‘The Song of the Pen’: Popular Romantic Literature 1839-1889

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signed **……..... Cheryl Deedman**

Date **…….....**

Abstract

Nineteenth-century entrepreneurial publishers exploited the opportunity presented by lower print production costs and higher rates of literacy to produce a proliferation of cheap romantic fiction in the form of penny-a-part novels, fiction-carrying penny periodicals and penny novelettes. Some of these had vast circulations, and it is possible that as many as half of all working-class women regularly read romance stories. The content of penny romance stories published between 1839 and 1889 has been little studied. Cultural historians have successfully used 'quality' literature to understand the social, moral and intellectual attitudes of a given period or group, recognising that it can both reflect, as well as reinforce, a culture. This thesis takes the same approach with this popular literature.

Nineteenth-century penny romantic stories are formulaic. They have common themes and plotlines: in a usual story the heroine becomes separated from her family or is orphaned and is without the 'protection' of a parent or older relative. She meets a hero, but she faces many trials and dilemmas before they can be united. Her most important role is to protect her virtue and reputation. Those who behave appropriately are rewarded with marriage and a 'happy ever after,' those who don't are punished, usually dying unpleasantly.

This thesis examines how the penny publishing industry developed, who the key producers were and what influenced them. It examines the clear messages penny romantic fiction contained and the role they played in the construction of gender roles. Women are told to be passive, to remain in the domestic sphere and to aim to become wives. I argue that these stories played a strong role in perpetuating patriarchal structures and the subordination of women.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
LJ	*The London Journal and Weekly Record of Literature, Science and Art*
FH	*The Family Herald. A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information and Amusement*
GFS	Girls' Friendly Society
NRS	National Readership Survey
RLF	Royal Literary Fund
RTS	Religious Tract Society
SDUK	Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aims and scope of this thesis

> Most of the younger women and some of the older ones were fond of what they called 'a bit of a read', and their mental fare consisted almost exclusively of the novelette. Several of the hamlet women took in one of these weekly, as published, for the price was but one penny, and these were handed round until the pages were thin and frayed with use. Copies of others found their way there from neighbouring villages, or from daughters in service, and there was always quite a library of them in circulation.[1]

Flora Thompson, an English poet and novelist, included this passage in her most famous work, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, a semi-autobiographical, fictional description of life in rural Oxfordshire at the end of the nineteenth century. On reading this I was immediately intrigued. What were these novelettes? What did they look like? What were they about? Who wrote and published them and why? The women Thompson described were obviously enthusiastic about them – what was their attraction? They cost only a penny but nevertheless, why did these women allocate their limited financial resources to this reading material? The comment about the 'informal library' also struck me as particularly interesting; these stories were clearly being *shared* by nineteenth-century women and read by a number of them, making them objects of importance, interest and community.

When I first read *Lark Rise* I was struggling with the lack of resources available to the historian interested in the personal lives of working-class women. Official reports and documents rarely made me feel a connection with their subjects, and the number of autobiographical, or eye-witness accounts, is limited. I wanted to understand how working-class women made sense of their lives, the class and gender oppression they faced, and how they managed the demands made on their time and energy. They seemed to be under pressure from both middle-class philanthropists and commentators and their own peer group to achieve a specific notion of the 'ideal' wife and mother during a period of social, political and economic change. Why did some working-class women accept the only choice available to them, dependency on a husband or other male relative, and the double-burden of doing both paid work and housework? I had also wondered about how and where

[1] FloraThompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 109.

nineteenth-century women found relaxation and happiness. I suspected these novelettes might provide answers to some of these questions.

Thompson had mentioned the *Bow Bells Novelettes*, and I found a collection of these in the British Library, dating from 1879. They are romances (a term I will define more fully below) concerned with the love lives of female protagonists and the trials they faced in the pursuit of marriage and happiness. These novelettes were published by John Dicks as an extension to his successful penny illustrated weekly magazine, *Bow Bells.* This had been launched in 1862 and was described by Andrew King as 'a descendant' of the *London Journal,* a family penny periodical launched in 1845.[2] The *London Journal* contained poems, answers to correspondents, 'improving' articles, for example on history, and household hints, recipes, puzzles, jokes, bizarre facts and, most importantly, serialised fiction and complete short stories. This fiction became known as the 'literature of the kitchen' because of its perceived popularity with female domestic servants.[3] It was the biggest selling periodical of this type in the 1850s and an obvious choice for a study of the fiction that preceded the *Bow Bells Novelettes*.[4] I discovered that this penny fiction had an earlier ancestor – novels that had been broken into parts to sell for a penny. Edward Lloyd was the publisher most closely associated with these, and I found many examples of penny-a-part fiction from the late 1830s and the 1840s in the British Library's Barry Ono Collection. Lloyd's early works were plagiarisms, but he recognised the potential market was expanding and began commissioning authors to write suitable works, some of which were tales about love.[5]

Lloyd's titles often contain the word 'romance', but this had a specific meaning in the early nineteenth century, being at that time associated with extravagance and sensationalism. *Walker's Dictionary* of 1846 defined romance as 'a tale of wild adventures in war and love; a lie, a fiction.'[6] Margaret Dalziel described how early penny stories were tales of terror, the supernatural, violence and crime and these became known as 'penny bloods' (for example J M Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre; or, the Feast of Blood: a Romance.* 1845). These stories

[2] Andrew King, *The London Journal 1845-1883: Periodicals, Production and Gender* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 155.
[3] Andrew King cites a *Saturday Review* article written in March 1856 that marked these family periodicals as reading for servants girls and so the 'literature of the kitchen.' King, *The London Journal,* p. 30; Sally Mitchell, *The Fallen Angel. Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835-1880* (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981), pp. 1-2.
[4] In 1854 the publisher Charles Knight reported *The London Journal* to have sold 450,000-500,000 copies a week. Alice A Clowes, *Charles Knight: A Sketch* (London: Bentley, 1892), p. 226; *The London Journal* is available both in physical form at the BL and on-line via Proquest (the Chadwyck-Healey British Periodicals database) < http://www.proquest.com/products-services/british_periodicals.html>.
[5] Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850. A Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes in Early Victorian Urban England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 29 & 55.
[6] *Walker's Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1846), p. 447.

had elements of the Gothic and melodrama genres, with mysterious happenings in unrealistic settings involving exotic characters, such as gypsies and pirates.[7] They also had aspects of the sentimental and domestic stories of the eighteenth century, which emphasised the feelings and emotions of the heroine, with the domestic novels seeking to describe 'life as it is'.[8] The love story – the relationship between the heroine and her hero - became more and more central to Lloyd's fiction.[9] The modern definition of romance is 'a love affair; a feeling of excitement associated with love; a book or film about a love affair', and, as this thesis concerns stories where love and the relationship between the protagonists is central, this definition will be used in this thesis.[10] Romantic fiction will be taken to mean any fiction where the love interests of the main protagonists are at the centre of the narrative, like the *Bow Bells Novelettes*.

This thesis examines love stories, serialised novels, short stories and penny novelettes published in the fifty years from 1839 to 1889. Literary historian Louis James said that in 1839 'the road to the new fiction was open' and gives this as the year that Edward Lloyd published his first best-selling serialised romantic novel, *Ela the Outcast.*[11] Nineteen-eighty-nine marks the year before the launch of *Pearson's Weekly* which, according to Richard Altick, 'revolutionised the lowest level of cheap journalism' and sold to a multi-million readership that would eventually become the audience of cinema and TV.[12] I have selected for analysis stories that have, at their centre, the romantic concerns and relationships of the protagonists. The thesis will investigate who produced this romantic literature, and will examine the content, the plots, characters, settings and narratives to identify the common elements it contained.

The historiography indicated that there had been points of tension between the bourgeois notions of what a woman (as daughter/wife/mother) should be and the actual patterns of

[7] Victor Neuburg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 151-53; Peter Haining, *The Penny Dreadful: or, Strange, Horrid and Sensational Tales* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976), p. 162; James, *Fiction*, pp. 114-34.
[8] Andrew King, 'Literature of the Kitchen: Cheap Serial Fiction of the 1840s and 1850s', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 38-53 (p. 44).
[9] Margaret Dalziel, *Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (London: Cohen and West, 1957), pp. 15-16.
[10] *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[11] Despite James recording Ela as first published in 1839, it is not entirely clear when it was first published. King gives its dates as 1837-9, the first edition of *Ela the Outcast* by Thomas Peckett Prest in the British Library was published in penny parts by Lloyd in 1839, Helen R Smith says Ela was first published in 1840, and Montague Summers gives the date as 1841. James, *Fiction*, p.29; King 'Literature of the Kitchen', p. 44; Helen R Smith, *New Light on Sweeney Todd: Thomas Peckett Prest, James Malcolm Rymer and Elizabeth Caroline Grey* (Bloomsbury: Jarndyce, 2002), p. 30; Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography* (London: Fortune, 196?[exact date unknown]), p. 126.
[12] Richard D Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1957), pp. 363-64; Victor Neuburg, *Popular Literature,* p. 231.

working-class behaviour. These tensions changed throughout the nineteenth century, and concerned both public and private relationships, work and the home. Evidence show that the experiences of work, industrialisation and urbanisation varied, and it was arguably not as dramatic as some earlier historians had suggested, however there was a change in the way society and the economy was organised.[13] Home was central to the mid-nineteenth-century Victorian middle-class ideal as a way of controlling the dissonance and ruptures caused by industrialisation and an important element of the new industrial bourgeois culture and middle-class consciousness.[14] Home and family were visualised as a way of controlling the chaos – yet home was an arena where working-class people could operate freely, away from the direct gaze of employers and both working- and middle-class religious and secular commentators – this was after all a private space. I see these stories as an attempt to resolve these tensions; for example heroines in romance stories do paid work only temporarily before marriage, and always in the domestic setting, yet the historiography shows working-class women actually carried out a variety of work before and after marriage.[15] These stories also offered the young working-class woman a set of rules to negotiate her way around the complicated and changing world in which she lived. They can be seen to offer her advice and protection and, as per the dominant ideology, they discouraged independence and promoted the attractions of marriage and the domestic setting.[16]

Mary Poovey described how there were 'skirmishes' among the secular and religious institutions to regulate social behaviour after the 1851 census revealed that forty-two percent of women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried and self-supporting. There were fears over the 'de-sexing' of women in factories, and concerns that migration meant families lost control over young women. These institutions reinforced the binary model of difference between the sexes based on the female's role in the reproduction and nurturing of children, restricting their involvement in the polity or the public sphere in order to be true to

[13] John Benson, *The Working-Class in Britain 1850-1939* (London: I B Tauris, 2003), pp. 1-4; Hudson; Maxine Berg has argued that quantitative indicators challenge the notion of the rapid change the word 'revolution' implies. Berg, 22-44 (p. 22).

[14] Catherine Hall says the evangelical movement and a 'new respectability' were the key influences that defined women in terms of home and family, siting them in the domestic sphere with responsibility for morality. Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 75-93; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class*, 1780-1850 (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp. 114-19 & 173-92.

[15] Sally Alexander, *Becoming A Woman and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminist History* (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 3-55; Maxine Berg. 'What difference did women's work make to the Industrial Revolution?' *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993), 22-44.

[16] There was a similar dissonance to that described by Catherine Gallagher between freedom and determinism in industrial fiction. Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction. Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

their 'real' nature as homemakers and mothers.[17] John Gillis states that 'from the mid eighteenth-century onwards sexual politics became increasingly bitter as the propertied classes attempted to impose their standards on the rest of society.'[18] For Poovey, the ideology of gender formation was uneven and contested; it appeared coherent and authentic yet it had an internal instability and artificiality. For some people the ideological constructions appeared to be the truth - Poovey used the example of the belief in the innate maternal nature of women - and for others it was a goal, or even a judgement and indicator of what they had failed to be.[19] Victorian ideology was constantly under construction and open to revision, and according to Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston 'the medium that most readily articulates the unevenness and reciprocities of evolving gender ideologies is the periodical press.'[20] They considered the periodical press to have wielded considerable cultural power; periodicals 'became sites of intensified representations of gender and sexual identity' taking a central role 'in the constructions of gender in Victorian cultural history.'[21] They considered how Victorian journalism could both confirm and contest gender roles; early periodicals represented gender transgression, though it was reviled, and the binaried gender model was continually crystallised and yet critiqued through the 1860s and 1870s. The medium allowed women to enter the profession and write anonymously, giving them the opportunity to write on 'masculine' topics. What was constant was the role journalists played in the discourse of gender.[22]

I take the view that although some readers might resist some of the overt messages in their reading, historians can use publications to suggest meanings, measure change and consider specific social issues. Louis James has suggested that the analysis of a periodical can be used as a 'cultural clock' to provide the historian with an insight into the concerns and issues of the society that produced it.[23] Publishers and authors, as producers of the material, were influenced by their class, education, religion, attitudes and experiences, external factors such as public opinion and middle and upper-class discourse, and market forces, i.e. what the readers demanded. The publications themselves are viewed as 'cultural productions', a term used by Sonya Rose to describe the interpretations people made of available texts to

[17] Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Virago, 1989), pp. 4-21.
[18] John R. Gillis, *For Better for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 135.
[19] Poovey, pp. 4-11 & 199-201.
[20] Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.
[21] Fraser *et al*, p. xi.
[22] Fraser *et al*, pp. 1-12.
[23] Louis James, 'The Trouble with Betsy: Periodicals and the Common Reader in Mid Nineteenth-Century England', in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by J Shattock and M Wolff, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 352-63 (p. 363).

make sense of their experiences.[24] Sally Mitchell argued that the woman who had time for leisure reading was 'to an extent, socialised through what she read; the woman isolated at home with her children socialised in turn the next generation.'[25] As 'shared cultural symbols' love stories could persuade people to accept particular views, or negate and repress alternatives.[26]

I will argue that love stories were vehicles for the dominant ideology concerning constructions of gender. The term dominant ideology is used here to mean the underlying set of values and beliefs that were connected to the power structures and power-relations of the society of the period.[27] I agree with Sally Mitchell, who argued:

> [T]he way a woman acts is also influenced by forces that come from within: by her self-concept, her imaginative picture of the possibilities open to her, by the roles she takes in her own fantasies. Some of these things she learned from reading... Light fiction supplies us with scenes to use in our daydreams and provides us with ready-made emotional reactions… it was through the stereotypes of fiction that the Victorian woman primarily knew her sisters… Fiction told her what women were like; it reflected the feelings of the age and it also educated them.[28]

This interaction with the imagination is what makes fiction powerful. Patricia Stubbs felt the novel was the arena where the author, either unconsciously or consciously, fought out the ideological battle. Starting with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (first published in 1740), novels provided some of the dominant images of women that traditionally focussed on the limited domestic and sexual roles of women. These images, according to Stubbs, create a reality from within, shaping consciousness. She linked the association novels made between women and the concern with emotions and personal relationships to its development at a time when industrialisation was excluding women from production and the public sphere.[29]

On the relationship between fiction and social attitudes Poovey states:

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[24] Sonya O Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 8.
[25] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, p. 4.
[26] Sonya O Rose, pp. 8-9.
[27] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p.13.
[28] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, pp. xiv-xv.
[29] Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction. Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920* (London: Methuen, 1979), pp. ix-xii.

> Part of the work that texts perform is the reproduction of ideology; texts give the values and structures of values that constitute ideology body – that is, they embody them for and in the subjects who read. In this sense reading – or more precisely, interpretation – is a historically and culturally specific activity… the conditions that govern the production of texts are reproduced in the texts themselves as the condition of possibility for meaning.[30]

Terry Eagleton says that literature *is* an ideology. It has an intimate relationship with social power.' Texts contain a dramatization of values, they are 'brought home to felt experience, with all the unquestionable reality of a blow on the head, literature becomes more than just a handmaiden of moral ideology: it is moral ideology for the modern age.'[31] Writers either accidently or intentionally reproduce the dominant ideology of the period, and this is why, despite the need for working-class women to do paid work and the active feminism of the second half of the century, the novel perpetuated the siting of women in the home. Stubbs's examination of late nineteenth-century novels found that '[a]lmost no heroine in late nineteenth-century fiction works. She says that in this regard literature was 'perpetuating a lie' – a clear example of one of the tensions between ideology and reality I explore in this thesis.[32]

David Vincent felt that the popularity of literature produced in the mid-nineteenth century reflected working-class concerns around the resilience of inherited value structures. He related fiction to the radical social changes the nineteenth-century working-class population experienced as a direct result of industrialisation, in particular changes in work, housing and family structures. He said 'What was required was a form of expression which would reflect their own lives in their own circumstances, yet provide a dramatic working out of the moral dilemmas with which they were constantly faced.' Vincent said the tensions brought about by social and economic change could be resolved in literature; it could offer a place where questions of morality and decisions about the 'right' way to behave could be played out, replacing the traditional family structure, the Church and the rural community in this role.[33] This thesis takes Vincent's view and treats popular romantic literature as a form of expression where questions of morality and the role of women were played out.

[30] Poovey, p. 17.
[31] Terry Eagleton, pp. 10-19 & 24.
[32] Stubbs, pp. xii-xiii.
[33] David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 205-06.

Why does this romantic literature matter?

Romantic literature was extremely popular. H J Keefe, a historian of Victorian publishing, estimated that in 1845 500,000 copies of penny-part novels were sold weekly.[34] In the preface of the 1841 edition of *Ela the Outcast* its author Thomas Peckett Prest said:

> Although it has been in the course of publication for two years, its sale has never, in the least, flagged; and in proof of the deep interest … I need only state, that its weekly sale has been *thirty thousand copies*, and the present is the *eighteenth edition*! [35]

There are no known surviving publisher's records to verify Prest's claims, but the sale of 30,000 copies of each edition does not seem unreasonable - *Ela* certainly became sufficiently well-known to enter the public consciousness, representative of the entire genre. In the Mayhew brothers' 1847 fictional account of a lady's search for a servant, *The Greatest Plague in Life*, the main protagonist suspected her employee Betsy of wasting time reading and so failing to do her work:

> Just as I might have expected, there she was, all the next day, so interested with that stupid outcast of an *Ela*, that she couldn't get my lamb before the fire until it was so late, that when it came to table it was only just warmed through, and everyone knows how nice underdone lamb is.[36]

In the year the Mayhews published *The Greatest Plague* Edward Lloyd issued at least 38 new penny-a-part serialised novels. Assuming the lower sales level of only 10,000 for each new publication, Lloyd would have had a weekly circulation in 1847 of 380,000.[37] Author Hannah Maria Jones claimed sales of 20,000 each for her three penny-a-part novels

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[34] H J Keefe, *A Century in Print: The Story of Hazell's 1839-1939* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, 1939), p. 7.

[35] Thomas Peckett Prest , *Ela the Outcast, or, The Gipsy of Rosemary Dell. A Romance of Thrilling Interest*, (London: Edward Lloyd, 1841), Preface.

[36] Augustus and Henry Mayhew, *The Greatest Plague in Life, Or the Adventures of a Lady in Search of a Good Servant* (London: David Bogue, 1847), p. 115.

[37] There are 38 novels published in 1847 by Edward Lloyd in the British Library Catalogue; This conservative figure of 10,000 comes from the *Edinburgh Review,* which said in 1887 that the sale of sensational novels in serial form exceeded two million a week, with individual titles selling 10,000 to 60,000 each. 'The Literature of the Streets', *Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal*, 165:337, January (1887), 40-65; The National Readership Survey (NRS) collects and analyses data that compares circulation (number sold) to readership (number of readers). This finds on average 3 readers per copy sold between January 2002 and 2010 <http://www.nrs.co.uk/choosetrends.html> [accessed June 2012]. There is no data on nineteenth-century Britain, and it is not possible to estimate how many read each copy during this period, however Andrew King estimates there were 4 or 5 readers for every copy of a newspaper sold during this period, King. *The London Journal*, p. 88; Wilkie Collins assumes 3 readers per issue of the journals he examines in, 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words*, 21st August 1858, pp. 217-222, p. 218.

available at around the same time, and G W M Reynolds claimed to have sold 60,000 of the first two numbers of his serial, *The Soldiers Wife*, in 1852.[38] Flora Thompson mentions how women shared their reading material, and there is evidence that other working-class people did this; if three people read each copy of of Lloyd's publications sold in 1847 he had a readership of 1.14 million.[39] Richard Altick said of these novels 'What [Harrison] Ainsworth brought to the drawing room audience, the hacks of Salisbury Square manufactured for the tenements.'[40] A 'literary revolution' took place during the 1840s, according to Margaret Dalziel, as anyone with a penny found themselves able to buy entertaining fiction.[41]

In addition to the penny-a-part novels, a number of penny periodicals were launched in the mid-1840s, providing further access to cheap fiction. The publisher Charles Knight reported that in 1854 the *London Journal* (*LJ*, 1845-1928) sold 450,000-500,000 copies a week, the *Family Herald* (*FH*, 1843-1939) 300,000 a week and *Reynold's Miscellany* (1846-1869) 200,000 a week, a total circulation of 950,000.[42] Again, using the conservative estimate of three readers for every copy, this gives a mid-century readership of penny periodicals of almost three million. Wilkie Collins estimated a readership of this size in 1858 and G W Macree, a Baptist pastor who investigated the cheap reading material available to the working-classes, estimated cheap periodicals in the whole of England to have a circulation of 2,900,000 in 1850.[43]

George Stiff founded the *LJ* in 1845, and a measure of its success was the value of the publication when he sold it after only twelve years for around £20,000.[44] Between 1840 and 1850 the number of cheap weekly publications in London had increased from approximately eighty to one hundred, and of these sixty contained only fiction.[45] According to Richard

[38] Royal Literary Fund Case File, Hannah Maria Jones, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19; Altick, Appendix B.
[39] Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p. 109; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 232; Lady [Florence] Bell, *At the Works. A Study of a Manufacturing Town* (London Virago, 1985), p. 149; Richard Altick described the informal sharing of a provincial newspaper in the 1820s. Altick, p. 323; Some people read aloud to others. Vincent, pp. 25-28; Alice Foley described reading aloud. Alison Twells, *British Women's History: A Documentary History from the Enlightenment to World War I,* (London: I B Tauris,2007), p. 136; Mrs Tonna, *Works*, 2 vols (New York, 1849), II, p. 404.
[40] Altick, p. 290.
[41] Dalziel, p. 2.
[42] Clowes, p. 226; Beetham says the *LJ* finished in 1912, but King says it survived until 1928. Beetham, p. 48; King, *The London Journal*, p. 11.
[43] 'The Unknown Public', (1858), p. 219; James, *Fiction*, p. 49.
[44] 'Case of Mr Stiff', *The Bookseller*, June 25th 1859, p. 859; Andrew King gives a figure of £30,000 for the sale of both the *London Journal* and *The Weekly Times.* King, *The London Journal*, p. 112; Margaret Dalziel says it was sold for £24,000 but unfortunately, like the rest of Dalziel, this figure is not referenced and so cannot be verified, Dalziel, p. 22.
[45] James, p. 49.

Altick, by 1850 'The reading habit had spread among the English masses as never before.'[46] The *LJ*, *Cassell's Illustrated Family Magazine* (1853-1867), the *FH* and *Bow Bells* sold almost two million copies a week between them in the 1860s.[47] By 1864 James Bertram, a small newsagent in Edinburgh, described how, when a serial in one of the periodicals reached its climax, demand for it was so great that in order to collect his copies from the station he had to hire a special wagon.[48] According to Louis James the *FH* was read largely by working girls, and Sally Mitchell identified the readers of both the *LJ* and *FH* as working-class, aspirational and looking to determine what is 'respectable'.[49]

By the late 1870s technological advances and the repeal of the tax on paper made it profitable to produce and sell a complete sixteen-page story, with illustrations, for a penny. These novelettes gave working-class readers the opportunity to buy, and own, a complete romance story with illustrations for a very small outlay. Kate MacDonald and Marysa Demoor said these were closely associated with the American 'library' series of cheap British re-prints that had been published in the USA since the 1840s. In the period 1865-1900 over eighty titles of novelettes and similar periodicals were being published in Britain, often as or with supplements.[50] I use here MacDonald and Demoor's definition of a novelette to mean 'a cheap periodical, publishing complete stories rather than serials.'[51] In 1889 W B Horner, another publisher of penny novelettes, claimed to sell 300,000 copies of his most popular titles. Assuming three women read each copy of a Horner's novelette, 900,000 women read each one.[52] The publisher of the *Bow Bells Novelettes*, John Dicks, made a fortune producing and selling cheap literature. He started out as a printer for the writer and publisher G W M Reynolds, went into partnership with him and was so successful he ended up owning homes in West London and the South of France.[53]

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[46] Altick, p. 293.
[47] Andrew King, '"Killing Time," or Mrs Braby's Peppermints: The Double Economy of the Family Herald and the Family Herald Supplements', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 43 (2010), 149-73 (p. 152).
[48] James, *Fiction* , p. 47.
[49] James, *Fiction*, pp. 44-45 & 49; Sally Mitchell, 'The Forgotten Women of the Period. Penny Weekly Magazines of the 1840s and 1850s', in *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, ed. by Martha Vicinus (London: Indiana Press, 1980), pp. 29-51.
[50] Kate MacDonald and Marysa Demoor, 'Borrowing and Supplementling: The Industrial Production of 'Complete Story' Novelettes and their Supplements, 1865-1900', *Publishing History*, 63 (2008), 67-95
[51] MacDonald and Demoor, p. 67.
[52] W B Horner's *Penny Stories for the People* sold up to 300,000 copies each according to the publisher's advertisement on the back of *The Master of Corrie Lynn* (London: W B Horner, 1889), p. 16.
[53] There are no company records available, but John Dicks's fortune was so great he spent most of the last ten years of his life at his villa in Mentone, South of France and owned a large house and land in Chiswick, West London. His death in 1881 (aged 63) sparked a feud between Dick's heirs that lasted many years. Guy Dicks, *The John Dicks Press* (Published by the author, 2005). pp. 40, 54-84.

