the practice of reading moral character through physical signs nevertheless was a sitting-room activity into the twentieth century. Michael Gamper suggests that the pastime was significant to nineteenth-century city dwellers in making sense of arbitrary social conventions, as well

as to promote a connection between individuals in an industrial world where people were increasingly isolated from one another (Gamper 151). Stetz asserts that artists and writers knew that viewers of their image would be performing physiognomic readings, and in preparation, "compose[d] their expressions deliberately in ways that would send a desirable message" (Stetz 18). By making images available, Lyall opens herself up to physiognomic scrutiny. She forges a pseudo-relationship with her admirers, and makes clear that she has nothing to hide; that, as her interviews suggest, she indeed is quite morally grounded, and also quite like them, her middle-class readers. *Figure 4.1*, a photo taken of Lyall at the age of thirty-five, represents one of at least seven similar portraits accompanying published articles of Lyall.[66] The portrait culminates a four-image exposé of Lyall from ages seven, fourteen, twenty-seven, and finally the present day, in a section of *The Strand* called "Portraits of Celebrities." The corresponding text indicates that "less is known of any other writer of equal prominence of the present day," and asks, "who is this Edna Lyall?" ("Portraits of Celebrities. Miss Edna

Figure 4.1: Churchill, *Edna Lyall, Age Thirty-five*, ca. 1892. Photograph.

[66] The same or similar portraits are located in "Edna Lyall at Home.", "Edna Lyall," Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine May 1889, Dora M. Jones, "Leaders in Thought and Action. Vii.--'Edna Lyall'," The Young Man 5 (August 1891): 254, Black, Notable Women Authors of the Day, "Personal. Edna Lyall," Harper's Bazaar April 8 1893: 279, and Lyall, "My Early Literary Influences," 13.

Lyall"). The sketches are meant to provide some indication as to the character of the author who is "an earnest thinker, being possessed of a vivid imagination, a delicate humour, and a simple, vigorous, as well as graceful style of writing" ("Portraits of Celebrities. Miss Edna Lyall"). The sketch, which allows a clear view of her facial features, lends itself to the type of physiognomic analysis then popular with Lyall's readers. Black's 1893 interview with Lyall, which features the exact image as its frontispiece, in fact begins with just this type of examination. Black writes, "[Lyall] is about the medium height, pale in complexion, with a broad forehead which betokens a strongly intellectual and logical cast of mind. She has well-defined, arched eyebrows, and very dark blue eyes, which light up softly as she speaks" (Black 134). The image and the interviewer highlight what physiognomists using Lavater's system of assessment recognize as the most important features: the forehead and eyes (Gamper 9). According to Lavater's standards, Lyall's forehead denotes a facility for comprehension, a "tender and flexible" character, and a "superiority of imagination, wit, and acuteness"; her blue eyes indicate a general "weakness, effeminacy, and yielding," but their clarity also suggests contentment, with her wide, open eyes relaying acuteness and understanding as well (Lavater 12-15).

Understanding Lyall through her portrait yields a feminine woman, a counter to the masculine traits expounded in her promotion of such public, political platforms through her 'novels with a purpose.' To read Lyall in contrast pushes the limits of accepted gender roles, blurring the division between the two. While Lavater's physiognomic indications are sex-neutral, women holding traits more actively associated

with men could be viewed with suspicion. Despite his work being one hundred years old by the time of Lyall's celebrity, Lavater's pronouncement that "a woman with a beard is not so disgusting as a woman who acts the free-thinker" also extends to potential criticism of Lyall's active political agenda, both within her 'novels with a purpose' and more largely through her commitment to progressive social causes, especially women's suffrage (Gamper 17). Stetz makes the observation that by the late Victorian period, artists and writers connect images of women's heads to modernity, particularly the representation of the New Woman (Stetz 15), with whom Lyall, who supported woman's suffrage and extended roles, could be confused. That Lyall allows herself interpreted in recognizably feminine ways by the larger public suggests that the images were an effort to temper and ease possible public outcry surrounding her moral messages and the public activity involved in disseminating them.