While Flora Thomson was describing the reading habits of women in rural Oxfordshire, Agnes Repplier, an American who visited England at the end of the century, described urban readers in her essay 'English Railway Fiction':

> The clerks and artisans, shop girls, dressmakers, and milliners, who pour into London every morning by the early trains, have, each and every one, a choice specimen of penny fiction to beguile the short journey, and perhaps the few spare minutes of a busy day.[54]

Repplier is describing readers of penny fiction, not the 'yellow-back' fiction that cost a shilling or 6d and was produced for those with more disposable income.[55] John Benson has calculated that between 1850 and 1939, 75 to 80 per cent of the population depended on manual labour for their income, and this proportion can be used to estimate the number of working-class women. The 1851 census showed the population of Great Britain to be 21.12 million. Of these 10.74 were female, including 3.16 million girls less than fifteen years of age, making an adult female population of 7.58 million. Assuming 75 to 80 per cent of these are working-class gives an adult female working-class population of between 5.69 and 6.06 million. The same calculation for 1891 gives a figure of 10.38 to 11.07 million working-class adult women.[56] Therefore the circulation figures cited above that give an estimate of three million readers of penny periodicals in the mid-1850s account for half the entire adult female, working-class population. This agrees with Andrew King's estimate that half the population were reading a penny weekly in the mid-1850s.[57]

Despite the popularity of nineteenth-century cheap fiction, its content has been little studied by historians.[58] Value judgements have been made by academics about what is viewed as 'quality' fiction, and therefore 'worth' studying and this has formed the canon of Victorian literature. Terry Eagleton sees the canon as 'fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time.' Value is identified as a 'transitive term', historically variable and forming part of the ideology of a culture.[59] Discussing the *LJ*, King applied Pierre Bourdieu's model of cultural consumption, separating literary and artistic products that do not have financial gain as the primary motivating factor in their production from those that do. The

[54] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, p. 189.
[55] See Michael Sadleir, *Collecting 'Yellowbacks'* (London: Constable, 1938).
[56] Benson, p. 4; 1851 Census for Great Britain, 1891 Census for England and Wales, 1891 Census for Scotland and 1891 Census for Ireland, <www.histpop.org>[accessed May, 2012].
[57] King 'Literature of the Kitchen', p. 41.
[58] John Springhall, 'A Life Story for the People? Edwin J Brett and the London Low Life Penny Dreadfuls of the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 33, (1990), 223-46 (p. 225).
[59] Eagleton, p. 10.

latter type was intended to sell in high numbers, and has little 'cultural capital', is excluded from the canon, and has been rarely quoted from or referred to.[60]

The novel became increasingly popular during the nineteenth century, and estimates range from 42,000 to 50,000 new novels published during Victoria's reign.[61] Estimates of the number of authors working during the period also vary, from 3,500 to 20,000.[62] Authors, journalists and editors were listed under the same heading in the censuses - there were 2443 in 1871, 3434 in 1881 and 5771 in 1891.[63] Clearly tens of thousands of new novels were published, yet only the work of a handful of authors has been regularly discussed. Contemporary commentators dismissed products with low cultural capital; historian John Feather said 'The dividing lines were as sharp on the printed page as they were in the social reality of Britain.'[64] Wilkie Collins described in 1858 how he had seen publications in newspapers and tobacconists in 'second and third rate neighbourhoods' but '[n]one of the gentlemen who were so good as to guide my taste in literary matters, had ever directed my attention towards these mysterious publications.' He was discussing penny journals, and their readers, described as the 'Unknown Public'. He was amazed by their huge readership of three million a week. Collins dismissed the authors of the stories, and said when the readers learned to be less ignorant of 'everything which is generally known and understood among readers whom circumstances have placed… intellectually in the rank above them' they would learn to read the 'great writers'; these writers would then have the huge audience. The Collins saw this fiction as having no value or merit compared to fiction written by 'great' authors.[65] This attitude persisted, and the material has largely remained unstudied. Kimberley Reynolds said that literary products are divided as much along the lines of gender as they are class. She says material produced for a predominantly working-class female audience, for example girls' stories, 'bloods' and comics, have been traditionally denied any literary merit.[66]

The New Historicism of the 1970s rejected the idea that only certain texts are 'worth' studying, preferring to see all culture 'as a text.' Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt argue that:

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[60] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 13 & 15-16.
[61] John Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 151.
[62] Sutherland assumed an output of seventeen per author to estimate 3,500, Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, p. 152; Nigel Cross does not say how he calculated his 20,000 estimate. Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 3.
[63] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 3.
[64] John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 156.
[65] 'The Unknown Public', (1858), pp. 217 & 222.
[66] Kimberley Reynolds, *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain: 1880-1910* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. xvi.

> Some of these alternative objects of attention are literary works regarded as too minor to deserve sustained interest and hence marginalized or excluded entirely from the canon. Others are texts that have been regarded as altogether non-literary.[67]

Practicing new historicism produces a sense of 'archival and interpretive inexhaustibility,' and allows the 'recovery' of new authors and works. Readers and scholars will ask different questions when looking at any text, depending on their point in history.[68] The answers they find will, in Terry Eagleton's words, 'realise new potential in the text.'[69]

Texts can be shared and read aloud, or reading can be a silent, solitary activity. The result of either is that the reader is alone when the text interacts with her imagination. Elizabeth Gaskell used her experience of mid-nineteenth-century working-class life to draw fictionalised accounts of working-class lives. She describes the impact that reading romance stories had on the eponymous Mary Barton:

> So, she turned on her pillow, and fell asleep, and dreamt of what was often in her waking thoughts; of the day when she should ride from church in her carriage, with wedding bells ringing, and take up her astonished father, and drive away from the old dim work-a-day court for ever, to live in a grand house…[70]

Gaskell was describing Mary's dream that she marry a local gentleman, Mr Carson, who was infatuated with her, and escape her job as a seamstress. Gaskell points out the irony that Carson liked her because of her 'keen practical shrewdness,' which she said:

> ... contrasted very bewitchingly with the simple, foolish, unworldly ideas she had picked up from the romances which Miss Simmonds' young ladies were in the habit of recommending to each other.[71]

Gaskell clearly saw the romance stories as responsible for Mary's daydreams. She was interacting with them, applying them to her imagination, a private space.

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[67] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practising New Historicism* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 9-10.
[68] Gallagher and Greenblatt, pp. 13 & 15.
[69] Eagleton, p. 62.
[70] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (London: Penguin, 1994, first published 1848), p. 74.
[71] Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, p. 74.

Throughout the nineteenth century literacy rates increased and with it the opportunity for fiction to enter the imagination. It is the intersection between the private inner-world of the reader and the outer social world that makes the analysis of popular literature a complex issue.[72] Richard Hoggart says 'Every culture lives inside its own dream', and as such authors share and shape the 'common dreams' of their society, putting these fantasies into words.[73] King links the popular fiction-carrying periodical to the imagination when he says its value 'lies in its stimulation and permission of fantasy of various kinds.'[74] Robert Louis Stephenson felt reading:

> … should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book; be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our minds filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or continuous thought.[75]

I think this is the locus of the power of romantic fiction – its ability to stimulate daydreams and fantasies, to interact with the mind of the reader in a completely private way, particularly when one considers the lack of physical personal space working-class people endured. This was a concern at the time - Kate Flint said it was the 'transformative' effect of reading on the female subject that concerned commentators of the day. She also said '[r]eading fiction, an activity which combined flexing the imagination with anticipating and reacting to the dynamics of a range of narratives, was a vicarious means of inhabiting other lives, and, potentially, changing one's own.' Like myself, she saw the power of fiction on the imagination, and suggested it could change the reader's life.[76] Sally Alexander, in her study of mid-nineteenth-century working women, described 'a concept of the subject divided by sex and driven by phantasy and the unconscious as well as by economic need.' This thesis considers the content of reading material as acting on the unconscious of the working-class woman reader, and shares Alexander's assumptions that 'subjectivity and sexual difference have life breathed into them by the unconscious.'[77]

Some work has been done on the history of working-class reading in the nineteenth century. Louis James, Sally Mitchell, David Vincent, Richard Altick, Andrew King and Margaret Dalziel have each examined popular literature, but none has concentrated specifically on romantic literature. Vincent and Altick examined working class reading and education, but

[72] Vincent, pp. 19 & 211.
[73] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (London: Pelican, 1978), pp. 208-09.
[74] King, *The London Journal*, p. 4.
[75] Flint, p. 31.
[76] Flint, p. 31.
[77] Alexander, pp. xi-xiv & xx.

did not consider the gender of the reader. James looked at fiction produced for working men between 1830 and 1850, overlapping only slightly with the period studied here. Mitchell stated a fundamental tenet of this thesis, that these stories are one place where historians can gain an understanding of working-class women's lives; however her study concentrated on the representations of the fallen woman. Dalziel's study of the same two decades was broader, and included descriptions of typical heroines, heroes, relationships and other themes. She said literature can reflect prevalent attitudes of the time, but did not use it in this way because she sought to determine whether standards in the quality of 'cheap' literature had improved or declined between 1850 and 1950. She did not, however, concentrate on women's fiction or romance and she included railway fiction, which cost a shilling and so was too expensive for most working women in mid-century. Andrew King's studies are the most comprehensive discussion of the industry and the content of penny periodicals and he has examined the content of the *LJ* between 1845 and 1883 and the *FH* and its supplements. He discussed how the content of this became increasingly aimed at women, but did not focus specifically on love stories.[78] He considered the production of the magazine and concluded that, while letting women enter into a pleasant fantasy and imaginative world, men as the producers were very much in control.[79]

Methodology

Sampling

This thesis is based on a sample of 518 penny parts or complete romance stories published between 1839 and 1889.[80] Only a proportion of the original quantity is extant, available and legible; these publications were designed to be disposable and not to be kept and the sharing of reading material aided deterioration. Their perceived lack of cultural and artistic value also militated against their preservation. Sampling choices from the available material were made according to several factors. The most successful publishers, best-selling periodicals and most popular authors were chosen to ensure the thesis is based on fiction read by the largest possible group of people. I found a startling similarity in the plotlines and themes of these stories, and the reader quickly becomes able to identify the heroine, the hero, the villain and anti-heroine, the types of incidents likely to befall them and to guess the outcome or ending of the stories. I continued to read examples of stories until their predictability made it unnecessary to read any more. It was this formula that interested me,

[78] He also looked at Lloyd's fiction in King, 'Literature of the Kitchen', pp. 38-53.
[79] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 240-41; King 'Literature of the Kitchen', pp. 41-47.
[80] This consisted of: 8 novels sold in penny parts, a total of 338 instalments; 4 novels serialised in the *LJ*, a total of 71 parts; 20 short stories published in the *LJ*; 18 penny novelettes.

and the thesis does not pretend to be a survey of the entire genre, but is a focussed analysis of the abundance and repetition of the messages found in what was a part of it.

Edward Lloyd was the most successful publisher of penny romances in the late 1830s, 1840s and 1850s.[81] Lloyd's penny-a-part serialised novels are available in bound, whole-novel form in the British Library as part of the Barry Ono collection. Although this is a useful resource, it is limited to the editions Ono was able, or chose, to collect. The majority of the Lloyd titles in the British Library were written by a small group of authors (Hannah Maria Jones, Thomas Peckett Prest and James Malcolm Rymer) and I selected novels that had been reprinted several times by Lloyd or were advertised by him in other publications because these authors were obviously selling well for Lloyd. Many of the earlier penny-a-part serials are 'penny bloods', the term used to describe fiction written for adults that is filled with criminal, supernatural and melodramatic events, but the stories I have used were selected for their emphasis on the feelings and romantic encounters of the heroine.[82]

In 1854 Charles Knight said the *LJ* was the best-selling weekly periodical.[83] Romantic fiction from this periodical was selected in several ways. Four serialised stories were analysed, a total of 71 parts. The two longest (December 1857-May 1858 and April to July 1869) were selected because of the popularity of their authors, Pierce Egan Junior and J F Smith. David Masson, the editor of *MacMillans Magazine*, named Pierce Egan as the 'unrecognized king' of popular literature in 1866.[84] Egan's serials were advertised widely, and the magazine advertised his likeness for sale on 1st October 1864 (Fig 1.1). Interestingly, testifying to his celebrity, at 1s. 6d., his image costs substantially more than his fiction. Egan was also the subject of an anonymous 1863 article in the *LJ* called 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan the Novelist', which celebrated his work.

[81] Feather, p. 142.
[82] James, *Fiction*, pp. 32-50; Helen R Smith, *New Light on Sweeney Todd: Thomas Peckett Prest, James Malcolm Rymer and Elizabeth Caroline Grey* (Bloomsbury: Jarndyce, 2002), p. 5.
[83] In 1854 the publisher Charles Knight reported the *LJ* to have sold 450,000-500,000 copies a week. Clowes, p. 226
[84] David Masson, 'Penny Novels', *Macmillan's Magazine*, June 1866, p. 96; 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan as a Novelist', *London Journal*, 17th October 1863, pp. 247-48.

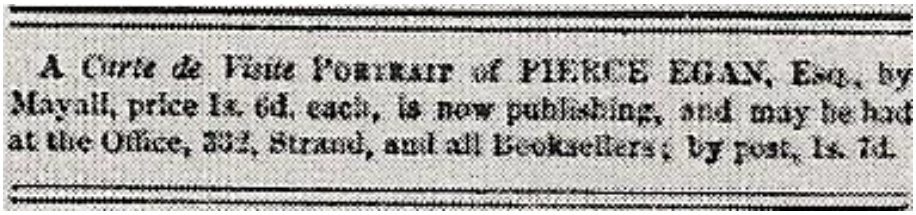
A *Carte de Visite* PORTRAIT of PIERCE EGAN, Esq., by Mayall, price 1s. 6d. each, is now publishing, and may be had at the Office, 332, Strand, and all Booksellers; by post, 1s. 7d.

Fig. 1.1 Advertisement for Pierce Egan's Likeness, *London Journal,* 40:1025 (1st October, 1864), p.223

Masson also mentions the popularity of J F Smith.[85] Between 1849 and 1855 every issue of the *LJ* carried a serial written by Smith.[86] He was enormously popular according to James, who says 'Smith used to increase the tension of his stories until the work-girls of the northern towns, one of his biggest class of readers, bought a copy each instead of waiting to borrow one, and the circulation would soar.' I also chose two other serials (published February to March 1850 and June to November 1875) to ensure a more even spread across the period.

Additionally I chose twenty short stories from the *LJ*, five from each decade. The quantity of fiction in the *LJ* increased from six of the sixteen pages in 1845 to ten-and-a-half pages by 1850, twelve of sixteen pages by 1865 and fourteen of the sixteen pages by 1889.[87] Also the type of story varied. In 1845 and 1850 there was an even number of pages of serialised fiction and short stories, but the quantity of short stories fell in the 1850s, and in the 1860s few, if any, short stories appeared. In 1870 the short story returned, although by the 1880s the serial became once again the most common form of fiction (see Appendix).

John Dicks started publishing *Bow Bells*, a general interest penny magazine on 12th November 1862 in direct competition with the *LJ* to 'cultivate a taste for beauty and humanity.' Its circulation rose according to historian of John Dicks's publishing firm, Guy Dicks, 'at the rate of ten, twelve and fifteen thousand a week for several successive weeks' until *Reynold's Weekly* claimed in 1862 that:

[85] Masson, p. 96.
[86] King, *The London Journal*, p. 103.
[87] An edition was selected in the middle of the year every five years and the content listed, examined and counted. See Appendix 1.

> …it now stands second only in respect to the circulation of all the weekly newspapers, *Lloyd's* [*Illustrated London Newspaper*] alone being above it. Calculating every copy of a weekly newspaper is read by about five persons, we now have nearly a million and a half readers.[88]

In 1879 John Dicks published *Tangled Lives or the Secret of Deep Tarn,* a complete romance story costing a penny. It was the first of the *Bow Bells Novelettes*, a series designed to capitalise on the brand name of his weekly *Bow Bells* magazine.[89] The *Bow Bells Novelettes* were published until 1897, and I read ten of these, the first in each new volume.

There were other penny novelettes available, for example *Horner Penny Stories for the People* which were published from 1883. These are different in tone, more religious and overtly moral. By 1889 Horner was advertising 147 different stories and constantly reprinted them, issuing between 150,000 and 450,000.[90] The authors appearing most regularly in Horner's advertisements were Fannie Eden and Sydney Watson. I read three Fannie Eden novelettes and one Sydney Watson, available as part of a bound collection at The British Library.

Definition of the term 'working class'

The term 'working class' eludes easy definition. Questions arise around the legitimacy of categorising people according to their income or occupation, or their social or cultural behaviour, or according to their own sense of identity.[91] Andrew King urges an approach similar to that used by business studies or social anthropology, seeing the social as 'comprising mobile, overlapping structures, and resisting any idea of binary opposites.'[92] David Cannadine also urges an approach that sees the class structure as a nuanced system of social gradations, forming a chain of relationships, rather than a set of two or three distinct and separate groups.[93] Thomas Wright, the journeyman engineer noted in 1867 that the working classes:

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[88] Dicks, p. 30.
[89] *Tangled Lives or the Secret of Deep Tarn.* Bow Bells Novelettes, Vol.1 No. 1 (London: John Dicks, 1879); Altick, p. 361.
[90] Publisher's advertisement on the back of *The Master of Corrie Lynn* (London: W B Horner, 1889).
[91] See the discussion in Benson, pp. 3-5. See also the introduction by Hoggart where characteristics of a working-class family are explored, and Hoggart discusses how difficult a clear definition is to determine, pp. 3-15.
[92] King, *The London Journal*, p. 6.
[93] David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 59-107.

> …are not a single-acting, single-idea'd body. They are practically and plurally classes, classes between which there are as decisively distinct marked differences as there are between any one of them and the upper or middle-classes.[94]

This continued to be the case to the end of the century. Helen Bosanquet, a social worker in London for the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in the late nineteenth century, described:

> … within the large class massed together by the outsider as the 'working people' there is the same manifold graduation in the social scale as that which exists at the other end; there is the same sensitiveness to class distinctions which are invisible to all but themselves, and the same resentment felt at any intrusion of one grade into another.[95]

I resist the notion that the nineteenth-century working-class was a homogenous whole, a group that shared a common outlook, life experience and sense of identity. Instead I consider the working class*es,* i.e. a stratified group experiencing different levels of affluence and poverty, different experiences of work and different experiences of life and culture. Whilst acknowledging that there are weaknesses in this approach, I define working-class women as those who needed to routinely perform paid manual or clerical labour to support themselves, those who were financially supported by relatives who performed manual labour or those who had to rely on charity or parish assistance to survive. Small business people, for example corner-shop owners, many of whom owned some capital, complicate this definition, and so the definition needs to be flexible to include these groups.

Theoretical framework

In the mid-twentieth century the Annales historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, urged a change in the direction of historical studies. They recommended collaboration with other disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, to understand the mentalities, i.e. the assumptions, beliefs, feelings and modes of thought, of ordinary people who lived in the past. This means taking a *cultural* approach to history.[96] Clifford Geertz defined culture as 'the informal logic of actual life', a public structure, created in peoples' minds and actions. He saw man as 'an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.' This cultural approach to historical study needs to look at the way people communicated with

[94] Thomas Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes,* (London: Tinsley Bros, 1867) <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/habits-1.htm> [accessed 11th November 2011].
[95] Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 178.
[96] Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929-89* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 12-31.

each other, since it is through communication that skills, knowledge and beliefs are transmitted and 'this transmission lies at the heart of a culture'.[97] Popular literature provides valuable evidence for culturally-orientated scholarship. As Terry Eagleton said, texts 'do' things to the people who read them, and this thesis will consider what the content of these romance novels *did* to their readers as part of the web Geertz described.[98]

My approach is informed by Joan Scott's recommendation that historians use gender, as 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,' as a category of historical analysis. She urges us to ask: how does gender work in human social relationships? How does gender give meaning to the organisation and perception of historical knowledge? She said 'to pursue meaning, we need to deal with the individual subject as well as social organisation and to articulate the nature of interrelationships.'[99] I propose that examining romantic literature through the lens of gender helps us to understand how working-class women made sense of their lives and to understand their relationships, both public and private.

Scott provided a framework for this kind of analysis. She said gender has several elements and that each must be looked at in relation to the other. The first element consists of the culturally available symbols that evoke multiple, and sometimes contradictory, representations.[100] These can be found in the roles of the hero as sons/husbands/fathers and the heroines as daughter/wife/mother in fiction. Another element is made up of the normative concepts that limit the interpretations of the meanings of these symbols. These are expressed in religious, educational, legal, scientific and political doctrines, and assert that male and female are binary opposites. Scott says the historian should concern herself with the moments and circumstances when these normative concepts are contested, and the doctrines work to repress the challenge.[101] These are what I have called 'points of tension', for example the challenge to the male-public, female-private ideology resulting from women's involvement in manufacturing work in the nineteenth century.

Scott said 'the point of new historical research is to disrupt the notion of fixity, to discover the nature of the debate or repression that leads to the appearance of timeless permanence in

[97] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 5 & 17.
[98] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, p. 11; Vincent, pp. 2-3; Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 187-88.
[99] Scott, pp. 1055 & 1067.
[100] Scott, p. 1067.
[101] Scott, pp. 1067-68.

binary gender relations.'[102] Cheap fiction constantly reinforced the ideology of women as dependent creatures, with the ultimate goal of dependency within a marriage, despite any challenges made to this model by the real-life need to work, and later feminist movements that demanded political and public involvement for women. Scott urged historians to look outside the family when examining gender to the broader vistas of the economy and society, at work and in education - as it is constructed in these arenas as strongly as it is within the kinship system, and fiction certainly enables us to look at public representations of gender.[103] Scott's final aspect of gender was subjective identity. She agreed with the notion that gender is 'enculturated', but did not see a full explanation in psychoanalysis; instead she said 'historians need... to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organisations and historically significant cultural representations.'[104] Romantic fiction has enabled me to examine the way gendered ideologies were constructed through close examination of the representations of admired, sanctioned or rewarded female (or male) behaviour, or those behaviours that are discouraged, disapproved of and punished.[105]

Sonya Rose said that gender relations are expressed in a variety of ways and these relations are 'part of the social whole'. Meanings of these relations are 'naturalised, embedded and reproduced' every day. People aren't aware that the assumptions they make from the symbols around them are guiding their activities, and this includes the meaning they find in their reading material.[106] For Scott, gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.[107] Cheap romances could be dismissed by some as 'just an escape' for the women reading them, an unimportant leisure activity that passes the time. However I argue in this thesis that the content of these novels was read according to a set of historically-based norms and ideas as 'part of the social whole', they naturalised, embedded and reproduced a power structure that limited women's position in society and excluded her from the public arena. They worked to repress the contestations Poovey discussed, for example the sexualised image of women that emerged in the eighteenth century.[108] This was enacted in nineteenth-century penny romances where a woman's virtue was represented as her responsibility and vital to her happiness and well-being.

[102] Scott, p. 1068.
[103] Scott, p. 1068.
[104] Scott, p. 1068.
[105] Scott, pp. 1067-69.
[106] Sonya O Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 12-13.
[107] Scott, p. 1069.
[108] Poovey, p. 10.

Nineteenth-century cheap romantic fiction was formulaic. Publishers continued with this formula because either it sold well for them or they believed this to be what women wanted to read. The formula has enabled me to see patterns, representations and constant messages. As I will demonstrate, this reading became addictive for many women and it is my view that the *repetitive reading* of these texts added to their power. Repeated exposure to their representations 'normalised' them. Primacy was given to women's role as an emotional being, concerned with matters of the heart, and these concerns sited her in the domestic and private arena. In these stories women were ruled by the heart and not their heads.

The readers: An introduction

The lack of publishers' or retailers' records makes it impossible to determine who the readers of penny romantic fiction actually were. This thesis examines fiction costing one penny or less - the primary target market was therefore working-class readers, but the notion will not be resisted that middle-class readers also purchased this fiction.[109] Sally Mitchell demonstrated how magazines like the *LJ* and *FH* catered for women and their 'Answers to Correspondents' dealt with health, beauty, personal relationships, what Margaret Beetham called 'the stuff of femininity.'[110] This thesis will consider the primary target audience of romance stories to be women; however it will not resist the possibility that men read these stories too.[111]

It is difficult to confidently identify the meanings a reader from the past generated from the literature she read. Readers' interpretations of the messages in their literature varied according to their experiences, religion, age, geographical location and attitudes to life.[112] Kate Flint says it is impossible to recover how a reader condemned or praised the sentiments expressed in fiction except through hypothesis, and Patricia Anderson has argued that 'the onset of a mass culture by no means signalled the passive acculturation of

[109] The mid-nineteenth-century penny publisher and prolific author G W M Reynolds responded to Hepworth Dixon's criticism of the 'literature of the lower orders' by saying many middle-class people read penny periodicals too. King, *The London Journal*, pp. 26-27; Journalist Thomas Frost and bookseller James Bertram also recall people of all classes reading the *London Journal.* King, *The London Journal*, pp. 44-46.
[110] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, pp. 1-21; Beetham, p. 48.
[111] Lady Bell's study of late nineteenth-century factory workers found that more women read fiction than men, who tended to read newspapers, but some men also read the same fiction as their wives. Lady [Florence] Bell, *At the Works. A Study of a Manufacturing Town* (London: Virago, 1985), pp. 142-70; King, *The London Journal*, pp. 7-8.
[112] Flint, p. 27; Margaret Beetham *A Magazine of her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 11.

the people.'[113] Margaret Beetham contested the simple reading of the content of magazines as 'instruments of pervasive domestic ideology and a regime of sexual repression.' She concluded that within the complicated power structures involved in magazine production and consumption, some groups have more power than others to make their meanings 'stick,' and she considered the female body to be made, shaped and re-made by the products sold in magazines. Readers may have less power than writers, editors and publishers, but they could still make the choice to accept or resist the meanings in their reading.[114] Beetham relied on the texts themselves to construct 'the reader', as do I, although that does not help always determine how readers resisted or re-made the meanings found in them.[115] But while few nineteenth-century working-class women readers of fiction have recorded their responses to their reading, autobiographical evidence can be used where it does exist, along with historiography, to contextualise the potential meanings found in the fiction.

The size of the market for books and the rate of literacy had a co-dependent relationship. Feather outlined what he called the 'cycle of change': more printed material stimulated the demand for literacy and more demand for education, these stimulated a greater demand for reading material, this encouraged technical innovation, which produced a higher quality material, resulting in more printed material in circulation. Feather was keen to stress the capitalistic, profit-driven motives of the nineteenth-century publisher.[116] Vincent suggested that without cheap popular literature, whether chapbooks or penny fiction, far more working-class women would have remained illiterate. Publishers created demand by making these penny publications available, affordable and increasingly attractive.[117]

The increase in literacy levels will be discussed more fully in chapter 2, but it is evident that women's literacy rates increased during the nineteenth century. The Registrar General's Returns indicated that 51.1% of women were literate in 1841, 73.2% by 1871 and 92.7% by 1891.[118] These statistics are difficult to verify, however the circulation figures for cheap fiction add to the evidence of what David Vincent calls increasing functional literacy throughout the period 1839 to 1889. Functional literacy is defined as that which is useful in a given cultural context, in this case the ability to read and understand a romance story.[119]

[113] Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture: 1790-1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 4.
[114] Beetham pp. 2-5.
[115] Beetham, pp. 11-12.
[116] Feather, pp. viii, 130-31 & 178.
[117] Vincent, pp. 210 & 226.
[118] Altick, p. 171.
[119] Vincent, pp. 15-16.

There is evidence that some readers formed an addictive penny-romance reading habit. In the 1870s, Mrs Layton, a teenage maid-of-all-work developed an enthusiasm for penny novels. 'The servant next door,' she wrote:

> lent me some trashy books that came out weekly. These books had tales that were continued week by week, and the tales were so arranged that they left off 'to be continued in our next' at a very exciting part of the story. This gave a young, impressionable girl a keen desire for the next chapter. After a while I became so fascinated with the tales that when the day came for the book to come out I had no peace of mind until I had been to the shop to get it and had found some means to read it.[120]

Mrs Layton painted a clear picture of how much a young girl looked forward to her reading. Linda Hughes and Michael Lund said this enjoyment was in part due to the serial format itself. Women were more likely to be interrupted and need to break off from their reading to meet domestic demands, but also the instalment novel:

> offers itself as a site of pleasure that is taken up and discharged only to be taken up again (some days or weeks later), and again, and again. Moreover, the engagement and discharge of pleasure in each new instalment is always orientated towards the future, towards new beginnings and sustained connections with the text, since an instalment ends but the narrative continues, 'to be continued' until the novels serial concludes.[121]

Hughes and Lund said that, according to nineteenth and twentieth-century commentators, the serial form offered particular pleasures to women readers because of the sense of intimacy it built with the characters, and the opportunity to get to know them and form a relationship with them.[122] The 'serials could become entwined with readers' own senses of lived experience and passing time.'[123] The extra padding, the meandering of the story and the digressions were part of their appeal. Hughes and Lund cite novelist Ursula Le Guin who said 'the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag,' rather than a straight line leading from A to B.[124] The journey towards the physical relationship with the

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[120] *Life As We Have Known It*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: Virago, 1977), pp. 26-27; Graham Law, *Serialising Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 11.
[121] Linda K Hughes and Michael Lund, 'Textual Pleasure and Serial Publication', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices,* ed. by J. O'Jordan and R Pattern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 143-63 (p. 143).
[122] Hughes and Lund, pp. 144-45.
[123] Hughes and Lund, p. 146.
[124] Hughes and Lund, p. 149.

hero, and the complicated reasons for its delay, creates dramatic tension, and the enjoyment of this journey is greater than its eventual achievement.[125]

Janice Radway agreed with this view of the love story. Radway, a professor of literature, analysed the romance reading of a group of women in Smithton, a mid-western American town, in the early 1980s to understand the impact of this reading on their lives. She found readers of twentieth-century North American romances felt enjoyment in the same way. The anticipation of the conquest of the hero was greater than the achievement of it – the getting there is more enjoyable than the arrival. Related to this is the formulaic nature of these romance stories and their predictable endings - Radway compared them to the myths of oral cultures, saying it was the *known* that was enjoyed; it reaffirmed fundamental cultural beliefs and aspirations. Her readers wanted a happy ending, even if the journey towards it was difficult and complicated.[126] Radway's study was undertaken in a very different period, and the historical specificity of reading limits how useful it is to a study of nineteenth-century romances, however the notion that novels are enjoyed for the journey as much as the arrival is important to consider here.

Mrs Layton demonstrated how servant girls passed these books amongst themselves, just as the girls in Flora Thompson's village did. Henry Vizetelly, the nineteenth-century writer and publisher, described the sharing of the *LJ* in the 1850s and how the 'factory girls in the North, the great patrons of the journal, were in the habit of lending it to one another.'[127] The suffragette Annie Kenney (born 1879) described 'going shares' in a weekly girls' paper full of fiction with other workers in a Lancashire factory and Lady Florence Bell's late nineteenth-century survey of 200 working-class Middlesborough families includes a husband and wife who read fiction they 'borrow from their neighbours.'[128] Reading was a shared experience in more than one way. The books themselves, as tangible objects, were lent out, and the same words read by different, connected people. There is also evidence that reading material was sometimes read aloud. Traditionally the more literate read aloud to the less literate in pubs, homes or at work.[129] David Vincent's analysis of marriage registers implied that at the end of

[125] Hughes and Lund, p. 157.
[126] Radway, pp. 191-99.
[127] King, *The London Journal,* p. 22.
[128] Flint, p. 232; Lady [Florence] Bell, p. 149.
[129] Simon Eliot, 'The Business of Victorian Publishing', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Deidre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2012, pp. 36-61 (p. 43); Richard Altick described the informal sharing of a provincial newspaper in the 1820s for example. Altick, p. 323; Vincent, pp. 25-28.

the nineteenth century more young women appeared to be literate than older ones.[130] This was described by Alice Foley, a library-user at the end of the century:

> When I reached home the borrowed books were dished out to brothers and sisters and, within a few minutes, all were engrossed in the opening chapters. I remember one such occasion when mother startled the family by suddenly jumping up and exclaiming 'Well I met as weel goo eaut, for this place is nowt but a deaf an dumb schoo'.' Somewhat embarrassed by this outburst, I offered to read aloud some pages of my book… From that time onwards I became mother's official reader and almost every day when I returned from school she would say coaxingly: 'Let's have a chapthur.'[131]

Alice's mother was frustrated by her children mentally absenting themselves while reading their newly-borrowed books. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of these was obvious. Alice's mother became equally enthralled, and she persuaded her daughter to read to her daily and she became as addicted to fiction as the other readers in the family.

There is also some fictional, literary evidence that women read to each other in a work setting. Mrs Tonna (1790-1846), a prolific evangelical writer in the early nineteenth century, describes how fiction was read out in milliner Ann King's workshop late at night to keep the girls awake. This was described as:

> …a tale, the very meaning of which she can hardly make out, but where murder, and violence and situations of fearful peril, and bursts of unbridled passion, at the expense of filial and conjugal duty, make up the exciting compound.[132]

I think it is unlikely that Mrs Tonna had read one of these tales herself, as my examination of them has found that girls who neglect filial or conjugal duty are always severely punished, but this extract is useful to demonstrate what an early to mid-nineteenth-century author believed the content of this sort of fiction to be.

Women's experiences of life, then as now, varied according to their class, location, occupation and skill-set, and yet women of all kinds were potentially exposed to the same words on the page. Carolyn Steedman argued that sharing literature contributed to a sense of national identity and national consciousness, just as handling a mass-produced cup or

[130] In the period 1879-94, 90% of 20-24 year olds could sign the marriage register compared to only 65% of 45-49 year olds. Vincent, p. 26.
[131] Twells, p. 136.
[132] Mrs Tonna, p. 404.

wearing the same clothes as other women. Women using, wearing and reading mass-produced items could imagine others, just like themselves, using these things.[133] Working-class communities who were read to by the more literate in the early part of the century, and those who read to themselves later in the century, were sharing in the literary practices of their communities; it could in fact provide membership of that community.

There are no known studies of the impact of reading on nineteenth-century working-class women, but it is possible to learn from studies of twentieth-century women readers. Meredith Cherland investigated how Canadian girls constructed identity through their reading. She said shared reading was one of the activities individuals undertook as part of the complicated process of negotiating a meaning from the world in which they lived, and that:

> Membership in a community is partly defined by the process of knowing and participating in the shared literacy practices that are characteristic of that community. The reason for this is that such local literacy practices are inextricably bound up with the social history and social organisation of a community and reveal much about the relationships that exist among different sub-groups.[134]

Radway explored the possibility that romance reading provided an alternative community for women isolated within their domestic environment. She found evidence that women learned the pleasures of regular discussions of the romance stories they had read with other local women, but this community was mediated by the distances of modern mass publishing. They did feel a personal connection to their favourite authors.[135] Women physically sharing books in the nineteenth century probably discussed them too, but even if they could not talk about their romances to other women, they were arguably aware that other readers in other places were sharing their experience. Flint says that the dual aspect of fiction as both a shared but also highly private experience is what makes it 'a curious activity.'[136]

[133] Carolyn Steedman, 'Englishness, Clothes and Little Things', in *The Englishness of English Dress,* ed. by C Breward, B Conekin and C Cox (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 1-32, (pp. 30-31).
[134] Meredith Cherland, *Private Practices: Girls Reading Fiction and Constructing Identity* (London: Taylor Francis, 1994), p. 6.
[135] Radway, pp. 96-97.
[136] Flint, p. 27.

Romantic fiction: an escape and a method of resistance, or a moral danger and a waste of time?

Charles Dickens wrote in 1850 about the need for a release, an escape out of the real world.[137] He was discussing plays, however popular literature performed the same service. The struggle and ultimate triumph of 'good' against 'bad' and the predictable moral code were essential to the popular story, and these constants appealed as an escape from the more unpleasant realities of the readers' lives.[138] As the extract from *Mary Barton* suggested, fiction could enable working-class women to transport themselves away from reality, and this may have provided an incentive to read.[139] In 1864, James Payn, editor of *The Chamber's Journal*, described books as 'the blessed chloroform of the mind.'[140] Richard Hoggart said in 1957 that English working-class people have 'regarded art as escape, as something to be enjoyed but not assumed to have much connection with the matter of daily life.'[141] As such, it is something the recipient *uses* as a means of escape.

This is carried one step further by Radway, who concluded that romance reading does more than allow women the opportunity to take a break from the demands of their lives. She sees the act itself as a temporary refusal to carry out the chores associated with their roles as wives and mothers, as a resistance to these and an act of protest against the life they lead. She suggested that women seeking to cope with oppression used books as a barrier between themselves and their families, by taking time for themselves, and being mentally absent.[142] She says '[r]omance reading buys time and privacy for women even as it addresses the corollary consequence of their situation, the physical exhaustion and emotional depletion brought about by the fact that no one within the patriarchal family is charged with their care.'[143] Cherland also concluded that twentieth-century Canadian girls used fiction to escape the constraints on their time, and as a way of exploring forbidden

[137] Charles Dickens, 'The Amusement of the People', *Household Words*, 30th March 1850, pp. 57-60.
[138] James, *Fiction*, p. 90; These difficult conditions are found in both fiction and autobiography. See for example, see Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Penguin, 1969, first published 1854); George Gissing, *The Netherworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, first published 1889); Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1982, first published 1896); Arthur Morrison, *Tales of Mean Streets* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1997, first published 1894). For autobiographical accounts see *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s*, Ed by John Burnett (London: Penguin, 1977); Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971); Kathleen Woodward, *Jipping Street* (London: Virago, 1983). Also in scholarly work, see articles in *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); *Women's History in Britain 1850-1945*, ed. June Purvis (London: UCL, 1995); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Ellen Ross, *Slum Travellers: Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
[139] Vincent, p. 277.
[140] Altick, p. 370.
[141] Hoggart considers all forms of popular media to be 'art'. Hoggart, p. 196.
[142] Radway, pp. 11-12, 86-90 & 94-95.
[143] Radway, p. 12.

domains (she cited the *Sweet Valley High* series where some of the characters engage in dangerous or forbidden high-school behaviour). However Cherland felt they were not engaging in a form of open rebellion because reading was an approved behaviour for the girls in that place and time.[144]

In contrast some of Radway's sample hid their books because their husbands felt threatened by their reading and disliked them doing it, and Flora Thompson's readers hid their books too:

> The novelettes were as carefully kept out of the children's way as the advanced modern novel is, or should be, today; but the children who wanted to read them knew where to find them, on the top shelf of the cupboard, or under the bed, and managed to read them in secret.[145]

It isn't possible to prove whether any nineteenth-century women saw their reading as a protest, or indeed whether they felt they had something to protest about, but there may have been parallels between the ways women used their reading to escape from their daily routines.

Employers objected to employees reading, especially when they should have been working. Mrs Layton admitted she read in secret when in employment:

> If by chance I was seen reading, I was told that I ought to find something better to do, and generally speaking a job was found for me. The result of this treatment caused me to read when I ought to have been doing my work. I managed to do so when I went upstairs to make beds, etc. [146]

Mrs Layton obviously ignored her employer and found time to read. Henry and Augustus Mayhew gave a fictional account in 1847 of an angry mistress who became frustrated with her servant, Betsy, who wasted time reading and neglected her household duties:

[144] Cherland, p. 177.
[145] Thompson, p. 110.
[146] Mrs Layton, 'Memories of Seventy Years', pp. 26-27.

> And, bless your heart, she hadn't been in the house a week or so before, I declare to goodness, I don't think there was a saucepan in the place that hadn't its bottom burnt out; for there she would let, no matter what it was, boil away until there wasn't a drop of water left; for what did she care about the fish or the potatoes so long as she could have a quiet half-hour's cry over the 'BLACK PIRATE' or else be finding out what became of 'MARY THE PRIMROSE GIRL'[147]

The Mayhews had obviously come into contact with Edward Lloyd publications, as these titles are typical of his type of penny-a-part novel. This perceived problem with fiction reading continued to be a concern. Winifred Foley, a general maid working at the end of the century, described her secret reading, and the chastisement she received from her employer when caught reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

> She never gave me a minute's peace to read so I hid it on a shelf in the kitchen cupboard; all my chores were done in there slapdash quick so that I could poke my head in and have a read. The tap-tap of her stick across the yard warned me of her approach.
>
> One day I got so engrossed in the part where Eliza braved the frozen river with her little son in her arms, I was indeed deaf to the world around me, the scalding tears falling on a pile of plates already inadequately wiped. I came smartly back to earth with a stinging swish from her walking stick across my behind. She had had a lot of practice so was quite a markswoman despite her age. My uncontrollable fit of crying against the cupboard door, for I had not yet found if Eliza had got safely across, took my old mistress by surprise. She was quite contrite. I didn't bother to enlighten her on the cause of my tears – she might find me with my head stuck in the cupboard again![148]

These women were being paid to work, and their reading wasted time when they should have been working. Time is a valuable commodity and those with the ability to control it hold power. Kate Flint says reading was seen as 'dangerously useless' and a 'thief of time' and Cherland says 'the control of time, like the control of money, was a cultural marker of power.'[149] E M Palmegiano, a scholar of nineteenth-century women's periodicals, said:

[147] Augustus and Henry Mayhew, *The Greatest Plague in Life*, p. 112.
[148] Burnett, *Useful Toil*, pp. 226-33.
[149] Cherland, p. 159.

> It is no wonder that, as contemporaries grumbled, maids wasted time and money reading penny romances. Often isolated from friends and family, at the whim of employer and senior servants, girls sought solace in fiction.[150]

Palmegiano comments on the servant girls' isolation from friends and family. Edward Higgs's study of domestic servants concluded that the majority of servants were employed as the sole domestic help. Many of them must have endured some degree of loneliness and reading may have helped them cope with this.[151] Despite the fact that 'trashy' or cheap fiction was given no value and reading it was seen as a waste of time, working-class women defied their critics and continued to read it.[152]

Thomas Wright, a journeyman engineer disapproved of wives who wasted time reading, stating in his 1867 autobiography:

> If the man whose household work is neglected or mismanaged is, as sometimes happens, of a meek character, and has been unfortunate enough to get for a wife… one of those lazy, lackadaisical, *London-Journal*-reading ladies with whom working men are more and more curst, he will have to devote his Saturday afternoon to assisting in the woman's work of his own house.[153]

Wright is clearly saying that reading wastes women's time, time that should be spent on their household duties. It shows, in his view, how reading can disrupt gender roles. He further suggested that women's reading could both affect their behaviour and drive men to the public house or 'some other form of dissipation.'[154] Women wasting time reading impacted on the sanctity of the home and a man's place in it, and ultimately his behaviour. Wright also thought reading romantic fiction made women dissatisfied with their husbands and their roles as wives.[155] He talked about the problems caused by the 'tale-tainted wife' and felt:

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[150] E M Palmegiano, *Women and British Periodicals 1832-1867: A Bibliography* (London: Garland Publishing, 1976), p. xxv.
[151] Edward Higgs, 'Women's Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses', *History Workshop*, 23 (1987), 59-80.
[152] Flint, pp. 17-46 & 253-73.
[153] Thomas Wright, p. 189.
[154] Thomas Wright, pp. 189-90.
[155] Thomas Wright, pp. 192-93.

> bound to say, speaking from an extensive experience among those classes, that the particular class of cheap literature of which I have been speaking exercises a most injurious influence upon them, and is frequently the insidious cause of bitter shame and misery, as well as a potent cause of the squalor and mismanagement so often found in the homes of even the higher-paid portion of the working classes.[156]

For Wright, women reading fiction was a 'potent cause of shame and misery.'[157] He believed they neglected their duties as wives and the management of domestic space, and he felt the material could interact with their imaginations and ultimately affect their behaviour. In the nineteenth century women of all classes were seen as more vulnerable to moral dangers when they read, more easily influenced than men, and unable to exercise sensible control over their reactions to texts.[158] Girls were felt to be even more suggestible.[159] Edward Salmon wrote in *Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review,* in 1886, about the deleterious effects penny novelettes could have on girls:

> [T]he high flown-conceits and pretensions of the poorer girls of the period, their dislike of manual work and love of freedom spring largely from notions imbibed in the course of a perusal of their penny fictions. Their conduct towards their friends, their parents, their husbands, and their employers is coloured by what they gather. They obtain distorted views of life and the bad influence of these works on themselves is handed down to their children and scattered broadcast throughout the family.[160]

Salmon did not believe young women capable of separating what they read from their conduct in the real world. What is interesting about his view is that he obviously had not read many (or any) of the popular penny novelettes, which contained strong moral messages and appropriate notions of Victorian femininity. I think he was alluding to the belief that these stories encouraged young girls to believe they could marry upwards, out of their class, and this was contrary to evangelical beliefs about accepting your place.[161]

The notions of escape and reading as resistance are interesting and important. The readers were unlikely to find themselves in the same situations as their heroines - the stories were populated by the upper and middle-classes facing *temporary* challenges to their status,

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[156] Thomas Wright, p. 193.
[157] Thomas Wright, p. 193.
[158] Flint, pp. 3-16.
[159] Reynolds, p. 92.
[160] Edward G Salmon, 'What Girls Read'**,** *Nineteenth Century: a Monthly Review,* 20 (1886), 513-29, (p. 523).
[161] Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 74-75; Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 2-3.

usually having to work for a living for a while, but invariably ending up wealthy and titled.[162] Working-class readers could recognise the settings and the dilemmas, but their fantasies were within controlled limits. They were not being promised wealth and a title at the end of their lives, yet they may have felt some affinity with the heroine. There were common messages in these romance stories that were relevant to women of all classes, and which are explored in this thesis: the notion that all women should marry, that women were responsible for maintaining their virtue and that women's proper place was the domestic setting. Escape into a fantasy world, populated by gallant and wealthy heroes who overcame the trials set by the evil villains to provide the happy ending of a lifetime of romantic love, did not mean the reader believed this would happen to her, but she was repeatedly being exposed to the same formats, endings and potential meanings. She may have used her reading as a protest against the demands made on her, but she was also constantly receiving the message that it was her right and proper duty to meet those demands.

Outline of the content of this thesis

In chapter 2 I will provide a brief history of British publishing, giving a background to the technology, legislation and economic environments in which the industry developed, and a history of the romantic love story and the genres that preceded and influenced it. I also consider the impact of important social influences, such as evangelicalism, and conclude the chapter by describing the particular features of each format of romantic literature. In chapter 3 I look specifically at authors of popular romantic fiction. I consider the influences on them: their backgrounds and education, the way they were employed and paid and how this affected their writing styles and the potential influence on their work of publishers and editors. I focus on a group of popular authors to determine the general patterns affecting their work across the period. More detailed biographies of two authors show how particular influences, such as poverty or education, determined what an author produced.

There was a startling similarity between the plotlines and themes of the cheap romantic fiction I studied. They commonly involved women facing a series of trials or a dilemma, becoming 'unprotected' and therefore placed in moral and physical danger, and frequently in need of rescue by men. I discuss these common themes and plotlines in chapter 4, together with a consideration of cross-class relationships and the predictability of the stories' endings. In chapters 5, 6 and 7 I analyse in detail three key themes of this literature; chapter 5 examines the characteristics of the ideal heroine and how she must

[162] These common plotlines are examined in chapter 4.

behave during the trials she faces to protect her virtue at all costs. Young female characters were passive actors on the romantic fiction stage, but they had a responsibility to protect their virtue, reputation and remain pure in thought and action. Heroines who made the right decisions were rewarded with marriage, those who did not were punished, usually by descending into poverty or death. Chapter 6 considers, in the context of nineteenth-century marriage and courtship practices, the message that marriage was the only future for a 'good' woman. I conclude that love stories influenced women's behaviour in a way that legislation and government policy could not. I also propose that the representation of the spinster as an anti-heroine reinforced this message, and I consider the notion that imagining a future of love and happy marriage enabled young working-class women to escape the realities of their lives. Chapter 7 explores the ideology of separate spheres, a theory that nineteenth-century women were placed in the domestic setting while men occupied the public sphere. This chapter will consider the work that female characters in romantic fiction did and how the division of labour was strictly gendered in these novels. I discuss the key female occupations in the nineteenth century: needlework, domestic service and factory work, and their representations in romantic novels are examined to determine authors' attitudes to women sited outside the domestic sphere. Finally in chapter 8 I discuss how and why these novels presented consistent messages, despite the actual political, cultural and social changes that were affecting women's lives, concluding that these texts, according to Scott's framework, worked to repress the contestation of normative values and maintain the stability of patriarchy.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT - THE POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING INDUSTRY, ITS PRODUCTS AND ITS READERS

> More astonishing than gas, or steam, or telegraph, which are capable of explanation on scientific grounds, is that flood of cheap literature which, like the modern Babylon itself, no living man has ever been able completely to traverse, which has sprung up and continues to spring up, with the mysterious fecundity of certain fungi, and which cannot be accounted for in its volume, variety and universality by any ordinary laws of production.[1]
>
> *British Quarterly Review*, April 1859

This anonymous author was comparing the growth of popular literature to all the other profound technological advances that transformed nineteenth-century lives. The romantic penny-a-part novels, fiction in penny periodicals and penny novelettes that emerged from the late 1830s were not conceived in a media vacuum - they were influenced by a tradition of story-telling and a series of genres that impacted on their content. Fairy tales have contained the 'happy ending' but there are many other elements that clearly came from other genres. Drawing on the historiography, this chapter outlines the legal, technical and logistical developments in the nineteenth-century publishing industry to provide a necessary context for the growth of the cheap romantic novel genre. An examination of readers' lives as consumers of penny romances will provide further context.

The Industry and its Products

Pre-1839

In 1774, Alexander Donaldson, an Edinburgh bookseller, made a successful legal challenge to the copyright system which limited the ownership of copyright to a small group (fifteen to twenty-one) of wholesalers and copyright-publishers.[2] Donaldson's action opened up the market for re-prints when the copyright period had expired. He produced and sold re-prints successfully in his London shop, marking a turning point in British book publishing – this change ended of a long period of protectionism and enabled other entrepreneurs to enter the market when copyright had expired.[3]

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[1] 'ART. I.' *The British Quarterly Review*, April 1859, pp. 313-45 (p. 316).
[2] Feather, pp. 25 & 61-82.
[3] Feather, pp. 39 & 82.