Staging a physiognomic reading was one way that Lyall facilitated a feminine perception; descriptions of Lyall's behavior and images of her attire also attempt to counter interpretations of her as 'unwomanly.' Victorians were well aware of the impact that clothing had on the wearer as well as those wishing to understand who that wearer was. "The Art of Dress," a mid-nineteenth-century essay articulating the importance of fashion, suggests that for women, what they wear is an indicator of their interiority: "With their habitual delicacy of mind and reserve of manner, dress becomes a sort of symbolical language…a species of body phrenology, the study of which it would be madness to neglect" (Eastlake 68). The excerpt suggests that women's behavior forced upon them a reading of their appearance by onlookers. Because they kept their thoughts

private and restricted their deportment to a narrow set of movements the public looked to what they wore to decide women's characters. Lyall's posed photographs, with her somber and feminine physiognomic signs, support this type of reflection on the female countenance, as do accounts of Lyall engaging in shopping, the epitome of female middle-class behavior, newly reinvigorated by department stores. Escreet's biography makes consistent reference to Lyall's love of shopping, particularly for clothing, explaining, "a new dress was a great interest to her, and shopping quite a delight […]. If friends wanted her undivided attention in a walk, it was best to beguile her away from the shops" (Escreet 95). As a space that "mediated between women's traditional domestic sphere and a public one," the department store and its associated activity extended the proper limits of a woman's place (Lysack 21), and that Lyall's habit of shopping is emphasized suggests a concern with Lyall's feminine image; focusing on such an activity highlights her femininity.

Figure 4.2: Unknown, *Edna Lyall in Her Study*, ca. 1895. Photograph.

Coupled with the publishing of full-length images of Lyall and corresponding commentary on her dress, a "body phrenology" reading of Lyall encourages a view of femininity that exemplifies

conventional ideals while also expressing an independence from the most restrictive aspects of them. Interviews with Lyall emphasize her attire, with Black commenting on meeting Lyall that "she wears a simply-made gown of olive-green material, relieved with embroidery of a lighter color" (Black 134). Lyall displays herself, not in bloomers—the mark of the New Woman—but in a richly toned dress simply made (*Figure 4.2*). The loose-fitting cut of the gown identifies Lyall with the changes in women's fashion that occur in the 1880s and '90s under the dress reform movement, when "clothing became plainer…and some women loosened their stays to engage in more active pursuits of careers and sports" (H. E. Roberts 567). The luxuriousness of fabric and the lace accents, however, save Lyall from being too radical in her fashion choices, which, if too alternative, could risk her political and social agendas (Kortsch 97). More than just suggesting a career focus, Lyall's sensible dress, which lacks the presence of a tight-fitting corset—an item synonymous with masculine submission (H. E. Roberts 567)—also indicates her political views, which, although liberal, are not so liberal as to eschew the gown in favor of pants. Lyall's dress reinforces a successful middle-class persona that does little to threaten the status quo, yet its dark color betrays a seriousness of purpose, a habit in dress the media pick up on, with one story devoted to the unique clothing of women authors including Lyall in their report and highlighting her simple dresses and penchant for dark colors ("Letter for Women. Literary Ladies' Fashion"). As an outspoken activist seeking results, Lyall's public image mattered. In concluding her interview for *The Windsor Magazine*, Velvin comments, "Edna Lyall is not only a writer of genius, but is also that somewhat rare thing in the present day—a true, womanly

woman" (Velvin 24). Velvin's summation of her womanly status indicates that Lyall is successful in negotiating a feminine persona while promoting causes disruptive of prescribed gender roles and behaviors. By pairing images supporting a feminine disposition with visual cues and interview text promoting liberal feminist views, Lyall counters assumptions that a public woman is disreputable and instead encourages extending women's rights through viewing her as an example of one such woman desiring them.

Figure 4.3: Unknown, *Edna Lyall's Study*, ca. 1895. Photograph.

In addition to publishing images of Lyall, a common practice of New Journalism in celebrity 'At Homes' was to include an image of a writer's study so that readers could attempt to learn their "habits of genius" (Stetz 34); Lyall does not avoid this custom in her interview with Velvin. Her workspace (*Figure 4.3*) is photographed and rendered twice in the interview: as the backdrop to Lyall's full-length photo, and then alone, so that the reader may gaze at the space. While readers may have learned new ways to develop their genius, the image is more instructive in what it reveals about Lyall's priorities as a feminist and writer. Velvin describes the room as "distinctly characteristic of the