Another relevant and significant change during the second half of the eighteenth century was the development of the novel, a form insignificant before the publishing of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* in 1742 and *Clarissa* in 1748.[4] *Clarissa* described the trials of the eponymous heroine as she tried to remain true to herself and virtuous despite family pressure to marry a man she did not love, her abduction and rape by the villain Lovelace, and her eventual death, which taught them all to regret their behaviour and treatment of her.[5] These novels, along with others, for example Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) and his *Sentimental Journey* (1768), formed a genre known as the 'sentimental novel.' Leo Braudy argued that these novels originated from the early eighteenth-century work of Pope and Swift, and aimed 'to imitate feeling rather than intellect.'[6] They were intended to elicit an emotional response from the reader using scenes of tenderness or distress.[7] According to Louis James they arose in response to the middle-class demands for didactic morality and human sentiment.[8] They often included scenes where threats were posed to their heroines' virtue and chastity, and a popular theme was the unprotected heroine, which will be discussed fully in chapter 4.

The domestic novel emerged from the sentimental novel (according to James, Richardson's novels 'mothered' this genre) and involved the notion of 'life as it is' involving settings and dilemmas familiar to the reader.[9] Domestic novels were often set in the countryside and idealised this way of life.[10] A common character was the gypsy, who, according to James, provided a 'bridge' between the Gothic and domestic novel.[11] James detects a paradox at the heart of domestic realism because although the locations were recognisable to the reader, the realism was illusory.' He felt the situations were 'romanticised, the people less complicated, the horizon always, finally bright.'[12]

Middle-class readers were also reading Gothic fiction at the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth centuries. The Minerva Press successfully sold Gothic tales between

[4] Feather, p. 96.
[5] Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, first published 1748).
[6] Leo Braudy, 'The Form of the Sentimental Novel', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 7 (1973), 5-13 (p. 5).
[7] Ann Wierda Rowland, 'Sentimental Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Romantic Fiction*, ed. by Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 199-206.
[8] James, *Fiction*, p. 116.
[9] James, *Fiction*, pp. 114 & 116.
[10] James, *Fiction*, pp. 117-22.
[11] James, *Fiction*, p. 125.
[12] James, *Fiction*, p. 134.

approximately 1794 and 1820 despite being condemned as 'trash' by many reviewers.[13] Victor Neuburg suggests that a desire to escape via fiction has its roots in the Gothic novel.[14] These novels bore no relation to reality. 'Sensibility' – or an effect on the nerves of the reader - was of greater importance.[15] They contained horror and mystery, and were populated by vampires, magical monks and ghostly apparitions.[16] The best known of these were Horace Walpole's *Castle of Ontranto* (1794) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).[17] These usually featured an antiquated setting with imprisonment or capture as a key theme, along with the appearance, or illusion, of the supernatural.[18]

At the start of the nineteenth century technological improvements in the book production process contributed to a huge growth in the availability of reading material. In 1814 John Walter was the first publisher to introduce Frederick Koenig's steam-driven press at *The Times,* and this produced printed material on a much larger scale than before, but needed big print runs to be economically viable.[19] Publishing was set to become one of the most highly mechanised of all English mass-production industries. Few book producers had the need for this kind of scale in the early part of the century. The Albion machine, made by G W Cope in the 1820s, was the standard book press that smaller producers continued to use.[20] While some aspects of book production remained unchanged, for example typesetting for books was still done by hand in some firms until the early twentieth century, the new machines meant mass production of typeset pages became possible.[21] One of the major barriers to mass publishing before the nineteenth century had been the high cost of paper. The Fourdrinier machines, introduced in 1807, revolutionised paper manufacture by producing it in continuous rolls rather than by the sheet. Costs were reduced even more when the papermaking machine patented by John Gamble was installed in factories across the country around 1820. The result was better quality, larger sheets of paper at half the cost.[22] James described what followed as 'a wave of cheap publications; a small wave compared to the flood that came ten years later, but considerable nevertheless.'[23]

[13] A history of the Minerva Press has been compiled by Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press 1790-1820* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939); Cross, *Common Writer,* p. 174.
[14] Neuburg, p. 151.
[15] Dalziel, pp. 15-16; Patrick R O'Malley, 'Gothic', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 81-93 (pp. 81-82).
[16] Eliot, p. 41.
[17] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, p. 152.
[18] O'Malley, p. 82.
[19] Altick, p. 262.
[20] Altick, p. 357.
[21] Feather, pp. 131-34; Altick, p. 277.
[22] James, *Fiction*, p. 12.
[23] James, *Fiction*, p. 12.

The publishers of literature for the upper and middle classes found the three-decker format, where a novel was divided into three parts and each published separately, was most economically viable. Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, published in 1814, was the first best-selling novel, however the bankruptcy in 1826 of his publisher, Constable, resulted in a long-term cautiousness on the part of publishers, and a reluctance to invest substantial sums of money in large print runs of novels.[24] Three volume novels meant they could spread the cost of production, gain revenue for early volumes before meeting the cost of later ones, and abandon poor selling novels after a single volume, thus reducing the risk. Three-volume novels cost 10s 6d per volume (a total of 31s 6d for a complete novel).[25] It also meant that very few people could afford to buy books, and so paid to borrow from the private lending libraries, for example Mudies or W H Smiths. These libraries became effective literary censors, deciding what was appropriate for their readers.[26]

The 'silver fork' novel dominated the private upper- and middle-class circulating libraries from the mid-1820s until the early 1840s, despite being criticised and parodied.[27] The term 'silver fork' was coined in 1827 by William Hazlitt in an article criticising the behaviour of the upper-class.[28] These stories involved the social lives of aristocrats and included balls, duels, arranged marriages and suspicions of adultery.[29] More recent critics have discussed how they celebrated, glamorised and defended the lives of the aristocracy, but they also attacked, censured and satirised them. They can also be seen to have provided instructions for those lower down the social scale aspiring to move up the social ladder.[30]

The working classes also had access to a variety of reading material before 1839. From the mid-sixteenth century pedlars were selling printed, single-sheet ballads to a working-class audience. These were poems or songs, some of which were medieval in origin, read or sung to an audience, and they crossed the barrier between the literate and the illiterate.[31] Chapbooks, paper-covered books sold by itinerant merchants, were well established as reading material for the poor by the start of the eighteenth century.[32] They rarely contained original material and many were the well-known stories that had previously been told in

[24] Feather, p. 150.
[25] Feather, p. 151-55.
[26] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 207.
[27] Ellen Miller Casey, '"The Aristocracy and Upholstery": The Silver Fork Novel', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 13-25 (pp. 15-18).
[28] Casey, pp. 13-15.
[29] Casey, p. 17.
[30] Casey, p. 22.
[31] Feather, p. 60.
[32] Victor E. Neuburg, *The Penny Histories* (Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 2-3.

ballad form.[33] These co-existed with the popular broadsheets, which sold in their tens of thousands throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They carried accounts of grisly crimes (for example murders with a 'love interest'), executions, and real-life horror stories. They were sold in the streets, door-to-door and at fairs and markets.[34] James Catnach, a leading London publisher of broadsheets, sold 1,166,000 copies of an account of a murderer's dying speech in 1828.[35] Altick has described Catnach's publications and hawkers:

> No newsworthy event – no gory murder, no well-attended execution, no contested election, no marriage or death in the royal family – went un-commemorated by one or more of Catnach's 'Seven Bards of Seven Dials,' a stable of seedy authors who earned shillings for gin by composing to order. When times were dull, Catnach kept his presses busy by issuing fictitious accounts ('cocks') of murders, fires, fearful accidents which were vended in the streets, the hawkers patter altering the scene of the event to suit the neighbourhoods in which they were working.[36]

Other publishers were producing reading material for the working class for more serious reasons. In 1819 the government had tried to suppress political agitation in newspapers with the Seditious Publications Act 1819 which levied a tax of 4d on all periodicals that contained news or comment on news. This was known as the 'tax on knowledge.'[37] If the publisher did not pay the tax the publication was 'unstamped' and illegal. Some publishers continued to publish cheap, unstamped publications to communicate with a working-class audience, despite the risks. Henry Hetherington was imprisoned in 1830 for publishing the *Penny Papers for the People*, which became *The Poor Man's Guardian,* and achieved weekly sales of 12,000-15,000.[38] The political agitation that preceded the 1832 Reform Bill were connected to the printed word - reading and self-improvement became associated with the class struggle.[39] The tax on knowledge was abolished in 1855; until then publishers who wished to produce an unstamped paper and avoid jail produced periodicals that did not contain any news, but was filled with serialised fiction.[40]

From the late eighteenth century religious and philanthropic groups, including the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), the Religious Tract Society (RTS) and the

[33] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, pp. 5-6.
[34] Feather, p. 60 & 156, Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, pp. 123-43; Altick, pp. 287-88; Eliot, p. 41.
[35] Altick, p. 287.
[36] Altick, pp. 287-88.
[37] James, *Fiction*, pp. 14-15; Law, p. 5, Table 1.1, p. 10.
[38] James, *Fiction*, p. 15.
[39] James, *Fiction*, pp. 4-15.
[40] Law, p. 10; Eliot, p. 46.

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), were also distributing reading material to the poor. For little or no payment they provided Bibles, religious tracts and magazines consisting largely of paternalistic stories with a moral or religious message to 'improve' their minds and souls.[41] The SDUK's *Penny Magazine* sold 200,000 a week by the end of 1832.[42] It combined general articles on historical and scientific knowledge, fiction and some classical poetry.[43] Other 'improving' magazines and religious tracts, with a clear moral and religious message, were also distributed on a large scale.[44] There is some evidence to suggest some working-class people resented of this attempt to 'educate' them, and others used this material for lighting fires or other similar household jobs, however it still played a role in the development of the market for popular literature.[45] It vastly increased the access to reading material for those who could not otherwise afford it, and so arguably played a role in the spread of literacy, providing a psychological incentive to read.[46] It also demonstrated that there was a potential market for literature for working-class readers. Hannah More was the founder of the RTS, and a prolific author of tracts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Feather felt the influence of these was great: '[t]he penny-a-part novel of the 1840s and the yellow-back of the 1870s are both direct descendants of the religious tracts of Hannah More.'[47]

Other publishers were motivated by the opportunity for financial gain. John Limbard, a seller of cheap re-prints and children's books, recognised the working-class readers' need for entertainment and escape and launched *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* in November 1822, which ran until 1847, with a cover price of two pence. It consisted of general interest, poetry and prose items, and its success was due to the sale of advertising space.[48] The first issue of *The Mirror* sold 150,000 copies, and its regular circulation settled at around 80,000 a week.[49] Limbard was forced to develop relationships with a host of alternative retail outlets, for example a shoemaker in Manchester and a tin-man in Coventry, because the regular booksellers saw it as downmarket, unsuitable for their 'respectable' customers, and so refused to stock it.[50] The fiction-carrying periodical made

[41] Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability. Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 3; Altick, p. 100; one hawker claims to have sold £1300 worth of tracts in three years. James, *Fiction*, pp. 114 & 116.
[42] Dalziel, p. 9.
[43] James, *Fiction*, p. 17.
[44] The Wesleyan Methodists also issued more than a million copies of tracts in 1841, and in the same year SPCK published 2.8 million of them. Feather, p. 162; James, *Fiction*, pp. 118 & 121.
[45] See examples in James, *Fiction*, pp. 114-15 & 123; Altick, pp. 101-07.
[46] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, pp. 13-15; Altick, p. 103.
[47] Feather, p. 162.
[48] Feather, pp. 111-12.
[49] James, *Fiction*, pp. 12-13; Altick, pp. 267 & 320.
[50] James, *Fiction*, p. 13.

entertaining literature affordable and accessible. Limbard's *Mirror* remained respectable, but imitators sprung up that provided more excitement and passion, for example *The Tell-Tale* (1823-4), *The Portfolio* (1823-9) and *Endless Entertainments* (1825).[51] William Chambers was a keen advocate of popular education who saw the need for a 'respectable' family periodical. He launched *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (which cost 1½d) in 1831 and it reached a regular a circulation of 80,000.[52] Chambers realised the role fiction played in satisfying consumer demand, and so it became an important element in this periodical.[53] The Chambers brothers had been booksellers in a poor part of Edinburgh, and Louis James says that *Chambers Journal* was popular with the working-classes, although Dalziel and Altick both argue its greater audience was probably the lower middle-class.[54]

William Strange was the first publisher to add illustrations to a fiction periodical with *The Penny Story Teller*, which started in 1832 and was published for five years.[55] In 1833 a correspondent in *The Bee,* a literary magazine for the upper and middle classes, wrote:

> At every corner of the streets [one] meets with some vendor of food for the mind, anxiously displaying the various treasures, which its brown paper wrapper protects from the too rough grasp of a hand not always devoted to so lofty an employment.[56]

This author is drawing a vivid picture of labouring customers handling this mental nourishment without experience. He says these people are not used to 'so lofty an employment', but their enthusiasm for the penny publications is clear. The 1830s saw London publishers establish distribution networks in the city and throughout the provinces. James Guest estimated in 1835 that nearly 75,000 copies of periodicals costing 2d or less were circulating in Birmingham.[57] G Berger, a journeyman compositor, was able to make enough money out of his periodicals to set up a shop in the Strand in 1838 and become the biggest newsagent in London before W H Smith.[58]

The nineteenth-century economy was based on free trade, and the publishing industry was a perfect example of this.[59] Market growth and technological changes offered lucrative opportunities to perceptive entrepreneurs. When publishers like Macmillan and John Cassell

[51] James, *Fiction*, p. 13.
[52] Altick, pp. 331-32; James, *Fiction*, pp. 16-17.
[53] James, *Fiction*, p. 16. Dalziel gives the year of first publication as 1832, pp. 11-12.
[54] Dalziel, p. 13; Altick, pp. 335-37.
[55] James, *Fiction*, p. 39.
[56] James, *Fiction*, p. 19.
[57] James, *Fiction*, p. 23.
[58] James, *Fiction*, p. 22.
[59] Feather, p. 139.

showed, in the first half of the century, that it was possible to build a successful company without having been a member of the previously controlling elite, the book trade was forced to become competitive. A new format developed in the 1820s - the novel broken down into multiple parts sold weekly or monthly. This format allowed publishers to spread their costs, enabled even small printers to print them and buyers to spread their expenditure.[60] Publishers could re-start popular serialised novels, or discontinue them if they did not sell well. This format was initially popular with the middle-classes. Pierce Egan Senior's *Life in London* came out in twelve 32-page parts costing three shillings each between October 1820 and July 1821 and was 'a huge hit with the public' though the price would indicate a middle-class market for the product.[61] Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836-7) was the most popular middle-class novel in parts, but by the 1840s the three-volume novel regained prominence as the most popular form for the middle-classes, and the part-novel aimed at this audience swiftly declined. Only Dickens persisted with this format.[62] However the penny-a-part novel was the most common form of fiction aimed at the lower orders from the 1830s to the 1850s.

The publishers of part literature who emerged in London in the 1830s were often small companies, but their circulations could be large. They included William Strange, G Purkess, James Watson, John Cleave and George Virtue, who straddled both markets for the middle and working classes during the same period.[63] There were minor publishers and printers in the provinces who were producing and distributing their own material.[64] Part-book publishers employed canvassers, who called on the homes of potential buyers to persuade them to subscribe to a serial. They would then deliver the next part when it was due, and collect payment. These could be very persuasive. Charles Knight, later a publisher himself, said of the salesman who came to his kitchen door in the early nineteenth century: 'no refusal can prevent him in the end leaving his number for inspection.'[65]

At first these new publishers re-printed or plagiarised popular novels published for the middle classes - *Pickwick Papers* was copied more than any other, and attempts to prevent the distribution of these copies and plagiarisms met with little success.[66] The key figure to emerge from this group was the entrepreneur and prolific publisher, Edward Lloyd. At first he

[60] Feather, p. 114, James, *Fiction*, pp. 9-10; Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, p. 106.
[61] Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, p. 88; James, *Fiction*, pp. 68-69; Altick, p. 279.
[62] Amy Cruse, *The Victorians and Their Books* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), pp. 16-20; Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, p. 87.
[63] James, *Fiction*, pp. 10-22 & 212-15.
[64] James, *Fiction*, pp. 22-23.
[65] James, *Fiction*, p. 11.
[66] James, *Fiction*, p. 52.

too produced plagiarism, for example *The Posthumous Notes of the Pickwick Club*, published in 1837.[67] He opened a bookshop in London in the early 1830s and ventured into publishing in 1835.[68] Later he commissioned authors to write for him, successfully combining the sensational material found in ballads, broadsheets and chap-books with the novel writing format of upper tier literature.[69] These were initially Gothic-style tales, featuring magic and secret passages, werewolves, fairies and witches, and were known as 'penny dreadfuls.'[70] But Lloyd recognised that the working-class wanted domestic and sentimental stories, combined with the excitement of their traditional street literature, and sensing the potential for profit, began to commission authors to write novels specifically to meet this need.[71] According to Louis James, *Ela the Outcast* (published in 1839) was the first such novel.[72]

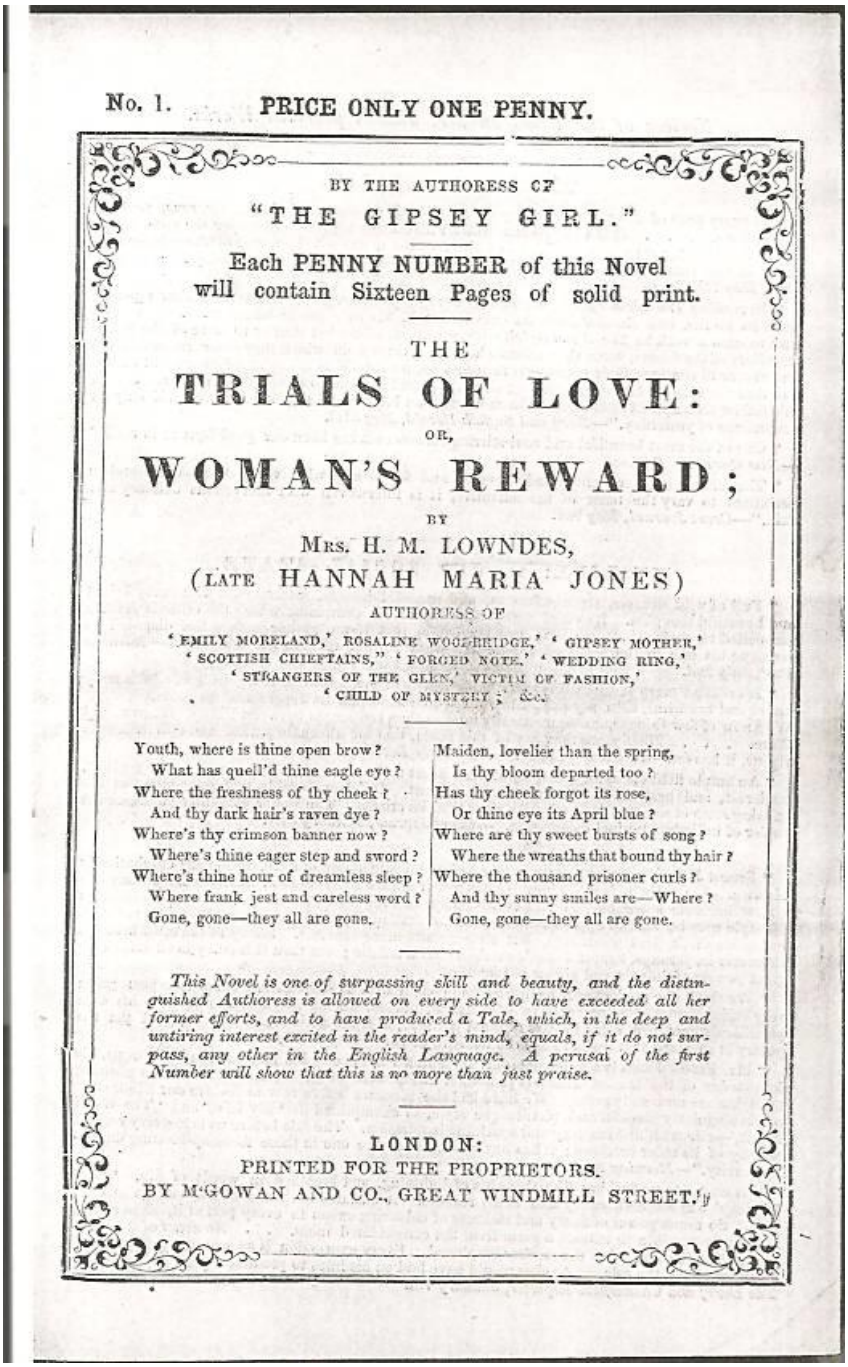
1839-1879

Technological advances continued to make printing cheaper and faster, while the development of lithography also meant clearer, cheaper illustrations.[73] Paper manufacture also continued to improve, and became cheaper when esparto was introduced as a raw material in the 1850s. Edward Lloyd was one of the first to experiment with esparto and purchased his own paper-mill.[74] Paper Duty had been reduced in 1837, and was abolished in 1861, lowering the cost of paper further.[75] In addition, population growth, and bigger urban conglomerations that made markets easier to reach, improved circulation possibilities.[76] The growth of the wholesaler Simpkin and Marshall meant publishers could shift their stock more quickly, selling in bulk at lower prices.[77] The completion of the national railway network by 1850 increased the speed to national markets.[78]

The penny-a-part novels of the 1840s and 1850s were printed on thin paper, some with an illustration on the first page. The examples in the Barry Ono Collection are bound together in hard covers to form a whole book. They are all 16 pages long and the pages measure

[67] James, *Fiction*, pp. 47-54; Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, p. 1; For the imitators, Sutherland, 'Dickens Serialising Imitators' *Victorian Fiction*, Chapter 4.
[68] Feather, p. 156; James, *Fiction*, pp. 28-29.
[69] Vincent, p. 205.
[70] James, *Fiction*, pp. 44, 85-6 & 99-101; Smith, pp. 19-20.
[71] James, *Fiction*, p. 28.
[72] James, *Fiction*, p. 29
[73] Feather, p. 134.
[74] Esparto is a fibre produced from grass. Altick, pp. 306-07; Haining, pp. 31-32; Law, p. 23.
[75] Feather, p. 131; Altick, pp. 278 & 306.
[76] Feather, p. 135.
[77] Feather, p. 137
[78] Feather, p. 135

approx. 13cm x 21½ cm, making them portable and easy to store (See Fig 2.1). Some of the penny-a-part novels appear to have been planned and written for publication as complete



No. 1. PRICE ONLY ONE PENNY.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF
"THE GIPSEY GIRL."

Each PENNY NUMBER of this Novel will contain Sixteen Pages of solid print.

THE
TRIALS OF LOVE:
OR,
WOMAN'S REWARD;

BY
MRS. H. M. LOWNDES,
(LATE HANNAH MARIA JONES)
AUTHORESS OF
'EMILY MORELAND,' ROSALINE WOODBRIDGE,' 'GIPSEY MOTHER,'
'SCOTTISH CHIEFTAINS," 'FORGED NOTE,' 'WEDDING RING,'
'STRANGERS OF THE GLEN,' VICTIM OF FASHION,'
'CHILD OF MYSTERY,' &c.

Youth, where is thine open brow?
What has quell'd thine eagle eye?
Where the freshness of thy cheek?
And thy dark hair's raven dye?
Where's thy crimson banner now?
Where's thine eager step and sword?
Where's thine hour of dreamless sleep?
Where frank jest and careless word?
Gone, gone—they all are gone.

Maiden, lovelier than the spring,
Is thy bloom departed too?
Has thy cheek forgot its rose,
Or thine eye its April blue?
Where are thy sweet bursts of song?
Where the wreaths that bound thy hair?
Where the thousand prisoner curls?
And thy sunny smiles are—Where?
Gone, gone—they all are gone.

This Novel is one of surpassing skill and beauty, and the distinguished Authoress is allowed on every side to have exceeded all her former efforts, and to have produced a Tale, which, in the deep and untiring interest excited in the reader's mind, equals, if it do not surpass, any other in the English Language. A perusal of the first Number will show that this is no more than just praise.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE PROPRIETORS.
BY M'GOWAN AND CO., GREAT WINDMILL STREET.

Fig 2.1: Cover Sheet to first penny-part of Hannah Maria Jones, *The Trials of Love*, (1854)

novels, but have been divided up by the publisher. The instalments stop mid-sentence, continuing in the next instalment, even if this means the next instalment doesn't make sense independently.

Lloyd dominated the market, but others publishers emerged in the 1840s: T Paine, George Vickers, and W. M. Clarke rose rapidly to prominence.[79] The novel in parts may have been a model taken from the publishers for the upper and middle class, but the key difference with the products these publishers were selling was the price: usually one penny per part, but sometimes a halfpenny or twopence.[80] Altick describes the output of the publishers of penny fiction as 'staggering'; in 1845 half a million copies were sold weekly.[81] Taking a calculation of 7.58 million women of reading age in 1851, and assuming 3 readers per copy, then 1.5 million women were reading these novels, 20% of the female working-class population.[82] Salisbury Square and Paternoster Row, where penny publishers were sited, were crowded on Sunday mornings with hawkers collecting the huge bundles of publications ready to sell them on the streets or to the small shops used by the working-class.[83]

Working-class readers also had access to literature via cheap, private libraries. Fanny Burney described one as early as 1778.[84] These were attached to tobacco shops, confectioners, stationers and barbers' shops and contained romances and penny fiction.[85] Some of these libraries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries charged only 1d to borrow a volume of a novel.[86] An 1848 illustration of a lower class library shown on page 7 of Louis James's *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850* depicts the customers as respectable, well-dressed women.[87] The Libraries catering for working-class readers were also based in factories, ragged schools, barracks and churches, but these were unlikely to stock much popular fiction, and even less likely to stock romances as they aimed to provide practical or religious education.[88] The 1850 Public Libraries Act made it possible for local authorities to increase rates to finance a public library, but rate-payer opposition meant few libraries were opened, especially outside of the large cities.[89]

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[79] James, *Fiction*, pp. 30 & 33.
[80] Altick, p. 291.
[81] Altick, p. 291.
[82] There is evidence that women shared their reading material. Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p. 109; Flint, p. 232; Lady [Florence] Bell, p. 149; Twells, p. 136. The modern calculation of readership is 3 times circulation. <http://www.nrs.co.uk/choosetrends.html> [accessed June 2012].
[83] Altick, p. 291.
[84] James, *Fiction,* p. 6.
[85] James, *Fiction*, p. 6; Altick p. 217.
[86] James, *Fiction*, pp. 2 & 6-7; Altick, p. 217.
[87] James, *Fiction*, p. 7.
[88] James, *Fiction*, p. 2.
[89] Altick, pp. 223-32.

The 1842 Copyright Act transferred copyright ownership from the publisher to the author for his or her lifetime plus seven years, for a minimum of forty-two years. This restricted re-prints and use of an author's work without permission. The Act was intended to benefit authors, however many who were writing to order, including those working for the cheap press, were paid by the sheet, and copyright passed to their publisher.[90] This made production cheaper for the publisher, but also impacted on both the quality of the fiction and the authors' lives, as will be seen in chapter 3.

In the middle-class market, a gradual shift was made from the mid-nineteenth century towards editions that readers could own. This began in 1847 when Simms and McIntyre published fourteen re-printed novels at 2 shillings each. The price dropped to one shilling and Simms and McIntyre published 279 volumes in this series, called *The Parlour Library*, between 1847 and 1863 with competitors releasing similar, low-priced, re-printed novels. The most successful was Routledge's *Railway Library*, started in 1848 and this ran to more than a thousand volumes of one shilling re-prints. These were still too expensive for most working-class readers, but signalled the shift towards owning fiction, rather than borrowing it from a private library.[91] Routledge started his publishing career in remaindering (selling of cheap copies of unsold books) but was the first to recognise the potential of the railway market. His publications were described in 1859 as 'novels that have died out in their original expensive form, at a guinea and a half, and are resuscitated, for the benefit of the incoming race of readers, at a shilling a piece.'[92] Routledge was sensitive to a change that offered an opportunity – he was both ahead of the market and he helped in its evolution.[93] By the 1870s it was standard practice for new novels to take three-volume form and be re-issued as a single volume edition costing six shillings and later for a shilling. The one shilling reprints of out-of-copyright novels were common.[94]

As the century progressed, publishers had to become more focussed on meeting the needs of a specific group of consumers in order to succeed. George Routledge exemplified this. Edward Lloyd, another great entrepreneur, had to build up his own sales organisation and distribution network for his working-class paper the *Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper* (started in 1842) after regular newsagents boycotted it because was too cheap (2d, then

[90] Mark Rose, 'Nine-Tenths of the Law: The English Copyright Debates and the Rhetoric of the Public Domain', *Law and Contemporary Problems,* 66 (2003), 75–87; Feather, p. 104.
[91] Cross, *Common Writer,* pp. 187-88.
[92] 'ART. I.' (1859), p. 324.
[93] Feather, 43; Cross, *Common Writer,* pp. 187-88.
[94] By the end of the 1880s, the three-decker had been replaced by the competitively priced single volume novel; more and more publishers were selling first editions at only six shillings. Cross, *Common Writer,* pp. 206-07

2½d).[95] He placed advertisements throughout the country on walls, trees and fences, and even stamped them on the pennies he paid his workers.[96] In 1858 Wilkie Collins described the types of shops selling cheap fiction in the poorer neighbourhoods of London:

> At such times, whenever I passed a small stationer's or small tobacconist's shop, I became conscious, mechanically as it were, of certain publications which invariably graced its windows. These publications all appeared to be of the same small quarto size; they seemed to consist merely of a few unbound pages; each one of them had a picture on the upper half of the front leaf, and a quantity of small print on the under.[97]

Collins found the same picture nationwide:

> I left London and travelled about England. The neglected publications followed me. There they were in every town, large or small. I saw them in fruit-shops, in oyster-shops, in lollypop-shops. Villages even – picturesque, strong-smelling villages – were not free of them. Wherever the speculative daring of one man could open a shop, and the human appetites and necessities of his fellow mortals could keep it from shutting up again, there, as it appeared to me, the unbound picture quarto instantly entered, set itself up obtrusively in the window, and insisted on being looked at by everybody.[98]

The demands of the market, and the influences of the genres of literature that preceded them, came together in the penny part-novels produced in the 1840s and 1850s, resulting in the proliferation of literature Collins described. There were clearly elements of the dramas found in ballads, broadsheets and chapbooks in some of these, and the authors Altick described as the 'bards of Seven Dials' were very possibly behind the creation of some of the early penny-a-part fiction, but too little is known about the authors to be sure.[99] Their titles reflect an interest in crime, adventure, misfortune and ultimately, love, for example James Malcolm Rymer's *Ada the Betrayed or the Murder at The Old Smithy. A Romance of Passion* (1842).[100] These penny-a-part novels were also sentimental, or domestic, full of 'pathetic seductions, villainous fathers, suffering mothers and cruelly treated children.'[101]

[95] James, *Fiction*, p. 41.
[96] James, *Fiction*, p. 41.
[97] 'The Unknown Public', (1858), p. 217.
[98] 'The Unknown Public', (1858), p. 217.
[99] Feather, p. 156; Altick, pp. 287-88.
[100] Smith, p. 32.
[101] Altick, p. 290.

James felt the domestic story also lay 'at the heart of almost all the penny issue fiction published during the 1840s.'[102] He cited Mrs E C Grey, who complained in 1841 that:

> Novel-writing has completely changed its character. From its high-flown elaborate style, it is now fallen into its opposite extreme; from improbabilities, always impalpable, sometimes gross, now, in their place, we find nothing but the hum-drummeries of reality.[103]

Mrs Grey could easily have been talking about James Malcolm Rymer's *Phoebe the Miller's Maid*, first published in 1841, which contained drawn out descriptions of life at the mill.[104] Rymer articulated this change from the Gothic to the domestic in his novel *Jane Brightwell*, in 1846, explaining how the Gothic novel had fallen out a favour because 'modern' readers preferred woman's love to be at the centre of their stories:

> It is the maudlin, sickly fashion of the present day to call all of this [romantic love] 'the devotion of the female heart', 'the singleness of women's dear affections', the love that clings to an unworthy object provided it has once been enshrined in the heart &c., &c.,[105]

The Gothic was giving way to the domestic romance. Aspects of the sentimental novel continued to be seen in the 1840s – these novels had strong moral and emotional overtones, as villains threatened female virtue and gallant rescue was required by heroes. Prest's *Evelina the Pauper's Child; or, Poverty, Crime and Sorrow,* first published in 1847) is a perfect example, as will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.[106]

Elements of the silver fork novels can also be seen, with descriptions of aristocratic life, and as I discuss in chapter 4, the stories generally portrayed the aristocracy in a negative way, and discouraged movements up the social scale.[107] According to Louis James the nature of fiction changed after 1850, and the styles of the more leisured novels of the past could not survive the bustle and pre-occupation of modern town life. The fainting heroines seemed ridiculous and the heroes appeared colourless and ineffectual to the slum dwellers of the 1850s.[108] I think there was more variation than this implies – penny-a-part novels of the early

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[102] James, *Fiction*, p. 114.
[103] James, *Fiction*, p. 114.
[104] James Malcom Rymer, *Phoebe the Miller's Maid. A Romance of Deep Interest.* (London: Edward Lloyd, 1842, first published 1841). Date of first publication from Smith, p. 36.
[105] James, Fiction, p. 115.
[106] Thomas Peckett Prest, *Evelina the Pauper's Child; or, Poverty, Crime and Sorrow. A Romance of Deep Pathos* (London: Edward Lloyd, 1851, first published 1847). Date of first publication from Smith, p. 30.
[107] Casey, p. 23; James, *Fiction*, p. 121.
[108] James, *Fiction*, p. 198.

type were still selling after the 1850s. This form continued to sell well to the end of the century.[109]

Working-class readers were also able to purchase penny versions of upper and middle-class literature. John Dicks launched *Dicks' Standard Plays* in 1857, complete plays that cost a penny. In 1864 he started to publish *The Complete Works of Shakspere* [sic] and in 1868 replaced this with *Dicks' Shakspere's Works,* which started as a weekly serial issue at two plays for a penny. Over 150,000 copies were sold.[110] In total *Dicks' Shakespere* sold close to a million copies. In 1869 Dicks also launched *Dicks' English Novels*, which cost six pence, then *Dicks' Waverley Novels* and *Dicks' English Classics*, which cost between two and three pence.[111] The popularity of these is evidence that the material produced for the working-class reader demanded more than a basic grasp of literacy.

Another important emerging vehicle for romantic fiction was the fiction-carrying penny periodical. At the beginning of 1840 two independent surveys investigating the literature read by the lower classes in London found eighty cheap periodicals circulating in the capital, two-thirds of which cost a penny. Twenty-two of these contained only romance and other stories.[112] In 1858 Wilkie Collins said that the *LJ, FH and Cassell's Family Paper* sold 895,000 copies between them; he estimated a readership for these publications of three million.[113] In 1864 John Frances in *The Athenaeum* analysed the twenty-one weekly publications available in London. He said that journals with novels and tales costing a halfpenny or a penny were selling 1,050,000 a week, with the *LJ* selling nearly half a million of those. [114] This puts the readership (if calculated as three times the circulation) of these two categories at 3.15 million. These calculations cannot be entirely reliable; we do not know if some people purchased more than one periodical, we cannot assume they were all working-class or all women, but they indicate a high level of readership of these publications.

Some of these periodicals had serious news content, but others were full of crime and sensationalism and were not seen as respectable family reading.[115] George Biggs started the *FH* in 1842, aiming to produce a periodical that was considered respectable enough to

[109] The sale of sensational novels in serial form exceeded two million a week, with individual titles selling 10,000 to 60,000 each. 'The Literature of the Streets', (1887), p. 41.
[110] These were also sold bound in cloth at two shillings (50,000 were sold) and then in a one-shilling bound edition (700,000 were sold), Dicks, pp. 28-36.
[111] Dicks, pp. 28-36.
[112] James, *Fiction*, pp. 30-31.
[113] 'The Unknown Public', (1858), p. 218.
[114] Altick, p. 358.
[115] Altick, p. 345.

be left where children could read it. This was achieved according to *The British Quarterly Review*, which assessed all the penny periodicals in 1859, and found the *FH* to be:

> [W]ell considered with reference to its aims, and is various and amusing, with a fair amount of utility intermixed. There is a leading article, or essay, every week upon some subject of an instructive or thoughtful character. These papers are not always up to the mark of current intelligence; they are sometimes crude and sometimes inaccurate; but the purpose is distinctly marked out, and we must trust to its more careful fulfilment hereafter. [116]

The inclusion of 'instructive' or 'thoughtful' items made the publication, in his view, 'the best' of its type. The author of this piece, possibly the editor, Robert Vaughan, remained critical of the fiction in the *FH*, but thought it was better than that found in other publications: 'Under the head of 'The Story Teller' we have novelettes of much the same character as the rest in point of quality, but less deleterious in matter, and simpler in structure.'[117] Biggs's publication maintained high sales (300,000 a week in 1854) despite the lack of illustrations, competitions and other attractions provided by competitors, and it continued until 1939.[118]

The *LJ,* started by George Stiff in 1845, was intended to rival the *FH*. It eventually achieved a higher circulation, reaching sales of half a million a week by 1854.[119] Stiff was, according to the writer and publisher Henry Vitzetelly a failed engraver who had not managed to stay in employment at the *Illustrated London News*, or start an opposition paper to it. Determined to succeed, Stiff employed talented authors and editors to produce a fiction-carrying penny weekly in direct competition with the *FH*.[120] The publication was extremely successful - it achieved profits of £10,000 to £12,000 a year.[121] Its success was due, according to Vizetelly, to Stiff's selection of talented editors and writers of fiction: G W M Reynolds, J F Smith and Pierce Egan Junior.[122] Smith had failed to succeed in the three-volume market, but produced serialised fiction that meant weekly circulation 'used to rise by as many as 50,000 when the *dénouement* approached.'[123] Working girls would usually lend each other copies but couldn't always wait to borrow it, and Vizetelly said 'when their curiosity as to how the story would

[116] 'ART. I.', (1859), p. 340.
[117] 'ART. I.', (1859), p. 340.
[118] Clowes, p. 226; James, *Fiction,* p. 44.
[119] Clowes, p. 226.
[120] King, *The London Journal,* pp. 21-22.
[121] James, *Fiction*, p. 45.
[122] King, *The London Journal*, p. 22.
[123] King, *The London Journal,* p. 22.

end was at its greatest tension, the borrowers being unable to wait for the journal to be lent to them, expended their pennies on buying it outright.'[124]

There were other popular fiction-carrying periodicals available, all with their own style and character, all competing, aiming at particular sectors of the market. *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-1854) intended to give 'aid to the gigantic struggle for intellectual improvement going on'; *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper* (1853-1867) modelled itself on the *Illustrated London News* but carried extra fiction, and *Reynold's Miscellany* (1846-1869) provided more thrilling tales.[125] In November 1862 John Dicks had launched *The Bow Bells* which included pieces about music, needlework and patterns alongside quality fiction from authors like Harrison Ainsworth.[126] Dicks claimed that the circulation of this grew to 200,000 a week in the first year.[127] His second series, in 1864, increased the number of pages to twenty-four and added fashion plates and a 'Ladies' Page by Madame Elise' - aiming some of the magazine directly at women 'with some spare income and pretensions to gentility.'[128] It was a success – he claimed an increased circulation of half a million.[129]

Unlike some of the penny-a-part novels, the serials in penny magazines were written specifically for this market, with reading 'in parts' in mind. It is evident to the reader that some authors had completed the instalments just before a publishing deadline, and the overall story appears to lack planning in the early stages. In some cases it is also evident that the authors had been asked to produce more instalments of a particular story, perhaps because it was proving popular. This resulted in stories that looked to be heading to a resolution or ending but then suddenly introduced new characters, or new ordeals, or deviated from the main storyline. For example in 'A Daughter of Fortune' (*LJ*, 1875), the sisters who have been separated almost make contact through their brother in Plymouth in Chapter 42. The serial ends that week allowing the reader to think they will reconcile, but they do not and further trials are placed in their way before they meet at the end of the story.[130] These serials typically stop at the end of a chapter, often on a cliff-hanger, causing increasing demand for them the following week.[131] This was obviously beneficial to the retailers and publishers, increasing their revenue, and would mean more copies were in

[124] King, *The London Journal*, p. 22.
[125] King, *The London Journal*, p. 100 & 176; James, *Fiction*, p. 149; Altick, p. 292.
[126] Altick, p. 361.
[127] Dicks, p. 32.
[128] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 155-56.
[129] King, *The London Journal*, p. 156.
[130] Clementine Montague, 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ*, 26th June-16th October 1875, 25th September 1875, pp. 214-16 & 2nd October 1875, pp. 198-200.
[131] James, *Fiction*, p. 47.

circulation for friends and family members to borrow. As seen, the author J F Smith became the master of this technique and his stories were the mainstay of the *LJ* until he left to work for John Cassell in 1855.[132]

Between 1845 and 1889 the number of pages of fiction in the *LJ* increased.[133] In 1859 *The British Quarterly Review* stated:

> Fiction is the staple of the cheap serials. Upon the attraction it holds forth their projectors rely for the support necessary to carry on their works. Fiction is the piece de resistance for the strong stomach of the million; the rest of the articles are mere flavours thrown in to entice more fastidious palates.[134]

The titles of the fiction indicate that this genre became increasingly focused on romantic love. The stories in the first edition in March 1845 are: 'Rambles in the East', 'An Incident in the Reign of Terror', 'Madame Laffarge; A True and Authentic Narrative of her Extraordinary Adventures', 'A Tale of Italy: Fiction, Murder and Coincidence in Florence. A Moral Tale.' All are travel and adventure tales. Fifteen years later in August 1860 the titles all contain girls' names, and are about heroines: 'Laura Etheridge', 'Ellen Ray' and 'Adela'. The titles twenty-nine years later in December 1889 were: 'The Young Wife', 'Wait till Tomorrow', 'Smiles and Tears', 'One Night's Mystery' and 'His Mad Passion'.[135] All concern love, marriage and courtship. The serialisation of novels arguably played a key role in the 'feminisation' of penny periodicals in the 1850s, and became an increasingly central element of the content.[136] These novels were stories about love, relationships and marriage, and they drove the popularity of these magazines.[137]

The authors and publishers aimed to keep their regular buyers by advertising and starting a gripping new serial as soon as one ended. This partly explains the formulaic nature of these stories, as authors were commissioned to imitate successes of the past. The stories needed to be sufficiently different to be a 'new' story to the regular reader, but also the 'same' as the ones they had enjoyed previously. The connection between what the publisher believed

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[132] James, *Fiction*, p. 47; Altick, p. 360; King *The London Journal*, p. 100.
[133] See Appendix 1.
[134] 'ART. I.' (1859.), p. 332.
[135] The *LJ*, 4th August 1860: 'Laura Etheridge' (4 pages, part of a serial) 'Ellen Ray' (4 pages) 'Adela' (4 pages, part of a serial). The *4*
, 28th December 1889: 'The Young Wife' (3 ½ pages, serial) 'Wait till Tomorrow' (1 ½ pages, short story) 'Smiles and Tears' (3 pages, illustrated serial) 'One Night's Mystery' (2 ½ pages, romantic short story) 'His Mad Passion' (3 ½ pages, illustrated serial).
[136] Beetham, pp. 3 & 48; Law, p. 23.
[137] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, p. 10; Patricia Anderson, pp. 108-09.

readers demanded and what was then actually produced is clearly visible here, as well as the evidence of competition between publishers. Some of the regular contributors to these periodicals were also popular with the upper- and middle-classes, for example Mrs Henry Wood and Charles Reade, and this questions the literary class divide. One critic said in 1890 that the stories in the *FH* were 'better than the average run of three-decker novels by the fashionable publishers.'[138] The formula for these periodicals had evolved according to what publishers believed to be the tastes of the readers and if publishers did not provide what readers wanted, they would see this reflected in their sales figures.[139] It was crucial that publishers knew their readers and met their needs. Errors could be costly. The *LJ* was sold in 1857, and the new editor, Mark Lemon, decided to take the publication upmarket and offer readers more 'quality' literature. Circulation fell, and Lemon was replaced in 1860 by Pierce Egan, a writer of popular, formulaic romantic fiction.[140] This episode demonstrated the role fiction played in readers' decisions to buy the product. John Feather states:

> The publisher is, in the most literal sense, the capitalist of the world of books… The market place was the master and the successful publishers were those who recognised how the market was developing.[141]

This free-market and entrepreneurial approach made this a thoroughly modern industry.[142]

The formula for the *LJ* was established by the mid-1850s. It contained lots of light fiction with plenty of illustrations, or entertaining non-fiction, household hints and advice columns, some concerned with love and marriage. The serials had an illustration on the front page at the top of the lead serial. Later instalments of long-running serials were moved to further back in the magazine to make way for new serials that may attract new readers, and the serials rarely had any illustrations once they moved out of the front page. The pages measured 16½cm x 24cm. Short stories rarely had illustrations, they often contained an obvious moral message: the characters were 'good' and 'bad', and it was easy to see which from the very beginning.

In the 1860s the distinction between products for the lower classes and those for the middle classes became more blurred. The 'penny blood' of the 1830s and 40s became the 'penny dreadful' aimed at juveniles, and fiction-carrying penny periodicals sought a different, family

[138] Altick, p. 360.
[139] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 112-139.
[140] King, *The London Journal*, 'When is a Journal not itself?' pp. 112-132.
[141] Feather, p. vii & 142.
[142] Feather, pp. 121-24.

audience and aimed to appear more respectable.[143] The sensation novels of the 1860s also blurred the distinction because their authors were published in both penny fiction and in the traditional middle-class three-volume format. Sensation fiction, as a newly identified genre, was thought to elicit physical sensation, appealing to the nerves, with its surprises, twists and revelations.[144] It set improper events within the domestic setting, and there was outrage about its transgression of social boundaries.[145] Like romantic fiction it was associated with women readers and sometimes women authors, and was thought to be read quickly and without care or thought; in this way it was a middle-class version of penny romances.[146] It contained aspects of the Gothic, silver fork, domestic and sentimental novels, as well as elements of melodrama. It was also romantic. The heroine and her relationships were central, and these novels aimed to appeal to the emotions. Pamela Gilbert, however, said that the main difference between romance and the sensation novel was that in romances the heroine passively wins the heart of her hero whereas in sensation fiction she can use her sexuality to gain and express power.[147]

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, published in the *LJ* between 21st March and 15th August 1863, was a prime example, with a bigamous, murderous anti-heroine who bewitched Sir Michael Audley with her beauty.[148] Braddon followed this with other serials in the *LJ*: *The Outcasts* (1863-1864), *Aurora Floyd* (1865-1866) and *Diavola; or, the Woman's Battle* (1866-1867).[149] The serials Braddon wrote especially for the *LJ* were placed on the front page – but re-prints were in second or third position, beneath editor Pierce Egan Junior's serials.[150] Braddon was popular with the middle-class reader, yet King says *Lady Audley's Secret* 'must be regarded as but a run-of-the mill' *LJ* serial.[151] Wilkie Collins had explored the themes of women's madness and incarceration in *The Woman in White* (1859), the first example of sensation literature, and these themes were echoed in *Lady Audley's Secret*. King says the 'mad woman' motif was common in the *LJ* from the mid-1850s onwards, and Braddon's work fitted in with this popular stream of literature.[152]

[143] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, pp. 1-21; Law, pp. 22-23.
[144] Pamela Gilbert, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 3-12 , (p. 2).
[145] Law, p. 24.
[146] Gilbert, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[147] Pamela Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 77.
[148] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Penguin, 1998, first published 1862)
[149] King, *The London Journal*, p. 197.
[150] King, *The London Journal*, p. 197.
[151] Law, pp. 23-24; King, *The London Journal*, p. 198.
[152] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 199-203.

There was a close relationship between romance, sensation literature and melodrama. Melodrama has been discussed so regularly since 1980 by historians that Rohan McWilliam called it the 'melodramatic turn.' In historiography, melodrama has been used as a way to understand the Victorian *mentalité* and as a key to the construction and presentation of the Victorian self.[153] In its simplest form it was a moralistic and sentimental play that allowed extreme emotions to be expressed and contained the binary oppositions of good and evil, rich and poor, town and country.[154] According to McWilliam, all forms of culture were influenced by melodrama, including the novel, but it had a particularly close relationship to romance.[155] He says:

> It was a form that encouraged comfort and certainty through the operation of narrative closure. Evil was always thwarted and virtue triumphed… Melodrama was a democratic mode, ideally suited to the needs of a secularizing society; it maintained the rigours of a moral universe in a post-sacred order.[156]

Historians have interpreted melodrama as giving women a voice or exploring the dangers they faced on the streets.[157] Its relationship with politics has also been explored, and McWilliam discussed the serials written for penny periodicals by G W M Reynolds in the 1840s and by J F Smith in the 1850s as representing the world as divided by rich and poor.[158] McWilliam classes romance stories as a form of melodrama.[159] It became considered a form of lower-class culture and was associated with women, and therefore was deemed inferior and trivial.[160] Fiction, according to McWilliam, is the place where the melodramatic frame of mind could be most readily understood:[161]

> Melodrama, the sensationalists recognised, was a source of pleasure but also a way of exploring some of the serious issues in Victorian society. The links between the stage and the sensation novel were very deep. This is because the nineteenth century was infected by the melodramatic imagination.[162]

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[153] Rohan McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', *Radical History Review*, 78 (2000), 57-84 (p. 57-8).
[154] Rohan McWilliam, 'Melodrama', in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela Gilbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 54-65 (p. 54).
[155] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 59-60.
[156] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 61-62.
[157] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', p. 8.
[158] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 70 & 72; This is applied in Rohan McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress: Interpreting a Victorian Penny Dreadful', in *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Beth Harris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 99-115.
[159] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', p. 63.
[160] Rohan McWilliam, 'Melodrama', p. 55.
[161] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', p. 74.
[162] McWilliam, 'Melodrama', p. 65.

This relationship perhaps explains why the sensation literature of the 1860s fitted so well into the popular penny periodicals of the mid-century.

During the second half of the century the different genres of literature were identified, defined and separated, becoming distinct types aimed at particular customers. Simon Eliot examined railway literature and thought that romances were promoted as a separate genre from the 1850s, and Graham Law identified how the romance, mystery and adventure genres became distinct forms of fiction within periodicals in between the 1860 and 1870.[163] This all aided publishers' targeting of particular consumers.[164] However Pamela Gilbert has described the relationship between the genres as complicated and shifting, for example works by Ouida, a popular author in the late nineteenth century, were romantic and sensational but contained elements of the silver fork novel. Mrs Wood wrote sentimental and domestic melodramas, but included sensational sub-plots.[165] Patrick O'Malley and Gilbert both discussed the elements of Gothic found in 1860s sensation literature, linking sensibility and sensation.[166] These blurred lines are an important aspect of these genres – authors borrowed freely from the literature they read and the plays that they saw – and the romance stories I have considered in this thesis contain elements of other genres and yet keep the love story at their core.