author's refinement and personality" in its lack of ostentation in favor of practicality and comfort (Velvin 21). Although it might reflect Lyall's simple tastes, her study also features accoutrements that emphasize her liberal habits. A quick scan of the room conveys that it is a working study, with the image capturing the space in disarray, as if Lyall took time out of working to meet Velvin. Velvin tells readers that the bookcases are filled with "books of instruction and reference, well but plainly bound" (Velvin 21)—she does not write "silly novels" (Eliot) but books well-researched. Central in the photograph is Lyall's typewriter, with a slip of paper prepared for writing. A journal's synopsis of the Velvin interview describes Lyall's use of the typewriter as one of the features that makes her a "modern woman" ("Edna Lyall's Literary Struggles"); this modern trait of Lyall, however, does not override her feminine persona. While the typewriter symbolized women's entry into the working world, with the effect that beginning in the 1880s women replaced men in secretarial and office assistant positions (Sussman 255), Lyall makes clear in her description of her work habits her solid middle-class standing and domestic priorities. Velvin details Lyall's daily routine as follows: "[Lyall] works steadily at her typewriter until twelve o'clock, when she goes for a quiet walk […]. A few calls in the afternoon, and then comes what to Edna Lyall is the happiest part of the day, 'the children's hour,'…when for the time being she devotes herself entirely to the little ones and their games, and enjoys it as much as any of them" (Velvin 24). This description of Lyall's day positions writing as part of a mundane custom alongside other female duties such as house calls and child play. Furthermore, an enthusiasm for play infantilizes Lyall, thereby counteracting the effects that her work

habits, which, despite their daily brevity, constitute a routine engagement in a profession, might have on readers wary of women who work. Explained in this way, Lyall cannot be accidentally lumped with New Women that were so feared in their breaking down of gendered binaries and power relations.[67] Velvin's piece describes Lyall on the cusp of new behavior acceptable for women, but not overly so, careful not to cross the line into masculine territory, that of an office outside the home, preoccupied with work and not family. With Velvin and other journalists as allies, Lyall's reputation management focused on navigating and presenting competing ideals, and in this manner she was triumphant; esteemed as a woman, this meant that her active lobbying came under the purview of femininity at the final analysis. Doing so moved notions of feminine behavior beyond the domestic realm while still remaining decidedly 'womanly,' with the effect that women gain increasing access to the public sphere and political agency. With Lyall as a role model and example for women who do enter the public sphere, her adversaries have little to use in their attempts to describe public, politically active women as potentially destructive of an entire culture.

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Fictional Auto/Biographies

Although Lyall embraces New Journalism as a literary celebrity, her literary style resists the same sort of use of innovative practices when fictionalizing her real-life experiences in *The Autobiography of a Slander* and *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist*. In their

[67] For an analysis of gender dynamics at the *fin de siècle*, see Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 4.

form—allegorical autobiography and biography—their stylistic continuity with work by earlier authors implies a need to adhere to accepted novelistic standards in order to sustain an ideological critique of English social practices. Written within two years of each other and at the zenith of accusations surrounding her sanity and religiosity, these novellas present opposing conclusions to the same problem: gossip. Although transposed onto male protagonists, the events of Lyall's life are evident in the stories' telling. While at first glance these novellas present little beyond a traditional condemnation of gossip as harmful, further scrutiny of the texts repays analysis. In *The Autobiography of a Slander*, England's rampant xenophobia is exposed as malicious and immoral while the tale's political undertones challenge the notion of separate spheres in its devastating effects on one individual. *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* corrects what *The Autobiography of a Slander's* tale cannot—the deleterious consequences of idle-chatter—but only with the assistance of an interested third party, suggesting that in the industrialized age and its multiple methods of communication, a public person needs a public representative.

In *The Autobiography of a Slander*, Lyall personifies Slander as a trait born from the devil. The *bildungsroman* is a parody of allegorical tales in the Christian tradition. Sublimating religious teaching beneath the surface of the text, the novella assaults a favorite social pastime, gossiping. In an interview Lyall emphasizes that it "'*was* written "with a purpose," and was suggested by a very disagreeable incident,'" that being Lyall's female impersonator and the rumors of Lyall's insanity (Lyall qtd. in Black 141). She continues, "'I wrote the little story, taking different types of gossip for each stage in the

Slander's growth and baleful power—the gossip of small dull towns, of country life, of cathedral precincts, of London clubs, and the gossip of members of my own profession in search of "copy"'" (Lyall qtd. in Black 142). The shilling paperback with cover art depicting a "serpent crawling out of a teacup" soon saw its 24,000th edition published (Escreet 65), with many thousands more to follow. Reaching such large distribution numbers means that Lyall's tale resonated with its audience, who found it "brilliant" (Escreet 65), even if reviewers claimed, despite being "skillfull and fluent," that Lyall was "a little hard on gossip […][,] Exaggerat[ing] the poisonous qualities of this sort of reptile" ("Lyall's (Edna) *Autobiography of a Slander* (Book Review)"). As a cautionary tale, it is not unique in its moralizing stance on gossip, following in the tradition of such works as William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *Othello* (ca. 1603), Jane Austen's (1775-1817) *Emma* (1816), and the lesser-known novel by George Meredith (1828-1909), *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), to name just a few.[68] The serpent in the teacup, Slander, does much more than expose England's penchant for gossip, however; the novella scrutinizes prohibitive roles for women and also situates Englishness as xenophobic and self-serving, calling into question the morality of the very institutions that Lyall names in her meta-commentary on the practice.