The 6th March 1875 edition demonstrates the appearance of the *LJ* (see Fig 2.2). This edition contained twelve and a half pages of fiction; comprising instalments of four similar serials.[167] All centred around young and beautiful women, had a potential hero, an element of mystery and a question around someone's identity. All contained detailed descriptions of the environment and the key characters - their hair, eyes, and clothing - and had a climax at the end of the instalment: *'To be continued in our next.'* The climaxes offered a 'hook', inviting the reader to look forward to the next instalment. The remaining three and a half pages were taken up with assorted articles and columns. A short article titled 'COURTSHIP' made it clear that women should play a passive role in initiating and driving relationships:

[163] Eliot, p. 52; Graham Law, *Serialising Fiction in the Popular Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 182-87.
[164] Eliot, p. 48.
[165] Gilbert, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[166] O'Malley, pp. 84-92; Gilbert, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[167] These were 'False and Frail' by Pierce Egan, 'Mary Rivenhall's Prophecy', 'Cupid's Curse' and 'Hunted for Her Money' all anonymous authors.

THE

LONDON JOURNAL:

And Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art.

[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.

No. 1569.—Vol. LXI.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 6, 1875. [Price One Penny.

[A DANGEROUS DISCOVERY.]

FALSE AND FRAIL.

By PIERCE EGAN.

Author of "The Flower of the Flock," "The Poor Girl," "Her First Love," &c.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOUBLE SECRET.

Within a spacious sitting room of a great hotel in the West-end of London lounged in a large leather easy chair a gentleman.

The room was very richly furnished, indicating that he was a guest of means, as he occupied a suite of the handsomest apartments in the gigantic building, and the look out was down a broad thoroughfare lined with splendid mansions, and intercepted more than a quarter of a mile distant by a belt of umbrageous trees. Open carriages and broughams whirled to and fro; and, a prominent object in nearly the centre of this great place, a mounted troop of Life Guards moved slowly in procession down the spacious roadway, the sunbeams gleaming and coruscating upon their brightly polished helmets and cuirasses.

Upon the gentleman, however, the incidents occurring in the wide avenue before him were wholly lost, for his eye was fixed and glassy in its expression, and it was plain that he beheld objects only which were passing in procession before his mental vision.

He looked about thirty; his fair hair was parted in the centre, and his moustache and whiskers were of the Dundreary order; he was faultlessly attired in the latest fashion, and had all the understood characteristics of an exquisite of the first water, but there were lines about the corners of his eyes and mouth which indicated that those who measured him by as a puppy and a fool were wrong in their calculation. He was shallow in some things, perhaps, but he was cunning in most. At least, such was his own impression, and that belief, as a rule, had formed through life the basis of his proceedings. He played restlessly with his moustache, pulling the hair with an incessant movement between his thumb and finger.

"Ten years! Only ten years! It is no more, and it seems as many centuries to me," he murmured, sullenly. "Ten! Ah!—a thousand years since that gray dawn when a foreign land looming up in the sea haze caught my eyes, and appeared to haul down from my brain that crushing load of horror and apprehension, which compressed it so terribly, and fling it at my feet. How I kicked it from me, wild with delight, only to find the burden back again when night fell, and I tried to woo sleep—a dreamless sleep."

He passed his white, jewelled fingers over his hot forehead twice or thrice, and then resumed the dragging at his moustache.

"Dead—drowned! Mine the hand that hurled her into the deep water. Ugh! if I could only banish from my eyes the white face as the water circled over it when it was settling down! If I could only have realized then how much I really loved her; but I was then the unluckiest devil alive; it was my rotten luck not to have known the fortune which had befallen me until too late. Poor Floye! your luck was dead out too, and the baby, the little miserable infant—mine—my only child—I wonder what its fate—whether it died on that door step before it was discovered. I shouldn't be surprised, and I am down for murder number two. Ugh! how my throat burns. Poor Floye! it was your own fault. I never meant to do that."

He sighed deeply twice or thrice, and presently thrust his hand into the deepest recesses of an inner pocket in his vest. From it he produced a faded, violet-quilted satin wallet, and out of a compartment he drew a photograph, and gazed at it.

It was the portrait of a young and beautiful girl, the features lit up with a singularly sweet, though slightly pensive, smile.

"Wonderfully like her!" he muttered, as he gazed steadfastly, but with humid eyes, upon it. "Just her pretty smile, poor girl. I wonder was she found, and what the verdict was. I must try and find that out. And baby too—I will most assuredly look her up. This may help me to recognise her. No doubt she resembles her mother, and by this photo I shall——"

It disappeared from his fingers at this moment with the swiftness and suddenness of lightning.

It had been snatched from him. He leaped to his feet, and, with an oath, turned to behold, close enough almost to touch, a lady, whose pale features now disclosed a faint tinge of scarlet on the cheekbones, and whose brilliant dark eyes sparkled with more than ten times their usual brilliancy.

There was a malevolent, dangerous expression on her clear olive face, which would have troubled some natures to have seen; but his face and brow were flushed vermillion, and his eyes danced and glittered with passionate rage. He disclosed his white teeth as, extending his hand, he demanded, in a peremptory tone—

"Lac, give me back that photograph!"

But she frowned viciously, and set her teeth resolutely.

"No," she presently ejaculated, with slow deliberation. "No, I shall not part with it. I have long suspected this. I have watched patiently for it, and I have it. I will not part with it."

"Give it me back!" he repeated, passionately. "Give it me, or——"

"You will do murder. Is that it?" she demanded, with a laugh that chilled him.

He shrank from her. The blow had struck home, though she knew it not then.

She removed her burning eyes from his as he slowly recoiled, and turned them on the photograph.

A bitter, scornful, and yet a savage smile curled her lips.

"So," she murmured, "young, fair, lovely, and with the affected simper these blonde fools practise so much. The vignette is a good one. I shall not forget my rival's face. I must search her out. It is right we should know each other, and that she should hear a truth it is needful she should know, however unwelcome."

"You may spare your labour," he ejaculated, guttorally and grimly.

"May I? Thanks! But I will not! I will track her—hunt her down. And when I have caught her—when I stand face to face with her——"

"Woman, you never will!" he interrupted, with a mad stamp of his foot.

She waved her hand imperiously.

"You cannot—you shall not—prevent me," she returned, her features growing more rigid and her complexion more deathly.

"I repeat, woman, never! never! never!" he almost shrieked.

She gazed at him with something like amazement at first, then she made again an impatient gesture with her hand.

"You do not know what I can do when I will to do it," she responded. "I have unearthed your secret.

Fig 2.2: Front Cover, *The London Journal*, 61:1569, 6th March (1874)

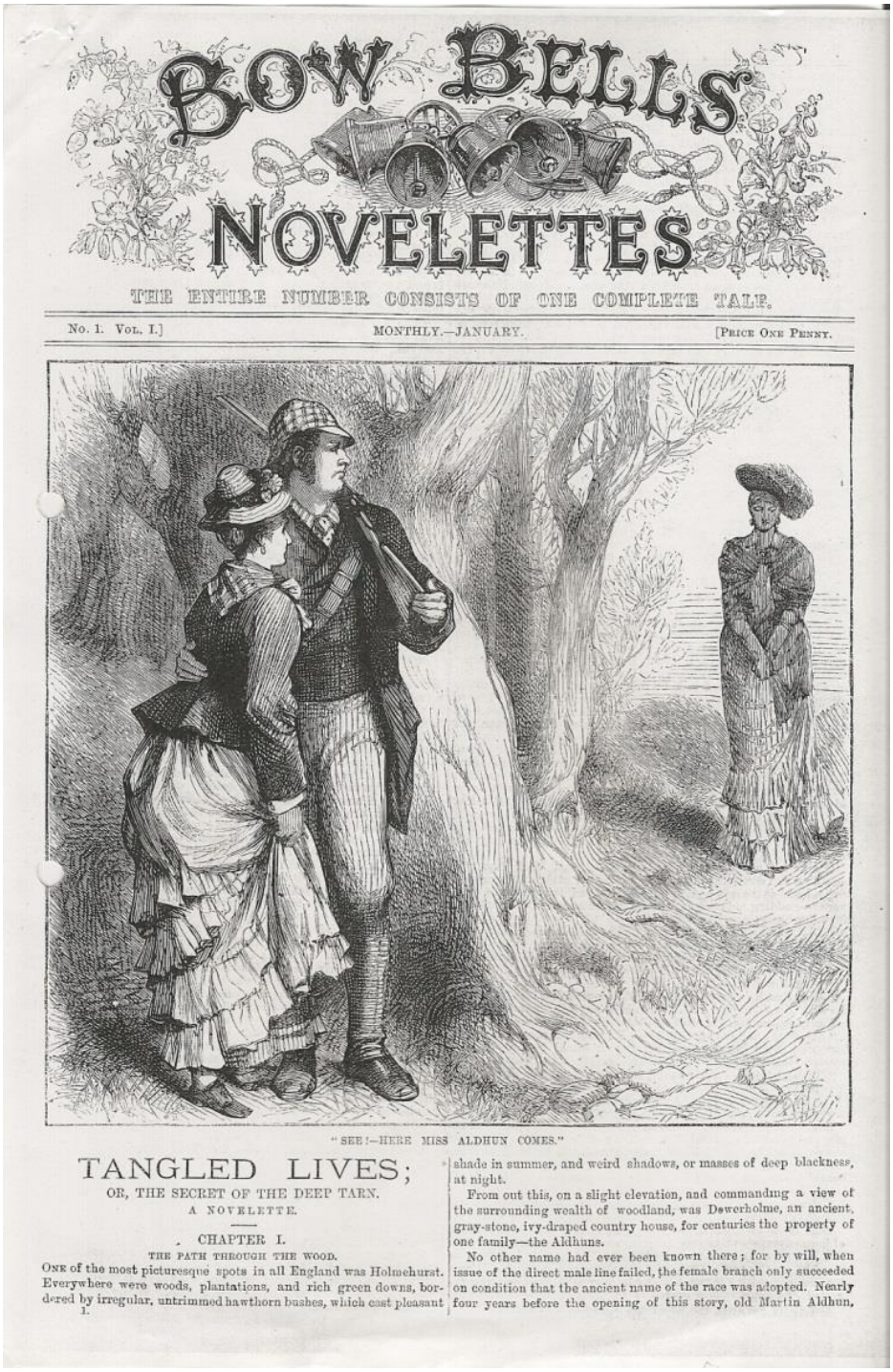
> In courtship men are supposed to be in the active and women in the passive voice. Exceptions are recognized as occasionally taking place; but the world notes *not* a vast multitude of cases in which the lady … is the actual originator of affairs which end in matrimony.[168]

A short article on a strike in South Wales followed, then a 'Science' section with snippets of information about rain, waves and scorpions. A section called 'Facetiae' made jokes at the expense of people from other countries while 'Statistics' detailed how many miles of locomotive track had been laid and the populations of the 'British possessions'. Recipes, directions for cleaning silk, 'Gems of Thought,' a sad poem and a page and a half of bizarre facts completed the issue. This edition, then, is filled predominantly with fiction and short 'facts' or jokes, mostly only a line or two in length. It did not pose any challenges for the reader, or require uninterrupted concentration. For the busy woman it provided the opportunity to dip in and out of reading between domestic chores and paid work.

Post-1879

On 22nd February 1879 the *LJ* advertised the first of it novelettes, *Fated to Marry*, which made it possible to buy a complete 16-page romance story for a penny. These penny novelettes were to be made available on the first Monday of every month. Regular advertisements in the *LJ* listed the novelettes they had produced, and informed purchasers they were available at all booksellers or at the publisher's offices at 332 the Strand.[169] In 1879 Dicks also offered a supplement to his *Bow Bells* magazine - *The Bow Bells Novelettes*, priced at one penny. These novelettes were sold using the Bow Bells brand. Supplements had been used by other publishers to extend their brand and provide more advertising opportunities [170] The look and feel of the *Bow Bells Novelettes* was a clear indicator of the technological improvements that had taken place in by the end of the century. They were bigger than the earlier publications, measuring 20cm x 30cm, the quality and thickness of the paper had improved, and they usually contained several illustrations (see Fig 2.3). The clarity of the illustrations and the print legibility were also improved compared to the serialised novels produced forty years previously.

[168] My emphasis on 'not'. *The London Journal*, 61:1569, 6th March (1875), p. 148.
[169] For example see *LJ*, 74:1924, 24th December, 1881, p. 16.
[170] King, 'Killing Time.'



BOW BELLS NOVELETTES

THE ENTIRE NUMBER CONSISTS OF ONE COMPLETE TALE.

No. 1. Vol. I.] MONTHLY.—JANUARY. [Price One Penny.

"SEE!—HERE MISS ALDHUN COMES."

TANGLED LIVES;

OR, THE SECRET OF THE DEEP TARN.

A NOVELETTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PATH THROUGH THE WOOD.

One of the most picturesque spots in all England was Holmehurst. Everywhere were woods, plantations, and rich green downs, bordered by irregular, untrimmed hawthorn bushes, which cast pleasant shade in summer, and weird shadows, or masses of deep blackness, at night.

From out this, on a slight elevation, and commanding a view of the surrounding wealth of woodland, was Dewerholme, an ancient, gray-stone, ivy-draped country house, for centuries the property of one family—the Aldhuns.

No other name had ever been known there; for by will, when issue of the direct male line failed, the female branch only succeeded on condition that the ancient name of the race was adopted. Nearly four years before the opening of this story, old Martin Aldhun,

1

Fig 2.3: Front page of 1st Bow Bells Novelette, 1:1 (1879)

MacDonald and Demoor examined the *Dorothy Novelettes*, penny novelettes sold at the end of the century, and felt a conventional formula for these had developed similar to the *Bow Bells* novelettes. They assumed the reader was interested in marriage, clothes, home and romantic love. As a commercial enterprise the publisher targeted women through these interests – and typified the perception of a women's romance novelette.[171] By 1880 a romance reader could choose from a large selection of complete stories and buy them from a range of outlets.

Libraries did not begin to provide entertaining fiction until 1889.[172] A 1890s survey of the occupations of newly registered borrowers from one of Manchester's two libraries defined the largest single group of members as 'entirely undescribed (i.e. women and children)'. There were 621 such members, compared to 536 'artisans and mechanics' and 238 'spinners, weavers and other factory workers.' Figures for library borrowing in Bristol in 1891 show the largest group to take books home were females with 'no occupation'. That year 10,476 books were issued to women.[173] By 1891 a correspondent in the *Evening Standard* was complained about the people using the new libraries:

> Many are the crimes brought about by the disordered imagination of a reader of sensational, and often immoral, rubbish, whilst many a home is neglected and uncared for owing to the all-absorbed novel-reading wife.[174]

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a bookshop in almost every town, and choice and access to reading material had increased for the majority of the population.[175] By the time George Gissing published *New Grub Street* in 1891, a fictional account of writers struggling to make a living in nineteenth-century London, the industry had undergone many changes. These included the introduction of syndication (i.e. the offering of re-print right to other parties while retaining copyright on the piece), the founding of the Society of Authors (in 1884), the use of literary agents (A P Watt was the first in 1881) and a dramatic expansion of the popular press.[176] In the late 1830s a penny would buy part of a novel, poorly printed on thin paper with perhaps one illustration. By the 1890s, a penny would buy a 32-page book(let) in a 'garish wrapper' on thicker paper, with several woodcut illustrations,

[171] Kate MacDonald and Marysa Demoor, 'The Dorothy and its Supplements: A Late-Victorian Novelette (1889-1899), *Publishing History*, 61 (2007), 71-101 (p. 80).
[172] Altick, p. 233.
[173] Altick, p. 237.
[174] Altick, p. 232.
[175] Feather, p. 135.
[176] Nigel Cross, *The Royal Literary Fund 1790-1918. An Introduction to the Fund's Archives with an Index of Applicants* (London: World Microfilms Publications, 1984), p. 204.

some of which could still be described as penny-bloods but others as 'more wholesome literature', for example Mrs Braddon's condensed versions of Scott's *Waverley* novels.[177] Middle-class commentators expressed their fears that the Board Schools were producing undiscerning readers, ready to swallow any literature, no matter how unsophisticated, and there was a renewed clamour against cheap thrillers.[178] What was undeniable was that affordable literature to suit every taste was now available to the mass market. As Altick says 'the common reader in the last days of Victoria was more amply supplied with books than ever before.'[179] From its publication, through to the end of the century, waves of fashion had 'swept over the novel', from the sentimental and moral tales, like Richardson's and Fanny Burney's, to comedies and Gothic fantasies, the melodramatic and sensational literature of the 1860s, and the penny romance novelette that emerged was the direct descendant of these literary offerings.[180] Women readers could now get their romance-reading fix through weekly serials in periodicals, in complete novel form in libraries or as novelettes that cost them just a penny.

Readers' lives: some context

Literacy and education

> My mistress used to teach her children instead of sending them to school. I had often to mind the youngest child while the mother in the same room taught the two eldest children to read. In this way I learnt how to spell and pronounce a good many words.[181]
>
> Mrs Layton, born 1855

David Vincent speculated that when books are more widely available people have a greater incentive to learn to read, and the demand for reading material increases.[182] The religious and moral groups who distributed reading material amongst the poor were also closely connected to their education. Sunday schools had been providing basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic for working-class children since the 1780s, and in the first half of the nineteenth century most working-class children attended at some point in their

[177] Altick, p. 314.
[178] Cross, *The Royal Literary Fund*, p. 215; Altick, p. 314.
[179] Altick, p. 317.
[180] Feather, p. 97.
[181] *Life As We Have Known It*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies, p. 26.
[182] Vincent, pp. 210 & 226.

childhood, the schools supplementing a short day-school career for adolescents.[183] Both religious and secular groups saw education as a way to control behaviour and to discourage atheism, blasphemy or political radicalism, while capitalists saw it as necessary for the growth of commercialism and industry.[184] Philanthropic Ragged Schools, provided a basic education for poor children, and factory and evening schools educated workers. In addition, some working-class parents paid to send their children to private or dame schools.[185] Forster's 1870 Education Act effectively provided free compulsory education for all children, but its impact should not be overstated, as it did nothing to improve the quality of teaching provision. Literacy continued to increase at the same rate despite the 1870 Education Act, and even after the introduction of compulsory schooling, girls continued carry out domestic chores when family needs demanded it.[186]

Historians debate the quality of education available to nineteenth-century working-class children. Altick paints a bleak picture of all these early schools, from the philanthropic efforts to the maintained elementary schools resulting from Forster's Act. He describes them as physically unpleasant with harsh discipline meted out by poorly educated and trained staff using inappropriate teaching methods, such as reading by rote.[187] As a result many children did not enjoy school, and left with little grasp of the meaning of the texts they were taught to read. Vincent is less pessimistic, but admits that most schools achieved an acquaintance with, rather than an effective command of, literacy.[188] Poverty cut short the schooling of some children, as it became necessary for them to work and contribute to the household income.[189] However, Thomas Laqueur argued that Sunday schools were staffed primarily by literate members of the working classes who worked in small groups using specialised text-books to teach reading and writing.[190] The amount and quality of the education their pupils received varied, but Laqueur believes they made a significant impact on the creation of mass literacy in the nineteenth century.[191]

Despite the obstacles to literacy that some faced, there is evidence that female rates of literacy were increasing.[192] The quality of the language and the variety of vocabulary used in

[183] Laqueur, pp. 61, 98-101 & 104.
[184] Altick, pp. 141-42.
[185] <http://www.ragged-online.com/tag/ragged-schools>[accessed June 2013]; James, *Fiction*, pp. 2-4.
[186] Altick, pp. 149-69; Vincent, pp. 53-54; Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor. Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press), 1996, pp. 97-102, 157-64 & 175-90.
[187] Altick, pp. 156-58.
[188] Vincent, pp. 73-93.
[189] Davin, pp. 97-102; Vincent, p. 56.
[190] Laqueur, pp. 19, 91, 94, 95, 109, 113 & 123.
[191] Laqueur, p. 123.
[192] Altick, p. 171.

penny publications can help determine readers' ability to understand the written word, and the style of writing found in these stories varies enormously. Hannah Maria Jones wrote in a way superior to many of her contemporaries. Her language is descriptive, at times very beautiful and always grammatically correct; her stories are well paced and well planned. She is described by Nigel Cross as 'one of the best writers in the genre of either sex' and her work was much re-printed and plagiarised.[193] A random sample from *Trials of Love; or Woman's Reward* (1848) demonstrates the type of language she used:

> Alas, how seldom is the most perfect fruition of all human schemes and wishes productive of happiness. In manners, appearance, and, as far as [Ada] could judge in disposition, her father was all that her most sanguine imagination had fancied, and yet she was not satisfied. Soft and melodious was his voice in general, there were occasional tones that made her almost start and doubt which were the most real or most consonant to his disposition.[194]

This language is not simple or easy to read. The vocabulary is broad and the descriptions detailed. Readers would need to be able to read long words and make sense of complicated sentences to fully understand the novels. It is hard to imagine that words like 'melodious', 'consonant' or 'variance' were in regular use, and the sentence structure is very complex. We have no way of determining what sense women made of these stories, or of gauging their level of understanding of them, but they enjoyed them enough to continue buying them, which indicates that they understood enough of the content.

Phoebe the Miller's Maid (1842), attributed to James Malcolm Rymer, contrasts with Hannah Maria Jones's work:

> "If she will not come?"
> "Oh, she will come. She can't very well refuse you an interview. Let me see. Tell her you think of leaving and would like to say a few words to her before you went away for ever."
> "Yes, yes, I will – I will say so. She – she will be happy at last."
> "Happy? Ay, to be sure; happy as possible. You wouldn't be happy yourself to see her in the arms of that George."[195]

A lower level of literacy skill is needed to make sense of Rymer's work. The quality of the writing is far inferior to Jones's, yet Rymer was also a very popular, successful and prolific

[193] Cross, *Common Writer,* p. 175; Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography*, (London: Fortune, 1942), p. 41; Her most famous novels, *The Gipsey Girl*, *The Gipsey Mother* and *Emily Moreland*, sold 20,000 copies each in their penny-a-part form. Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 175.
[194] Hannah Maria Jones, *The Trials of Love; or Woman's Reward* (London, 1848), p. 417.
[195] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid*, (1842), p. 249.

author, leaving a fortune of £8,000 when he died.[196] The contrast between Jones and Rymer is evidence of a choice for consumers; those who wanted it could buy 'quality' literature, and others could buy publications that were easier to read. Without publishers' or readers' records it is difficult to determine to what extent distribution, and therefore availability played a role in the choice available, however the contrast between Jones and Rymer, both publishing in the 1840s, demonstrates that the publishers of penny-a-part novels were catering to a range of tastes and reading ability.

Other social changes also gave people the impetus to learn to read, for example the need for literacy in their work and the introduction of the penny post in 1840 which gave distant family members and friends the opportunity to stay in touch.[197] Family members taught each other to read and write. Vincent says 'In the broadest sense, every parent was a teacher.'[198] Some provided a basic grounding that was extended in schools, but also children who could read helped their parents.[199] Most families could not afford to buy children's literature and would have simply used the reading material available; this may have included penny-a-part novels or penny periodicals as well as the religious tracts given away by Sunday schools.[200]

Some commentators were concerned that this new reading population was only interested in 'light' cheap reading material. The *Quarterly Review* was dismayed in 1867 'to find such rubbish continually poured forth, and eagerly read.'[201] Frederic Harrison, a religious teacher, literary critic, historian and patron of the novelist George Gissing, described this reading in 1886 as 'a debilitating waste of brain in aimless, promiscuous, vapid reading, or even, it may be, in the poisonous inhalation of mere literary garbage and bad men's worst thoughts.'[202] Walter Besant, author and founder in 1884 of The Society of Authors, was more optimistic, saying reading was a more innocent form of amusement than the billiard room, the music hall and the tavern.[203] By the end of the century the literacy of the working-classes varied enormously, but it is possible to say that the nineteenth century witnessed a decisive transition from a working-class entertainment culture based on an oral tradition, to one where written forms became one of the most dominant.[204]

[196] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 178; James, *Fiction*, p. 38.
[197] Altick, p. 171; Vincent, pp. 33-45.
[198] Vincent, p. 54 and examples are given from autobiographies, pp. 67-68.
[199] Vincent, p. 69.
[200] Vincent, p. 61.
[201] Vincent, p. 196.
[202] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 205.
[203] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 205.
[204] Vincent, pp. 270-73.