In a nightmare tale that mirrors a successful game of 'telephone,' Slander enters the world over the tea table in a drawing room and reaches maturity in a matter of days. The English ladies, whose impetus for beginning rumors about Sigismund Zaluski are

[68] For an extended analysis of gossip across various texts and in culture, see Patricia Ann Meyer Spacks, Gossip (New York: Knopf, 1985).

that he is foreign, wealthy, attempts to approximate Englishness, is not quite attractive, and is about to be engaged to a town darling that is a favorite-nephew's crush, speak flippantly about Mr. Zaluski yet welcome him to afternoon tea. Slander has an easy adolescence, and leaves the town of Muddleton with the highest recommendations—through a letter to the archdeacon's wife. From there Slander travels to a dinner party, where he meets with a languishing author, who shares the story in hopes of collaborating it at his London Club. Overhearing the accusations of Nihilism and atheism, another club member writes to his Russian acquaintance in St. Petersburg to ascertain the truth, with the letter intercepted in a routine raid on the recipient's home. Slander's words convince the Russian secret police to incarcerate the innocent Zaluski, having returned to St. Petersburg on a quick business trip, and he dies months later in one of their prisons, with a sullied reputation and a lost love connection.

Slander does not break in chapters, but rather each instance of significant growth in the parasitical Slander's life is highlighted by an announcement of its starting a new stage, totaling seven in all, followed by an epigram summarizing the transgressions that allow Slander to mature. The seven stages resonate with the seven deadly sins, each worse than the next, with the form of the tale's presentation mirroring the content, building anticipation and speeding towards an inevitably destructive conclusion. Slander cannot survive if its hosts refuse to engage in sinful misdeeds, but these are abundant in each stage of its journey, indicating the rampant sin of the English people, whether church official or layperson, woman or man, living in the country or city.

Slander's birth in Muddleton, "a small, dull, country town" (*Slander* 5), starts with female gossips, where boredom, personal motives, and fears of miscegenation coalesce to initiate Zaluski's imminent downfall. Although gossip has been attributed to women since the story of Eve and her "unwise speaking and unwise listening," another explanation develops in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, ascribing gossiping tendencies to women because they have little else to do after their exclusion from "significant economic function" and in their "lacking good education and meaningful occupation" (Spacks 41). Because Lyall begins the novella with the comment that Muddleton "laboured under the usual disadvantage of a dearth of bachelors and a superfluity of spinsters" (*Slander* 5), the latter explanation appears the larger impetus for Slander's beginning and subsequent growth. Unspoken, then, is the response for what to do with England's surplus women—provide them with a vocation and extend the right to vote so that they talk of civic matters instead of propagate malicious rumors. That Slander arises from a tearoom conversation is no surprise given the novella's introductory remarks on the town and the lack of options available to its women unable or unwilling to marry.

Ladies with little to do but pepper slanderous gossip "every now and then, [to add] a piquant flavor to the homely fare provided by the commonplace life" (*Slander* 7), provide Slander the opportunity of entering the world when Zaluski's behavior distinguishes himself in ways the English deem inferior, in particular his outburst of emotion. Mrs. O'Reilly, a town matriarch, says to her fellow gossipmonger, Lena Houghton, "'as to his being a Pole, why, I think it rather pleased me than otherwise'"

(*Slander* 8), but his less than English tearoom etiquette that instigates Slander's birth suggests that she thinks differently; Mrs. O'Reilly claims Zaluski to be "nothing less than a Nihilist" after he grows too impassioned over a discussion of Russian despotism (*Slander* 7). In writing on the novel of manners, James Kincaid suggests that naturalizing codes of behavior results in manners being "forms of cultural power and control" (Kincaid 88). Zaluski thus characterizes himself as uncontrollable, and Mrs. O'Reilly's gossip emanates at least in part out of an outburst disruptive of social order. Behavior aside, Zaluski intends to marry Gertrude Morley, a local English girl that Mrs. O'Reilly's nephew "is over head and ears in love with" (*Slander* 9); in stating the she "'had always hoped for something very different for dear Gertrude'" (*Slander* 9), Mrs. O'Reilly makes plain that what she means is that she had always hoped for something very much the same for Gertrude. A man unfamiliar with English etiquette and rules of behavior threatens the status quo; marrying an Englishwoman would facilitate a breakdown of English values, as through their progeny Zaluski would then have the potential to pass on his radical ways.

Mr. Blackthorne, the town curate, echoes Mrs. O'Reilly's xenophobic remarks in his facilitation of Slander. Poor pulpit skills and an arrogant and envious churchman drive Slander onward. The curate, Mr. Blackthorne, whom Slander describes as "seem[ing] to fancy…that with the poor his work ended" (*Slander* 21-22), fails to capture the spinster Houghton's attention in church, leading her to ruminate on Zaluski and Morley (*Slander* 20), and, after the dull sermon, seek him out to share her concerns. Failing to keep her cares confidential, Blackthorne, in a fit of jealousy over Zaluski

playing tennis better than himself, gossips once more, fueling Slander's growth. When Mrs. Milton-Cleave, a Muddleton socialite, commends Zaluski's skills, Blackthorne responds, "'I am afraid I am full of prejudice, and consider that no once can equal a true-born Briton'" (*Slander* 31). This reply follows an earlier playful jest by Zaluski, where he teases Blackthorne: "'Mr. Blackthorne cannot make up his mind about me. One day I appear to him to be Catholic, the next Comtist, the next Orthodox Greek, the next a convert to the Anglican communion. I am a mystery, you see!'" (*Slander* 27-28). Zaluski's remarks color a reading of Blackthorne's, where being a "true-born Briton" means more than just being born on British soil. It also entails being immediately identifiable by one's religious practices and behaving consummate with English notions of masculinity. Zaluski's ability to pass as Catholic, atheist, Orthodox Greek, and even Anglican Christian reinforces popular notions of mutability in foreigners and its associated threat to English identity—Zaluski, like Bram Stoker's (1847-1912) Dracula a few years later, figures as a site of anxiety over fears of reverse colonization.[69] Zaluski's charm, moreover, in making light of his unreadability at Blackthorne's expense, wins him "friendly banter" with the nearby ladies, leaving "the curate [standing] by feeling rather out of it" (*Slander* 28). With English masculinity linked to taciturn behavior and "an appeal to honesty and authenticity" (Tosh 88), Zaluski not only does not hold these traits, but his popularity in the community suggests a failure in English masculinity to secure female favor. As a curate, Blackthorne is supposed to resist

[69] For an insightful analysis of *Dracula* (1897) and reverse colonization, see Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," Victorian Studies 33.4 (Summer 1990).

personal temptations, yet in Zaluski playing better tennis than Blackthorne and securing an enviable love match, Blackthorne reveals his own sinful habits in xenophobic comments and his lack of charity and goodwill in gossiping unconfirmed news about Zaluski to Mrs. Milton-Cleave. That the curate Blackthorne is such easy prey for Slander denotes a corruption in English morality down to its core.

Slander's trip to London places the English in no less harsh of a light; regardless of locale, Slander flourishes. Up to this point in the story, gossip circulates but remains contained within a small community because it is passed on orally. Letter writing and novel writing, however, conspire to wreak havoc on Zaluski's reputation. "Possessed by an inordinate desire for influence" (*Slander* 36), Mrs. Milton-Cleave shares the gossip with Mrs. Selldon, the archdeacon's wife at Dulminster, who, herself very dull, passes on the tale to a celebrity novelist while at a dinner party. The author, Mark Shrewsbury, makes his insularity known when Mrs. Selldon asks whether he likes travelling and he replies negatively: "'I detest travelling […]. When I need change I just settle down in some quiet country district'" (*Slander* 47). He carries Slander forward in his embellishment of the tale, which he tentatively titles "Like a Green Bay Tree," even taking it to his London club to share as a "story of a successful scoundrel" (*Slander* 52, 54). Shrewsbury betrays himself as an unskilled historian and a novice writer in his proffering the tale without checking his facts and relying on his limited knowledge of the world outside England. Worse than him, however, is Gertrude Morley's uncle, Henry Crichton-Morley, who overhears Shrewsbury and, based on status alone, believes the tale: "'Shrewsbury the novelist […]. A sterling fellow. And he heard it from an