Living conditions: disposable income, time and light

> It was the interaction of wages, incomes and the cost of living that determined working-class purchasing power; and it was the working-class purchasing power that, together with work, influenced virtually every aspect of working people's lives.[205]

Readers' access to income directly affected their access to reading material. They needed to be able to purchase reading material, or borrow it, and they need some leisure time and sufficient light to be able to see the printed page. The shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial one continued, and John Benson calculated that the working-class population enjoyed growing prosperity throughout the nineteenth century.[206] During the first half of the century there was an increase in the stratum of the population that could be categorised as upper working-class, and their incomes were increasing. These groups were more likely to educate their children.[207] Martin Daunton detected a downward trend in irregular employment, and an increase in regular factory employment, providing families with a more steady income.[208] Average nominal total income in 1850 was, according to John Benson, fourteen shillings a week, increasing to twenty shillings by 1880 and twenty-five by 1906.[209] Using a cost of living index with 1850 as his base year representing 100, Benson calculated that real incomes equated to 118 by 1880. Families were more able to make more consumer choices as average disposable income increased.[210] These broad generalisations need, however, to be treated with some caution. Seebohm Rowntree found in York in 1899 that there were many still too poor for the luxury of spending a penny on reading material.[211]

Despite the persistent male breadwinner ideology many working-class women did paid work, both before and after marriage.[212] Participation rates and the availability and type of employment for women were subject to regional variation, but in 1851, 26% (2.8 million) of women in Great Britain did paid work rising to 42% (3.9 million) by 1881, as will be

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[205] Benson, p. 39.
[206] Benson, pp. 9-71.
[207] Altick, p. 83.
[208] Martin Daunton, *House and Home in the Victorian City. Working-class Housing 1850-1914* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), p. 264.
[209] Benson, p. 53.
[210] Benson, p. 55.
[211] Vincent, p. 212.
[212] 25% of married women were in paid employment in 1851. Joanna Bourke, 'Housewifery in Working-class England, 1860-1914', *Past and Present*, 143 (1994), pp. 67-197 (p. 167); Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Sally Alexander, *Becoming A Woman and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminist History* (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 3-56; Andrew August, *Poor Women's Lives. Gender, Work and Poverty in Late-Victorian London* (London: Associated University Press, 1999), pp. 105 & 117; Elizabeth Roberts. *Women's Work, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3.

discussed in chapter 7.[213] There were some national patterns.[214] The majority of women in paid employment were in domestic service – in 1851 40% of all women who worked were servants (1.14m of the 2.83m women working for wages), and this increased to 45% (1.76m of 3.89m women) by 1881. Textiles employed the next largest group – 22% in 1851, which increased in numbers (from 0.64m to 0.75m) but decreased in percentage terms to 19% by 1881. The number employed in the clothing trade increased from 0.49m to 0.67m), but it stayed at the same proportion – 17% - from 1851 to 1881. While the number and proportion involved in agriculture fell (from 8% in 1851 to 3% in 1881), the number and percentage of women involved in professional occupations, public administration, printing and stationery increased from 4% to 7%.[215]

Women's earnings were both lower than men's, and subject to more variation.[216] Angela John, using *Morning Chronicle* surveys conducted between 1849 and 1851, shows that in Yorkshire, for example, men could earn twenty-five to twenty-seven shillings a week as wool sorters or thirty shillings as hot pressers. Women in contrast could earn just six to eight shillings a week as wool pickers, boilers or burlers (workers who removed the lumps).[217] Sally Alexander and Maxine Berg have examined the huge variation in women's work.[218] Women formed part of an 'elastic labour force' that could be laid off when employers no longer needed them.[219] They were often denied access to the more highly skilled (and highly paid) jobs and restricted to poorly paid, low skill employment.[220] They were also more likely to be home-workers where they had little political power or representation and were subject to exploitation.[221] A key reason for women's poor pay was the assumption that women's

[213] Duncan Bythell, 'Women in the Workforce', in *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, ed. by Patrick K O'Brien and Roland Quinault (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 31-53 (pp. 35 & 37-8); Angela V John, 'Introduction' in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 1-41, Appendix A and Appendix B, pp. 36-37.
[214] Maxine Berg, 'What difference did women's work make to the Industrial Revolution?' *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993), 22-44.
[215] John, Appendix B, p. 37.
[216] Benson, p. 59.
[217] John, Appendix D, p. 39.
[218] Berg, pp. 22-44; Alexander, pp. 3-55.
[219] Sonya O Rose, '"Gender at Work": Sex, Class and Industrial Capitalism', *History Workshop Journal*, 21, (1986), 113-31 (p. 115).
[220] Katrina Honeyman, 'Sweat and sweating: women workers and trade unionists in the Leeds clothing trade, 1880-1980', in *Class and Gender in British Labour History. Renewing the Debate (or Starting it?)*, ed. by Mary Davis, (2011), pp. 50-75; Linda Clark and Christine Wall, 'Skilled versus Qualified labour: the exclusion of women from the construction industry', *Class and Gender in British Labour History. Renewing the Debate (or Starting it?)*, ed. by Mary Davis, (2011), pp. 6-116.
[221] Sonya O Rose, 'Gender at Work', p. 115; Felicity Hunt 'Opportunities Lost and Gained: Mechanisation and Women's Work in London Book Binding and Printing Trades', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 71-94; Nancy Grey Osterud, 'Gender Divisions and the Organisation of Work in the Leicester Hosiery Industry', in *Unequal*

wages were supplementary to a husband's or other male relative's wage.[222] But Judy Lown also suggests that the paternalistic structure of the nineteenth-century home was mirrored in the workplace in order to reconcile the contradiction between an ideology that placed them in the home, and the reality of their paid employment.[223]

Among domestic servants, the most common type of employment for women, experiences varied.[224] Edward Higgs found the majority worked alone as maids-of-all work.[225] This could be lonely and isolating, and reading offered entertainment and escape. The *Servant's Magazine* in 1838 noted that 'Times have changed since the great bulk of female servants were unable to read … Servants are now fond of reading, and this is well.'[226] However many female servants worked for little more than food and board and did not share the increasing prosperity of women in other sectors.[227] In contrast, clerical workers enjoyed the ability to live independently, although as Meta Zimmeck has explained, employers' policies aimed to enable them to live 'decently' but not in comfort. Between 1851 and 1911 the total number of clerks rose from 95,000 to 843,000, and women made the greatest gains. In 1851 only two percent of clerks were women, but by 1911 the proportion was twenty percent. Most of these women were unmarried (a few were widowed) and these women had the benefit of both income and education.[228] They made up some of the group of readers that Agnes Repplier described reading fiction on trains on their way to work at the end of the nineteenth century.[229]

Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree identified the poverty cycle in terms of a male labourer, demonstrating how he was more likely to have experienced poverty when a child, when he himself had children as dependents and in old age. [230] It is possible to apply his model to a

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Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918, ed. by Angela V John, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 45-70.

[222] Sonya O Rose, 'Gender at Work', pp. 115, 117 & 119; Osterud, pp. 45-70; Jenny Morris, 'The Characteristics of Sweating: The Late Nineteenth-Century London and Leeds Tailoring Trade', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by Angela V John, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 95-124.

[223]Judy Lown, 'Not so much a factory, more a form of patriarchy: Gender and class during industrialisation', in *Gender, Class and Work*, ed. by E Gamarnikow (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 28-45 (p. 36).

[224] Burnett, *Useful Toil*, pp. 135-245.

[225] Edward Higgs, 'Domestic service and Household Production', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by. Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 125-52,(p. 136).

[226] Reynolds, p. 7.

[227] Edward Higgs, 'Domestic Service', pp. 125-52.

[228] Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls: the Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 153-77 (pp. 154 & 162-63).

[229] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, p. 189.

[230] Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty, A Study of Town Life 1901* (London: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 136-38.

working-class woman. At certain times she could enjoy some disposable income and relative prosperity, for example when she still lived with her parents at the start of her working life and could keep some of her income. In some areas, for example Bradford, a woman could live independently from her parents at this time and still have money to spare.[231] When first married she could enjoy this prosperity further, until the birth of children limited her capacity to work and exhausted that disposable income. It is not until these children grew up and began to contribute to the family income that this relative prosperity returned, and lasted only as long as she, or her husband, could work. After this, the retired could suffer extreme poverty again. Considering the stratified nature of the working-class and Rowntree's findings, it is likely that penny romantic fiction was purchased by single young women, either living at home or in service; newly-married women before the arrival of children; women married to well-paid artisans or skilled workers or wives who could supplement the family income with work of her own; or older women who had older working children contributing to the family budget. Of course the sharing and lending of books would increase the readership of popular fiction beyond those who could spare the penny to buy them, for example teenage daughters may have passed them to their mothers and other relatives.

Another requirement for any reader is the time to read. Most working-class people during the early part of the century had long working hours. The 1847 Factory Act limited the work-day in factories to ten hours for women and children, and the 1850 Factory Act required them to finish work by 2pm on Saturdays. This, in part, explains the popularity of the Saturday periodicals.[232] The seasonal nature of agricultural work meant that workers in rural areas may have had free time at certain times of year, at other times they had even less free time than factory workers, and this didn't change until the last quarter of the century.[233] Paid work, coupled with the 'double burden' of unpaid domestic work, the arduous nature and the long hours of both, would have resulted in sheer fatigue for many women, possibly leaving them too tired to read.[234]

Readers in all areas faced over-crowding and darkness in their homes which made reading difficult.[235] As late as the 1880s one fifth of the population lived more than two people to

[231] Karl Ittmann, *Work, Gender and Family in Victorian England* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1995), p. 151.
[232] Altick, pp. 85-88.
[233] Keith Snell, *The Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 15-66; Altick, p. 89.
[234] Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem. Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), pp. 110-13; Bourke, p. 173; Altick, p. 93.
[235] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (Ware: Wordsworths Classics of Literature, 2008), pp. 65-69; Altick, pp. 90-91; Davin, pp. 45-57.

each room, and the 1891 census showed that London had over 100,000 one-room tenements with more than one occupant.[236] These conditions were not conducive to an uninterrupted, quiet or comfortable read. The poor reliance on inefficient candlelight or rush lights to read after dark would have added to their difficulties.[237] Even if they could afford the periodicals, working women had less time to read than their male colleagues or non-working women.[238]

The level of sales of these publications indicates that large numbers of working-class women overcame these challenges. They had access to sufficient disposable income to purchase reading material, or they borrowed it, and sufficient time and light to read, despite noise and interruptions. Indeed, several scholars identified the emergence of a working-class population with time and space to read as one of the most important developments of the second half of the nineteenth century.[239] It is possible that readers used their literature as a way to escape from their living conditions, to block them out and gain some mental, if not physical, privacy.

Respectability

> Social historians studying the working class in the recent past are almost overwhelmed at times by the total devotion and dedication shown towards the concept of respectability. It can be seen in the lives of all members of the working class, even in those who in the eyes of others were 'rough'.[240]

The notion of respectability is difficult to define but was enormously influential in the nineteenth century and determined many aspects of readers', authors' and publishers' behaviour. John Stuart Mill identified evangelicalism in his 1859 essay *On Liberty* as responsible for the cult of respectability.[241] Hugh McLeod also sees respectability as inextricably linked with evangelicalism, status, temperance and purity.[242] Boyd Hilton describes the ramifications of the evangelical movement on nineteenth-century mentalities

[236] Altick, p .92; Davin, pp. 45-46; Vincent, p. 213.
[237] Altick, p .93; Vincent, p. 213.
[238] Vincent, p. 213.
[239] Feather, p. 142; Altick, p. 306, Vincent, p. 11.
[240] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place. An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p. 14.
[241] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), pp. 75-78, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34901/34901-h/34901-h.htm> [accessed 12th January 2014].
[242] Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1984), pp. 22-24 & 34.

as 'widespread and pervasive'.[243] He dubbed this the 'Age of Atonement'; life was seen as a moral obstacle course, where each individual faced trials and temptations, which must be passed in order to gain salvation and was responsible for keep a constant mingoral vigilance over the choices they made.

The religious census of 1851 revealed that only about half the adult population regularly attended a place of religious worship, with enormous regional variation.[244] Attendance in rural areas was 72.4%, but much lower in large towns, for example Preston at 25.5%. However, church attendance is not a straightforward barometer of belief and Hugh McLeod argues that Christianity was a major influence on behaviour, despite these attendance figures.[245] Evangelicalism entered working-class life through philanthropic work, and direct preaching. Hilton felt working-class behaviour, particularly in the home, was affected, for example keeping one's affairs in order and taking responsibility for one's own actions.[246] By the 1850s and 1860s the key tenets of evangelicalism were the centrality of duty, self-discipline and high seriousness, and it imposed its code of respectability: Sabbath observance, responsibility, philanthropy and the centrality of the family with the domestic role of women. Discipline in the home was a key part of this.[247] William Cowper and Hannah More, writers and key figures in the evangelical movement in the late eighteenth century, were 'influential for setting the terms for the characterisation of domesticity and sexual difference' that placed men in the public sphere and restricted women to the private.[248] Davidoff and Hall say that by the mid-nineteenth century these values existed on a scale not seen before because the voices of the Anglicans and Dissenters joined together on this issue.[249]

Elizabeth Roberts found that religion, in the working-class families she investigated at the end of the century, was expressed not so much in theological, but in social terms, related more to behaviour and so formed an ethical pattern for everyday life.[250] This is consistent with Jose Harris's study of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain. Harris felt that although there is evidence that church attendance fell and religion withdrew from the centre to the periphery of public life by the end of the century, involvement increased in Christian

[243] Hilton, *The Age of Atonement,* p. 26.
[244] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 107.
[245] Bebbington, pp. 107 & 118-23.
[246] Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 81-82 & 376; Bebbington, pp. 105, 118-19 & 129.
[247] Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 81-87; Bebbington, pp. 105 & 129.
[248] Davidoff and Hall, p. 149
[249] Davidoff and Hall, p. 179.
[250] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 4-5.

organisations like Bands of Hope, Boy's Brigades and The Girls Friendly Society.[251] She stated that 'institutional religion appeared to contemporary observers to be largely irrelevant or marginal to the lives of the majority of working-class citizens' but there was a great deal of unstructured religious activity that she described as 'informal, this-worldly, working-class religiosity.'[252]

The evangelical movement was associated with upward social mobility, the desire for acceptance and esteem and the notion of respectability.[253] Social historians have commented on the amount of time, resources and energy dedicated by working-class families to the maintenance of their respectability. Their reputation was tied to local gossip, an instrument that could, for some, be a powerful form of social control.[254] Rowntree's survey of late nineteenth-century York found that families on twenty shillings a week or less were committed to the effort to sustain respectability, despite limited resources to do so.[255] Working-class people made the distinction between the 'rough' and the 'respectable' based on a series of considerations. From the early nineteenth century children were taught the values associated with respectability by their (mainly working-class) Sunday school instructors: self-help, hard work, thrift, sobriety, self-restraint, cleanliness and respect for their social superiors.[256] As the century progressed day schools also played a role in conferring ideas of 'respectability' which Anna Davin describes as part of their 'civilising mission.'[257]

Charles Master's study of working-class life in York between 1867 and 1914 explored how national and local notions of respectability could be complementary and conflicting, but essentially developed from the perceived need for an 'orderly, restrained and civilised' society.[258] He stressed that historians should not visualise respectability as something imposed on the working-class by the middle-class. The need for stratification and economic and social differentiation came from within the working classes as well.[259] F M L Thompson defined respectability as 'a bundle of self-generated habits and values derived from past

[251] Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit. A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 150-54.
[252] Harris, pp. 159-61.
[253] Bebbington, pp. 11 & 124-26.
[254] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 192-94.
[255] Cited by Charles Walter Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers; a Case Study of York, 1867-1914* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle, 2010), p. 163.
[256] Laqueur, pp. 188-93; McLeod, Class *and Religion*, p. 77; Masters, pp. 3-4.
[257] Davin, p. 34.
[258] Masters, pp. 2-3.
[259] Masters, pp. 4-8.

customs and present responses to living and working conditions.'[260] The concept of self-help gave individuals agency and responsibility, and a form of cultural autonomy.[261] This is consistent with Boyd Hilton's theory that as the century progressed religious ideology changed from the early nineteenth-century evangelical emphasis on sin, temptation and damnation to the calmer notion that everyone could earn a place in heaven if they made the correct moral and life choices.[262]

Katrina Honeyman says respectability was based on specific notions of masculinity and femininity that for men were bound up in an external persona based on being brave, strong and independent; for a woman 'to be honourable and respectable meant to have the virtues of sexual purity, domesticity and motherhood.'[263] She saw a clear link between economic and industrial change, the separation of the public and domestic spheres, and respectability.[264] Lynda Nead says:

> Respectability meant different things for men and for women; for women it was defined in terms of their location within the domestic sphere and their consequent sexual respectability…
> [It] was organised around a complex set of practices and representations which defined appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance; these social rules and moral codes worked to regulate both gender and class identities.[265]

Women were made unequivocally responsible for the appearance and cleanliness of the home and its inhabitants as well as their moral behaviour.[266] Wives were needed to provide home comforts, as described, to prevent men from getting drunk, for example.[267]

Historians of the later century, for example Elizabeth Roberts and Anna Davin, have found that this notion of respectability persisted, as did women's responsibility for it.[268] Martin Daunton says working-class families continued to embrace the domestic ideal in the late nineteenth century, even if financial and spatial constraints meant it was difficult to put into

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[260] F M L Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 355.
[261] Masters, p. 8
[262] Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp. 175-79 & 632-33.
[263] Katrina Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation in England 1700-1870*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 101.
[264] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, p. 111.
[265] Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (London: Blackwell, 1990), p. 28.
[266] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class. Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 86 & 89; Davidoff and Hall, p. 86; Masters, pp. 160-63.
[267] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, p. 104-05.
[268] Davin, pp. 70-74; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp.14-15.

practice, and this was bound up in the notion of respectability. The respectable working-class family viewed those who conducted a life on the streets as belonging to the slums, and looked down on those who did not conduct a home-based lifestyle.[269] A well-ordered home-life became an essential aspect of a respectable working class family, and the drive to be seen as respectable was acted out through this difference in attitude towards the home as a haven, separate from work.[270]

Arguably authors were arguably both influenced by respectability and played a part in its continuing importance. Chapter 3 provides biographies of some penny romance authors and demonstrates how they struggled to gain acceptance from authorities dispensing aid or assistance because penny literature was not deemed as respectable. However chapters 4 to 7 demonstrate how concerned these romance stories were with this concept, as heroines' choices and behaviours are limited by a strict moral code. Publishers also felt guided by this concept; the *FH* for example actively marketed itself as a respectable publication.[271]

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated how publishers, operating within a capitalist system and aiming to maximise profits, exploited the increasing demand for cheap reading material, priced at a penny or less. The material was arguably tailored according to readers' demands and contained elements of the Gothic, silver fork, domestic and sentimental novels, plus features of melodrama. The market for romantic literature grew exponentially between 1839 and 1889 and penny fiction developed from small part-novels without illustrations printed on thin paper to large, illustrated complete stories on quality paper. Distribution chains were developed to enable women from all areas to gain access to the material. The high level of sales indicates that the difficulties working-class women faced as readers could be overcome. The material itself is evidence that working-class women could be competent readers of complicated language, suggesting that levels of literacy were higher than scholars currently indicate. The content of some high-selling weekly penny periodicals, namely the *LJ* and *FH*, changed over time to include more fiction and this became increasingly romantic in nature. Working-class women readers had become 'a market' to these publishers who met their demands, and the content of this reading material reflected what they wanted to read.

[269] Daunton, p. 272.
[270] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, p. 111; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 14; Harris, p. 93.
[271] James, *Fiction*, pp. 44-45.

CHAPTER 3: THE PRODUCERS - AUTHORS, AND INFLUENCES ON THE CONTENT OF THEIR STORIES

Introduction

> Many among us fancy that they have a good general idea of what is English Literature. They think of Tennyson and Dickens as the most popular of our living authors. It is a fond delusion, from which it is time that they be aroused. The works of Mr Pierce Egan are sold by the half million. What living author can compare with him? But how many educated man and women in this country know of the existence of Mr Pierce Egan?[1]
>
> David Masson, Macmillan's Magazine, 1866

The production of any fiction involves a wide range of people: authors, publishers, editors, printers, paper suppliers, shippers, librarians and booksellers, plus their commercial service providers such as lawyers and bankers. The efficiency and competence, ambitions and aspirations, education and experience of these all influence the content and success of the publication.[2] This chapter will examine the authors of nineteenth-century romantic literature and what influenced them to produce what they did. Their backgrounds and education will be considered, the role of publishers and editors, and the social and cultural environment in which these stories were written will be seen as relevant to their content.

The professional author, like the professional publisher, was a product of the age of the printed book.[3] The practice of 'writing to order' developed from the late eighteenth century and David Vincent estimated the number of professional writers increased fifteen-fold in the nineteenth century. The *Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* includes the biographies of 878 authors, and Sutherland has attempted to make generalisations about their lives - he describes these as the ones whose records 'lie close enough to the surface' to enable him to research them.[4] Cross points out that only 849 nineteenth-century writers of his estimated 20,000 writers are listed in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* and thinks this has limited the conclusions made by many scholars investigating the period.[5] He used the records of the Royal Literary Fund (RLF), a charity that writers could appeal to for help

[1] 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 96.
[2] King, *The London Journal*, p. 4.
[3] Feather, p. 26.
[4] Sutherland, *Victorian Writers*, p. 152; John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 1988).
[5] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 3.

during times of financial hardship, to research the careers of now unfamiliar writers who were popular at the time, and he found how difficult it was for writers to enjoy success if they were not well educated and did not have some social status, a private income and plenty of leisure time. Authors without these things were confined to the often anonymous, formulaic writing of working-class literature for the lower-tier of the publishing industry to earn enough to subsist.[6]

David Masson was the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, a monthly literary journal published for the upper and middle-classes. In 1866 he wrote an article about the popularity and fame of Pierce Egan, editor and author for the *LJ*. Egan's father was also an author, who Masson says more middle- and upper-class people may have heard of,

> …but the Pierce Egan of the present day, whose stories are read in very truth by the million, is utterly unknown. Who has ever heard his name as belonging to literature? Who thinks of studying the literary tastes of the populace for whom he caters? And yet, that vast unheeded multitude, with their unrecognised king, Pierce Egan, are worth looking after.[7]

Masson's article highlighted the perceived divide between authors for the upper and middle class, and those who served the tastes of the 'multitudes.' Nigel Cross's findings make it clear that even talented writers would struggle to publish for the upmarket publishers without a private income, as the biography of Hannah Maria Jones given in this chapter will demonstrate.[8] Jones's novels were reprinted in penny-part forms many times by Lloyd, her most popular selling 20,000 copies each time, yet she died in abject poverty.[9]

This chapter considers the key influences on authors of fiction for penny publications, including their education, their pay and the influence of publishers and editors. There is not space in this chapter, or the sources available, to write comprehensive biographies of all the authors who wrote romantic literature in the period. I will therefore focus on two popular authors, Hannah Maria Jones and Pierce Egan Junior, as examples of authors of the romantic literature of the period.

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[6] Cross, *Common Writer*, pp. 5 & 126.
[7] 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 96.
[8] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 126.
[9] Cross, *Common Writer*, pp. 175-79.

What influenced the authors of popular literature?

The authors considered here are: Hannah Maria Jones (1786?-1854), Thomas Peckett Prest (1811-1859) and James Malcolm Rymer (1814-1884), authors of penny-a-part novels published by Edward Lloyd, Pierce Egan Junior (1814-1880), J F Smith (1806-1890) and Emma Robinson (1814-1890), who published serialised stories in the *LJ,* and George Augustus Sala (1828-1895) who, along with Robinson, wrote penny novelettes.[10] These authors have been selected because of their popularity. Publishers advertised their work, they were the subjects of commentary by their contemporaries in newspaper and periodical articles, or they are known to have written several penny novelettes, which were published anonymously.

There are gaps in the sources available to the biographer of these authors. Many authors wrote using pseudonyms or anonymously, possibly to maintain their reputation, and there do not appear to be publishers' records available to reveal who these writers were. [11] James Malcolm Rymer wrote using anagrams of his surname, such as M J Errym, Malcolm J Merry and Captain Merry. He also wrote as Marianne Blimber, Nelson Percival, J D Conroy, Septimus Urban and Bertha Thorn Bishop.[12] Rymer had ambitions to become a writer for the middle-classes, and wrote disparagingly about popular fiction in *The Queen's Magazine* and this perhaps explains why he wrote using pseudonyms.[13] Another example is Clementine Montague, a regular contributor to the *LJ* throughout the 1870s. Andrew King has suggested this was either a pseudonym or a generic name given to a 'serial factory.'[14] There is also confusion over seemingly jointly authored work. An example is the romance story 'Masks and Faces', first serialised in the *LJ* between June 1855 and March 1856, with no author name given. The publication repeated the same story in 1888, again with an anonymous author. Emma Robinson claims to have written this serial in a letter she sent to the RLF in 1861. In 1908 the same journal serialised it once more, giving the author as 'J F Smith and ANOTHER.'[15] Smith may have been given prominence because his fame and reputation continued to sell stories for the *LJ*, and his by-line would encourage readers.[16] King has

[10] They wrote for John Dicks, publisher of *The Bow Bells Novelettes.* Royal Literary Fund Case File, Emma Robinson, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 1/1558; *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala, written by Himself* (London: Cassell and Company, 1896), pp. 667-68.
[11] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 40-41.
[12] James, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 41.
[13] James, *Oxford DNB*, p. 42.
[14] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 160-61.
[15] J F Smith and ANOTHER, 'Masks and Faces', *LJ*, 21st March 1908 -16th January 1909.
[16] Smith is described in the British Quarterly Review as one of the most popular writers for the cheap periodicals and as having a 'special reputation', 'ART. I', (1859), p. 335.

found evidence that suggests Smith wrote the first twelve chapters and Robinson then finished the serial after Smith left the *LJ* to work for Cassells.[17] The author named on a serial or short story may not have been the true author, and gaps exist in the sources which mean the researcher is not always able to solve the inconsistencies.