archdeacon's wife. Confound it all! the thing must be true, then'" (*Slander* 54). With no personal knowledge of either Shrewsbury or Mrs. Selldon, Morley is all too willing to accept gossip as fact, and it is at this moment, in a letter Morley writes to a friend in Russia to confirm the tale, that Zaluski's fate is sealed and the Russian police find their evidence to convict him of Nihilism upon his return to the East. In its move from country to city, Slander develops out of a general lack of morality in so many being willing to malign an individual unknown to them, be it because of a need for a conversation when a poor conversationalist, a story when lacking imaginative acuity, or simply because one believes in a rumor because of the gossiper's social status. The far-reaching implications of this morality tale imply a need for the English not only to revise their own principles on the 'Woman Question,' but also to foster a greater understanding and acceptance of cultures beyond the Isles. Had their xenophobia been less, and their awareness of Russian political structures been greater, Slander would not have had so rich a life.

Lyall's tale spares no one in her attack on gossipers, and while enormously successful, not all readers were in accord with her views. Commenting about the book, one contemporary reviewer, in fact, defends the guilty: "the slander in question is merely the statement that a Polish merchant, who loses his temper in a drawing-room about Russian despotism, must be a Nihilist in disguise. Anyone might have said that" ("Lyall's (Edna) *Autobiography of a Slander* (Book Review)"). The reviewer, however, misses the point, and in fact reproduces what Lyall cautions against. The 'purpose' of the tale is lost, both in its attack on gossip, and in the subtext of the very nature of a corruption in Englishness itself. That *Slander* is the only one of Lyall's twenty-two published works to

end unhappily, with Lyall commenting, "'it had to be,' though it cost her many a tear!" (Escreet 65), underscores the serious nature of the hyperbolically tragic bestseller. The gossiping habits of the English, when traced as Lyall does in *Slander*, suggest that personal accountability and ideological reform must occur or else the English risk succumbing to the devil in their delight in persecuting those dissimilar to them.

If Zaluski had had a publicist, he might have survived Slander's attack. That, at least, is one conclusion that can be drawn from reading *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist*. As Corrick points out in her analysis of the text, Lyall's concerns over the value of creative writing and the larger public's perception of its worth, as well as the effort it takes to produce fiction, are mirrored in this fictional biography (Corrick "'Nobody Ever Guessed...'" 67). On these points Lyall is in accord with contemporary male authors who struggled with the same misconceptions about professional writing;[70] Lyall consistently battled reports of her easy ascension to literary celebrity status, refuting time and again the rumors that she was an overnight sensation.[71] In an autobiographical account Lyall conceives of writing as metaphorical combat, finding inspiration in her own ancestor's

[70] For a non-fiction account, useful critical studies include Adams, Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity, and Martin A Danahay, Gender at Work in Victorian Culture (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2005). For fictional renderings, see, for instance, George Gissing, The Private Papers of Henry Rycroft (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2007). Perhaps the most influential in making a case for authorship as hard work is the *kunstlerroman* published earlier in the century by Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (New York: Modern Library, 2000).

[71] Instances of this misperception, as well as Lyall's correcting of it, can be found in "Edna Lyall's Literary Struggles," Current Literature 17.5 (May 1895), Ellen Velvin, "Illustrated Interview with Edna Lyall," Windsor Magazine January 1895, and "Personal. Edna Lyall."

battlefield woes to confront the "hard times" that preceded the publication and successful reception of *We Two*, the novel that made her a celebrated popular writer:

> 'I well remember turning into St. Paul's one day, after the sorrows of Paternoster Row, and miserably wondering whether I must after all give up. I made up my mind to go on until the list of publishers was exhausted, and as I walked down the south aisle a little thing gave me fresh courage. I caught sight of the monument of one of our kinsfolk who was killed at Camperdown, and I thought, "You died fighting—I'll die fighting, too."' ("Edna Lyall's Literary Struggles")

It is no surprise, therefore, that Lyall devises Vaughan's struggle for vocational success, and more importantly, personal and public respect, in terms of a battle, one between the writer and his twin brother, Lawrence Vaughan, whose own claim to fame comes from a tenuous combat victory that turns him into a national war hero. As a private figure with morals, Vaughan refuses to correct the rumors running rampant surrounding his personality and work ethic, rumors that L. Vaughan plays a part in circulating. It is up to his lifelong friend, Sydney Wharnecliffe, to set the record straight, doing so in a published account of Vaughan's life. Wharnecliffe confides that he is "perhaps stimulated to make the attempt by certain irritating remarks which one overhears now often enough at clubs or in drawing-rooms, or indeed wherever one goes" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 5). Unwilling to refute the allegations himself, Wharnecliffe acts as intermediary in ensuring that Vaughan's reputation recovers from slanderous gossip. As

a study of the life of a writer at the *fin-de-siècle*, *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* stresses the necessity of working with publicists and the media in managing one's reputation when a celebrity figure subject to public scrutiny.

The opening pages of Vaughan's biography establish the need for Wharnecliffe's intervention. Desiring to "write a true version of [his] friend's career" in order to dispel the myth that, "Like Byron, he woke one morning and found himself famous" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 6) and "that a novel is turned out as easily as water from a tap" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 8), Wharnecliffe catalogs the accounts of Vaughan in the media only to conclude that "these tell little of the real life of the man" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 7). Wharnecliffe states,

> Everyone knows his face. […]. Yet somehow these works of art don't satisfy me, and, as I write, I see before me something very different than the latest photograph […]. You might talk to him for long in an ordinary way and never suspect that he was a genius; but when you have him to yourself…he all at once becomes a different being. […]. For the rest, there are of course the neat little accounts of his birth, his parentage, his education, &c., &c. (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 7)

Wharnecliffe's conclusion dismisses the idea that physiognomy, casual interaction, and surface details provide one with the tools needed to judge a person. Instead, Wharnecliffe purposes to share the most intimate details of Vaughan's life so that the public can accord him due respect. This respect hinges, as Corrick explains, on the

personal traumas that Vaughan endures and his ability to write despite major setbacks (Corrick "'Nobody Ever Guessed...'" 68-69). In the course of the short history of Vaughan's life, the reader learns that he lost his mother while simultaneously undergoing a 'crisis of faith;' chose to care for his alcoholic and verbally and physically abusive father who disrespected his career choice because it was not 'manly' enough, to the point that he burned Vaughan's unpublished novel as kindle; lost the interest of his affection, Freda Merrifield, who fell for his brother instead due to false rumors; and was swindled out of his share of his father's inheritance by the same greedy, unethical twin. Sharing these incredibly private instances of pain, while seemingly intrusive, is, however, necessary if Vaughan has any chance at influencing negative public perceptions of his character.

These public views are conveyed to Wharnecliffe by, among others, Merrifield, who, because of her brief interaction with Vaughan lacks clear insight into his character, relying instead on L. Vaughan's depiction of his brother. A war hero and, because of his military career, his father's favorite, L. Vaughan uses his reputation on the battlefield to sully his brother's name in order to win Merrifield's love, which had been bestowed on Vaughan. With Vaughan himself unwilling to play dirty, rumors of his selfishness and maltreatment of his father abound unchecked. It is only when Wharnecliffe finds opportunities to interject the truth that Vaughan is eventually vindicated. When Wharnecliffe encounters Merrifield at a London dinner party, he takes the occasion to discuss Vaughan. Merrifield uses this as a moment to speak positively about L. Vaughan while also denigrating his brother: "'I wish Lawrence could be more with Major

Vaughan…for he is his father's favorite. You see he is such a good talker, and Derrick—well, he is absorbed in his books…he must be a very uncongenial companion to the poor Major. […]. It is true, isn't it, that he has quite given up his life to writing and cares for nothing else?'" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 113). Wharnecliffe, incensed by this debasement of Vaughan's character, replies, "'Well, he has deliberately sacrificed his best chance of success by leaving London and burying himself in the provinces…and as to caring for nothing but writing, why he never gets more than two or three hours a day for it'" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 113). Wharnecliffe's efforts pay off, as Merrifield, after quietly listening to his detailing of Vaughan's life caring for the Major, admits, "'I have been misled…I had gained quite a wrong impression of him" (*Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* 113). Merrifield soon after jilts her fiancé, reconciling with Vaughan years later by biography's end. By sharing this personal tragedy-cum-romance involving Vaughan, Wharnecliffe achieves two things: first, he is able to repair Vaughan's personal life, and second, in writing of this event, he also depicts Vaughan as wrongfully persecuted, and all the more a hero for his suffering silently. Making Vaughan a hero of his own tale, Wharnecliffe constructs a public identity that counters negative publicity circulating about Vaughan, especially that his life was an easy one.

Merrifield's reconsideration of Vaughan and their later reconciliation symbolize a larger union of sympathy between Vaughan and his admirers, personally and professionally. In recording Vaughan's trials for all to see, Wharnecliffe manages to complicate a simple narrative of the ease of the life of a writer. One reviewer's accolade of *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist*, suggests that Lyall was successful in her mission to re-

imagine fiction writing as hard work: "In substance, as well as in form, it is the manliest of Edna Lyall's books" ("Lyall's (Edna) *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist* (Book Review)"). The highest form of praise, being 'manly' in the nineteenth-century was a positive term indicating courage, resolution, tenacity, virtue, and wisdom (Tosh 73), and, as "a set of values by which men judged other men," manliness was not a birthright but rather "lay in the power of one's peers to confirm or deny" (Tosh 5, 14). This instance of praise, more than just reinforcing the vocational status of writing, also provides a glimpse into the expanding field of acceptable gender behavior. An acknowledged 'womanly woman,' Lyall could also produce 'manly' fiction. Her peers could view her, like Vaughan, as doing quality work, work that took effort. The review establishes that Lyall's aim to manage her reputation and at the same time extend the purview of women's roles in society through public outreach is achieved.

Acknowledging in an unpublished letter that no biography would be forthcoming during her lifetime ("Letter Indicating"), Lyall nevertheless gives the reader insight into her personal struggle for success in *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist*. What is clear in reading *The Autobiography of a Slander* and *Derrick Vaughan, Novelist,* in addition to learning of Lyall's own life, is that without a public platform, and even a publicist working on one's behalf, one's reputation is always at risk, especially when challenging the status quo. In the age of New Journalism one's private life is no longer private, and a willingness to share intimate details goes a long way in shaping a public image that affects public policy.

A Political End

As a public feminist, Lyall could not have emerged from the private realm to advocate as successfully as she does without the help of New Journalism's emphasis on celebrity culture. Although Arnold derided Stead's New Journalism as "*feather-brained*" for its soft approach to news (Arnold 638-39), Stead saw political possibilities in a personal reporting style. This format, which may have sensationalized and exacerbated as much as it legislated for specific political goals, also accorded celebrities, in a paper's race for advertising revenue, a mass audience for their private opinions. While scholars such as John Goodbody see the downfall of politically extreme New Journalism with the rise of 'puff pieces' found in newly expanded areas meant to bolster income, such as "The Women's Column" (Goodbody 158-60), I would suggest that radical political stories did not disappear entirely from New Journalism press coverage, but instead were incorporated into the very accounts accused of their replacement. Not only were female literary celebrities particularly attractive to periodicals for their large popular readership base, but there also existed public curiosity over such traditionally private individuals. If a female celebrity chose to sit for 'At Homes' then she wielded the power to hold public attention, and for a woman such as Lyall, this was an opportunity to engage in politics in a very public way. Under the auspices of inquiry into the domestic life and novelistic style of Lyall, in interviews Lyall was able to direct attention to woman's suffrage and religious tolerance, in addition to other social and political causes. Lyall's power at the time was all the more so because of her delicate navigation of her public persona. As a feminist working within the constraints of Victorian gender ideology she successfully

expanded notions of acceptable female behavior; obituary notices confirm this by commenting that she was "respect[ed] and admire[d]" as a woman regardless of what one thought of her novels ("'Lyall, Edna, Life of,' J.M. Escreet (Book Review)"). Although women's suffrage did not occur in her lifetime, her public support of women's civil rights certainly contributed to the growing understanding of women as equal civic partners.

Lyall published twenty-two works, including novels, short introductions, children's tales, and a play before her early death at the age of forty-five. While it is counterintuitive that the public eagerly consumed novels by such a didactic writer, the timeliness of her storylines to contemporary events likely prompted audiences to do so. Shortly after her death, the *Englishwoman's Review* commented on Lyall's exceptional, yet peculiar, popularity: "It says much for the influence she exercised, something also for the youth of the country, that work so high-toned, so refined, should have been so eagerly sought after and appreciated both by men and women" ("Obituary. Miss Ada Ellen Bayly ('Edna Lyall')"). In translating her personal beliefs and experiences into fiction—from her crisis of faith and bouts with multiple slanderous accusations, to her stance on Irish Home Rule and the Armenian massacres—Lyall was able to connect to her audience, an audience hungry for contemporary, personal accounts of a 'real' British woman. New Journalism strengthened this connection to her admirers, making Lyall more intimately tied to her followers, but also helping to distribute her political beliefs to a mass audience capable of changing policy.

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