Background and education

Writers are influenced by their background and education. Nigel Cross believes the prerequisites for a career as a writer were an education, some social status and some 'moneyed' leisure time, although as this chapter demonstrates there were penny fiction authors who did not enjoy all these advantages.[18] Most of the writers listed above appear to have been born into middle-class families, often families associated with literature or the arts. Rymer's father was an engraver and print-seller, Egan's father was a sporting journalist and author of hugely popular penny fiction adventure stories, Smith's father was a manager of the Norwich Theatre circuit, Robinson's father was a bookseller and Sala's mother was a professional singer. Prest is the exception. He was the son of a blacksmith, but was apprenticed to a printer and compositor as a young man.[19] Without knowing her maiden name we do not know when or where Jones was born or what her parents did, but she claimed to be in line for an inheritance of £250-£300, which suggests that she was not from a very poor family.[20]

David Vincent says that an author's work can be seen as the product of his/her education.[21] It isn't possible to determine the formal education most of these authors received, but their work demonstrates that they could all write coherent, grammatically correct prose, although the quality of their work does vary. Vincent discussed how Prest's work is 'pervaded by a sense of its own limitations'[22] demonstrating how the narrow vocabulary and word and phrase repetition used in *Evelina the Pauper's Child* (1851) failed to describe convincingly the anguish and feelings of the characters.[23] Prest used the same phrases constantly: heroines 'blush' and regularly 'fall insensible'; villains were 'fiendish' and 'scoundrels.' The result is that Prest's work made limited demands on the reader, the melodrama provides

[17] King, *The London Journal*, p. 99.
[18] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 5.
[19] *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala, written by Himself* (London: Cassell and Co, 1896); <www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 5th July 2012].
[20] Letters to RLF, 6th July 1831 and 15th October 1844, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, items 9 and 26.
[21] Vincent, p. 217.
[22] Vincent, pp. 218-19.
[23] Vincent, pp. 219-20.

entertainment for little effort, but it becomes repetitive and lacked sophistication.[24] It is obvious to the modern reader that Prest did not possess, or use, the same wide vocabulary as Hannah Maria Jones. As discussed in chapter 2, her texts were rich in description, are more sensitive and reflected a higher level of education or exposure to quality literature.

Both working- and middle-class women generally received less formal education than men during this period.[25] Women's education was designed to equip them for household management, whatever their class.[26] Richard Altick's study of nineteenth-century female authors' biographies found only twenty per cent of them had received formal schooling and less than five per cent had attended higher education. This contrasted with male authors: sixty three per cent had attended university and only seven per cent had received no formal schooling.[27] Camilla Toulmin (1812-1895), an author who contributed to the *LJ* and *Chamber's Journal*, commented that women's 'mental diet' had consisted of novels, and so they were more likely to write fiction than any other genre.[28]

The literature authors read as part of their education or for their own leisure arguably influenced the literature they subsequently produced. By the mid-eighteenth century most towns had a bookseller, and the lending libraries also provided the middle-class reader with access to fiction.[29] The early authors (writing in the 1840s and 1850s) were likely to have been exposed to Minerva Press gothic fiction, with its emphasis on strong emotion and terror.[30] Louis James showed a direct relationship between the Gothic fiction of English and German authors of the early nineteenth century and Prest's early work.[31] He cited Wilson Disher, a scholar who suggested that penny-a-part novels published between 1838 and 1848 had a distinct character as a result of the Gothic novels that preceded them.[32] James also demonstrated a similar relationship between the radical work of Romantics Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and Robert Southey and the early work of penny authors G W M Reynolds (who was also a business partner of John Dicks) and Pierce Egan.[33] David Vincent felt

[24] Vincent, pp. 219-20.
[25] Anna Davin, pp. 97-102; Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). Mary Wollstonecraft had written about the disadvantages this gave women as early as 1792 in *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman*.
[26] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 165.
[27] Cited by Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 165.
[28] Cited by Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 168; <www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 5th July 2012].
[29] Feather, pp. 98-99.
[30] Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press 1790-1820* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939); Cross, *Common Writer*, pp. 168-71; James, *Fiction*, pp. 83-86.
[31] James, *Fiction*, pp. 94-106.
[32] James, *Fiction*, p. 104.
[33] James, *Fiction*, pp. 86-91.

Prest emulated the style of G W M Reynolds, describing Prest's work as containing a relentless pace and vivid colour that integrated social comment and high adventure.[34]

Authors of up-market or 'quality' fiction can also be seen to have a direct influence on the work of nineteenth-century authors of penny literature. Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, a historical novel first published in 1820, was hugely popular, and influenced a revival of interest in the historical novel.[35] Louis James sees a clear parallel here with Prest's heroine in *The Hebrew Maiden*, published in penny parts by Lloyd in 1841;[36] he also examines serialised fiction written by J F Smith (in particular *Stanfield Hall*, a historical romance published in the *LJ* 1849-1850) and says the 'hand of Scott is still not far away.'[37] Andrew King saw the influence of French writer Eugene Sue in Smith's work (Smith had lived in Paris), as did Percy B St John, who wrote an eye-witness account of the 1848 Revolution.[38] James Malcolm Rymer's most famous penny-a-part serials, apart from *Ada*, were *Varney the Vampire* and *The String of Pearls*, which introduced Sweeney Todd into popular fiction.[39] His work shows the influence of Dickens, Ann Radcliffe and Walter Scott.[40] Emma Robinson had a personal connection with some of the authors of quality fiction of the period. She offered testimonials to support her 1869 application for a grant from the RLF from William Thackeray, Charles Dickens and Edward Bulwer Lytton.[41] George Saintsbury compared her work to the historical novels written by G P R James and Harrison Ainsworth's in *MacMillan's Magazine* in 1894.[42]

Remuneration and writing

The way payment was structured, and the standard of living the authors could enjoy as a result, impacted on their writing style.[43] After 1842 fiction was subject to the Copyright Act which meant copyright lasted for the lifetime of the author plus seven years for a minimum of

[34] Vincent, pp. 219-20.
[35] Alice Chandler, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Medieval Revival', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 19 (1965), 315–332.
[36] James, *Fiction*, pp. 103-04.
[37] James, *Fiction*, pp. 110 & 109-13.
[38] King, *The London Journal*, p. 106; Percy B St John, 'The French Revolution in 1848: An Eyewitness Account' <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1848johnson.asp>[accessed 14th February 2012]
[39] James, *Fiction*, p. 99; <www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 5th July 2012].
[40] <www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 5th July 2012].
[41] MS BL96 RLF 1/1558, item 12.
[42] George Saintsbury, 'The Historical Novel', *MacMillan's Magazine*, October 1894, pp. 410-19.
[43] James, *Fiction*, p. 38.

forty-two years but authors of popular fiction were paid by the sheet and the one-off payment meant the copyright stayed with the publisher.[44]

The amount authors negotiated and received varied. Some were able to become very wealthy indeed. Dickens was paid £10,000 for *Dombey and Sons* alone in 1846-8.[45] Mrs Henry Wood made many thousands during her lifetime, and her family received more than £35,000 for a collected edition of her works published by Bentley after her death.[46] In 1858 Cordy Jefferson said Charles Dickens' huge individual earnings meant that the 'best in society' were more tempted to join the profession because being lucrative made it more 'honourable'.[47] The authors of serialised fiction could also command high payments if they worked for a publisher who was determined to keep readers purchasing their magazine weekly. Pierce Egan Junior was a good example; in the early 1860s he was earning between £10 and £12 a week and there is evidence that he became wealthy as a result of his work as a writer. He kept servants, lived in a large detached house and his son became a barrister.[48] The opportunity to make a comfortable living as an author changed the whole nature of the profession.

The 'hacks' who worked for the lower tier of publishers were paid according to the quantity they produced. Edward Lloyd provided his regular authors with specially lined paper, which constituted a penny issue of one of his serials, for which Lloyd paid ten shillings.[49] Those who could write quickly, like Rymer or E P Hingston, were obviously able to benefit from this system. Rymer, for example, who could write ten serials at a time, retired with a fortune.[50] Others barely managed to survive. Nigel Cross identified a list of eighteen well-known female authors who needed help from the RLF in the mid- to late nineteenth century.[51] He found evidence to suggest a lot of time was spent by some authors endeavouring to produce good work, despite the reputation of the penny press for publishing 'trashy' literature.[52] It appears that unless they were ruthless or determined, or had gained a reputation in the market place, their publishers had little respect for them and their rights to their work. The taint of the lower tier stayed with these authors, and meant that even if they produced high quality fiction they were paid badly, and reprinted repeatedly by publishers who were making

[44] Mark Rose, 'Nine-Tenths of the Law', pp. 75–87; Feather, p. 104.
[45] Feather, p. 174.
[46] Feather, p. 174.
[47] Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, p. 22.
[48] King, *The London Journal*, p. 96; 1841 and 1871 Census Returns < Ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 3rd July 2012].
[49] James, *Fiction*, p. 37.
[50] <www.oxforddnb.com>[accessed 5th July 2012]; James, *Fiction*, p. 38.
[51] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 198.
[52] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 221; the term 'trashy' is used by *The Bookseller* magazine in an article: 'Shop Window Literature', *The Bookseller*, 24th September 1859, p. 1205.

vast profits from their work.[53] Edward Lloyd, for example, died a wealthy man. His will showed him to be worth £563,743 in 1890.[54]

As the author of one of Edward Lloyd's most popular novels, *Ela the Outcast,* Prest was paid 10s a number, and in the 1840s he became one of Lloyd's most prolific writers.[55] John Medcraft described Prest as 'a morbid genius with a wonderful imagination' and said he wrote more than half of Lloyd's penny-a-part serialised novels, as well as more than a hundred full-length stories.[56] Despite this impressive output, Prest did not enjoy financial security; he was unable to change his writing style to meet reader demand and fell from favour.[57] The 1851 census shows he was living in a lodging house in Finsbury which he shared with a hairdresser and his wife and another lodger, a tailoress. He suffered from lung problems and died a pauper, of phlebitis in June 1859.[58] Hannah Maria Jones also lived and worked in poverty, despite her popularity. In the late 1830s and early 1840s she received only ten and a half pence a page, less than a penny a line. By the end of her career in the early 1850s she was still earning only one shilling a page.[59]

The conditions in which authors lived and worked would have affected their work; Jones describes her lack of furniture, her ill health and the pressure to continue writing.[60] She described the conditions under which she worked in the poem she sent to the RLF in 1844.

> With looks bewildered and worn
> And eyelids that weighed like lead
> An authoress sat at her nightly toil
> Spinning her brains for bread
> Write write write
> In poverty, hunger, - and when
> Her trembling fingers failed
> She sang this song of the pen.[61]
>
> *The Song of The Pen*, Hannah Maria Jones, 1844

[53] Cross, *Common Writer*, pp. 194-97.
[54] 'The Late Mr Edward Lloyd's Will', *The Manchester Guardian*, May 13th 1890, p. 14; John Medcraft, *The Bibliography of the Penny Bloods of Edward Lloyd* (Dundee: privately printed, 1945) There are no page numbers; Vincent, p. 200.
[55] Dalziel, p. 16; Medcraft.
[56] James, *Fiction*, p. 113; W. O. G. Lofts, *The Men Behind Boy's Fiction* (London: Howard Baker, 1970), p. 276.
[57] James, *Fiction*, p. 113.
[58] <www.oxforddnb.com>[accessed 5th July 2012].
[59] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 176.
[60] MS BL96 RLF 1/553.
[61] *The Song of the Pen*, Hannah Maria Jones, 1844, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 23.

Jones based her poem on Thomas Hood's *The Song of the Shirt,* published in *Punch* in December 1843, which described the sad plight of the seamstress.[62] It generated a lot of pity and Jones capitalised on this. She would have expected her readers, members of the RLF, to recognise this poem and associate the work of the writer with the seamstress, possibly making a point about how writing, as another form of homework, was another area where women were exploited. She was also demonstrating her intelligence, wit and skill as a writer. Her harrowing description is both moving and enlightening. Her extreme poverty dictated the way she lived, worked and must have influenced the way she wrote. She needed to produce her work quickly, it had to meet the requirements of her publishers and readers and ultimately it had to earn her enough money to survive. Her correspondence with the RLF indicates that she had little power in her relationship with her publishers, and was unable to negotiate a higher rate. This was possibly due to her personality or her desperation, or her payment could have been typical for women authors working for lower-tier publishers at this time. The loss of the copyright of her work was because she wrote the majority of her popular works before the 1842 Copyright Act, and the work she produced after it was for the lower-tier of publishers, who bought the copyright with the work. She herself suggests her style of writing had fallen out of favour with public taste, but there is evidence that her early work continued to sell.

Some of these writers produced multiple works under severe time constraints; some were under a great deal of pressure.[63] Rymer was said to write up to ten stories simultaneously.[64] It is evident to the reader of some of the serialised novels that their authors were working at great speed, or working to fill a certain amount of space in a short time. They often include unnecessary padding, repetitive dialogue and errors in names or gaps in plots. Louis James analysed the work of E P Hingston, one of Lloyd's regular writers, and demonstrated how he used conversations between characters to fill the pages. He wrote short sentences for his characters, starting a new line with each piece of dialogue, with unnecessary questions and answers and lots of repetition.[65] Augustus Sala described how quickly, and thoughtlessly, he produced work for John Dicks to be published as *Bow Bells Novelettes:*

[62] Thomas Hood, *The Song of the Shirt* (1843). <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hood/shirt.html> [accessed 15th January 2013].
[63] Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, 1995, pp. 44-53; James, *Fiction*, p. 39.
[64] <www.oxforddnb.com>[accessed 5th July 2012]; James, *Fiction*, p. 38.
[65] James, *Fiction*, pp. 38-39.

> Mr Dicks' appetite for novelettes was insatiable, and whenever I wanted cash I had only to scribble for a few hours, take the copy over to Mentone and receive from my friendly publisher a crisp ten pound note and two Louis and a half of gold. Was this not, practically speaking, alchemy?[66]

This passage provides evidence of the demand for the newly written novelettes, and also implies a lack of thought and effort on the part of some writers producing these stories. It is not surprising to find that they were similar and adhered to a particular formula; authors writing at this speed were not under pressure to produce quality or original fiction. 'New' meant 'more of the same'.[67] These conditions must have contributed to the poor reputation of the genre.

Some authors for the penny press wanted to produce more up-market fiction, but financial constraints or their particular writing style meant they were forced to continue to work for publishers like Lloyd and Dicks. The author James Malcolm Rymer was contemptuous of penny fiction at the start of his career, however he had great success with his penny serials, in particular *Ada the Betrayed*.[68] He demonstrated that 'popular' authors are aware of the sacrifice they made, but he gained financial security in return. Once they had gained a reputation as an author for the down-market publishers, it was difficult to break away from this stereotyping.[69] This is consistent with the description George Gissing gives in *New Grub Street*.[70] Gissing had experienced financial insecurity himself as he struggled to earn a living through writing in the 1880s, and this novel was his first great literary success; it ironically relieved his poverty.[71] The novel is not autobiographical, but it mirrored his and fellow writers' experiences and contemporary reviewers commented on its realism.[72]

The over-arching message in *New Grub Street* was the struggle writers without a private income must face. Edwin Reardon was a talented author who was failing to financially support his wife Amy and their child. He could not bear to 'make a trade of art.'[73] Amy was unhappy with their situation, and urged Edwin to scale down his ideals and write something

[66] Both Dicks and Sala were living in the South of France at this time, Dicks in his villa in Mentone. Sala, pp. 667-68.
[67] Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, p. 77.
[68] James, *Fiction*, p. 42.
[69] Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, pp. 152-54; King, *The London Journal*, pp. 55-57.
[70] George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008, first published 1891).
[71] John Goode, 'Introduction', *New Grub Street*, pp. ix-xi; Pierre Coustillas, 'Gissing, George Robert' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[72] Goode, pp. x-xi.
[73] *New Grub Street*, p. 51.

that is '"good enough for the market."'[74] Edwin responded: '"Don't use that word, Amy. I hate it!"'[75] Their conversations provided a debate around the issues of quality versus commercial popularity.[76] Reardon considered the vanity of the aspiring author, but he cannot simply abandon his ideals; his conscience did not allow him to.

Gissing's fictional Edwin Reardon perhaps articulated Rymer's view:

> How well I can imagine the answer of some popular novelist if he heard me speak scornfully of his books. "My dear fellow" he might say, "do you suppose I am not aware that my books are rubbish? I know it just as well as you do. But my vocation is to live comfortably. I have a luxurious home, a wife and children who are happy and grateful to me for their happiness. If you choose to live in a garret, and what's worse, make your wife and children share it with you, that's your concern." The man would be abundantly right."[77]

Gissing recognised the distinction between artistic and commercial writing. Another character, Jasper Milvain, in contrast to Reardon, was an author who, despite his disdain for the readers and publishers he wrote for, was commercially astute and managed to make a respectable living from his journalistic writing. Milvain cynically persuaded his sisters to write children's books for a living:

> 'It is obvious what an immense field there is for anyone who can just hit the taste of the new generation of Board school children. ..you have to cultivate a particular kind of vulgarity...you could both together earn about a hundred a year in Grub Street. It would be better than governessing; wouldn't it?'[78]

Gissing complicated the issue; Reardon's attempt at writing a popular novel failed and he was forced to work as a clerk. His wife left him because she could not bear the poverty and lack of social position, and he died alone. Not all writers, even talented ones, could meet mass-market requirements. However, Reardon's good friend, Harold Biffen, a serious author who continues to aim for excellence, also died in poverty, highlighting how difficult it was for the talented to survive without an independent income. The writer who has achieved success is the less pleasant, less talented man. Milvain continues to sell well, and married Amy Reardon after Edwin's death, although his motives were suspect, as Amy had inherited a legacy that enabled him to pursue his goal of becoming the editor of a popular periodical.

[74] *New Grub Street*, p. 49.
[75] *New Grub Street*, p. 49.
[76] *New Grub Street*, pp. 52-54.
[77] *New Grub Street*, pp. 53-54.
[78] *New Grub Street*, p. 35.

The key role that money plays in a writer's career choices was evident throughout this novel; Gissing made it clear that talent alone would not allow a writer to succeed.

Jasper Milvain's recommendation that his sisters earn a living through authorship is unsurprising. Writing was one of the few professions open to middle-class women in the nineteenth century. Nigel Cross estimated that women formed around twenty per cent of professional writers in the period, approximately four thousand authors.[79] Cross's estimations are based on the number of women writers identified as regular, named contributors to monthly and quarterly magazines. The figure could have been much higher. Some wrote using male pseudonyms (for example George Eliot), others wrote anonymously (Emma Robinson wrote *Bow Bells Novelettes* anonymously for example) and the *LJ* has many authors who are credited only with initials (for example L G and AHB) and so their gender is unknown. The number of named female writers publishing stories in the *LJ* increased in the second half of the century; Andrew King's examination of the journal determined that between 1868 and 1879 the proportion of female named writers rose by fifty per cent.[80] King thinks after 1855 the influence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* encouraged an increasingly globalised market for fiction, and this impacted on UK popular fiction.[81] By the end of the century it became more likely that authors remained anonymous, and so it is difficult to see if the trend continued.[82]

The records of the RLF show that the majority of women applicants began writing in order to support themselves and their dependants.[83] Emma Robinson had been awarded a Civil List pension of £75 a year in 1862 'in consideration of her many romances, historical plays and other contributions to periodical literature of admitted excellence,'[84] but in 1869 she was forced to apply to the RLF for financial relief. She said this had become necessary because she had set her brother up in business as a bookseller, but the business had failed, he was now deceased, and she was left with his debts to repay. In addition she supported her elderly father and sister from her earnings. Thackeray, Dickens and Lord Lytton supported Robinson's application.[85] In a later application she says she had to struggle all her life to pay her father's creditors: 'and entering with engagements on his behalf with his creditors which

[79] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 166. My examination of the case files for Hannah Maria Jones and Emma Robinson confirm this.
[80] King, *The London Journal*, p. 214.
[81] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 9-10.
[82] *The Bow Bells Novelettes* and *The London Journal* novelette supplements were published with anonymous authors.
[83] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 172.
[84] 'Civil List Pensions', *The Times*, Monday 7th July 1862, p. 12.
[85] MS BL96 RLF 1/1558, item 11, 30/12/1869.

have been a burden upon me almost my entire career until now.'[86] Robinson was still writing twenty years later, struggling to support her father and siblings, until her death in 1890 in Hanwell Lunatic Asylum. She is recorded as suffering from 'chronic melancholia' and the cause of death is given as 'Senile decay, chronic bronchitis, vascular disease of the heart, cirrhosis of the liver.'[87] This evidence suggests that Robinson wrote to support herself and her family, and her physical and mental health suffered as a result.

The influence of publishers and editors

From the end of the eighteenth century Britain had embraced industrialisation, capitalism and the entrepreneurial spirit. Eric Hobsbawm said that by the early nineteenth century 'On the whole… it was accepted that money not only talked, but governed.'[88] Publishers were capitalists who aimed to make a profit from their enterprises, and indeed many did.[89] An article in *The Morning Chronicle* in 1850 entitled 'Perilous Nature of Penny Press' said six men who had started life with little money had become publishers and were now able to run country houses.[90]

Edward Lloyd (1815-1890) was the son of a Surrey farm labourer who left school at an early age, moved to London and started a bookshop in Drury Lane. He studied at the Mechanics' Institute in Chancery Lane and published his own booklet on stenography when only eighteen years old. In 1835 he started publishing adventure stories, then moving on to plagiarisms of popular writers like Dickens and Ainsworth. Lloyd astutely realised that popular tastes were changing. Between 1839 and 1856 Lloyd published more than 200 stories of varying length, including many 'domestic romances.'[91] He was a leading Liberal, and a promoter of the National Liberal Club. Lloyd eventually moved into newspaper production and worked hard to discard the 'penny blood' reputation that followed him (he allegedly sent agents to buy all the copies in the 2d lending libraries and destroy them), but there is no doubt that he was a hugely influential figure in the penny press market throughout the 1840s and 1850s.[92]

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[86] MS BL96 RLF 1/1558, item17, 31/5/1887.
[87] Record of Discharges, Removals and Deaths: Females, London County Asylum, Hanwell, London Metropolitan Archives, MS H11/HLL/B/15/003.
[88] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London: Abacus, 1962), p. 47.
[89] Feather, p. vii.
[90] James, *Fiction*, p. 49.
[91] Medcraft (there are no page numbers).
[92] James, *Fiction*, 28-9; Medcraft; 'Lloyd, Edward', Oxford DNB, <www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 5th July 2012].

John Dicks (1818-1881) was a similarly successful publisher. The son of a coachman from East London, Dicks learnt the printing trade in his first job working for the Queen's Printers.[93] In 1847 he became the managing clerk and printer for G W M Reynolds, a popular author of sensational penny fiction.[94] Reynolds was a prolific writer of mystery and adventure stories, and had considerable success with his *Mysteries of London*.[95] He had also started a penny newspaper, *Reynolds Weekly*. However he was a poor businessman, and when Dicks joined him he was facing bankruptcy for the second time. The company grew under Dick's management; he successfully launched two more penny publications, *Bow Bells* magazine and *The Penny Illustrated Weekly News*, and penny editions of the classics by authors such as Shakespeare, Byron, Scott and others. He became Reynold's business partner in 1863, and at the annual dinner Reynolds told their employees that 'from the very first he was assisted by the business-like habits and sound intelligence of Mr Dicks; and after having for so many years maintained the most friendly relations as employer and employed, it was only natural that such a connection should be consolidated by a partnership.'[96] Reynolds was a well-known Chartist and said that Dicks shared his liberal and political views.[97] Together they continued to sell their penny periodicals and penny editions of plays and the classics. When Dicks died in 1881 his personal estate was worth around £20,000, and he also owned the copyright to various publications, including *Bow Bells, Bow Bells Novelettes* and *Reynold's Weekly Newspaper*.[98]

The preface to *May Grayson; or, Love and Treachery, A Romance*, written by Thomas Peckett Prest and published by Edward Lloyd in 1842, shows that publishers commissioned stories from popular authors. It talks about how the Copyright Act will lead to publishers paying 'extravagant prices' to 'greedy authors' for works that 'in many instances are below mediocrity' and so push up the price of reading material.[99] However Lloyd, or Prest (it is not clear who wrote the preface), wanted to reassure consumers of cheap literature that their supply would continue:

[93] This firm had the exclusive right to print prayer books, bibles and Acts of Parliament. Dicks, pp. 1-2.
[94] Dicks, p. 6.
[95] First series published 1844-1846. The novel sold 40,000 copies in penny instalments and over a million copies cumulatively. Dicks, p. 9.
[96] Cited by Dicks, p. 32.
[97] Dicks, p. 38.
[98] Dicks, p. 63.
[99] Thomas Peckett Prest, Preface to *May Grayson; or, Love and Treachery. A Romance*, (London: Edward Lloyd, 1842).

> To this end the publisher of this and similar works issuing from his press, has devoted much of his attention, and he is gratified in being able to announce that he has succeeded in engaging gentlemen of well-known literary talent to produce for him a series of works which, though sent forth to the public in a cheap form, will be found equal to the best of the high-priced publications, and certainly, in most instances, far superior to the trash that finds its way into the circulating libraries under the auspices of high-sounding names. Thus, in spite of the Copyright Act, the humbler classes will not be deprived of the rational enjoyment that is at all times to be found in works of merit.[100]

The phrase 'rational enjoyment' is interesting – it suggests Prest and Lloyd felt the work was sensible, respectable and not a frivolous waste of time, or at least they reassured their readers of this. This extract also suggests this publisher saw a division between his penny publications and those for the private circulating libraries. John Sutherland described the division between publishers: 'In this, as much as anything else Victorian England was two nations.'[101] Cross felt this division developed because popular literature did not pretend to be art, so the concept of authorship implying intellectual ownership was irrelevant to this literature, hence the loss of copyright to the publisher, it was not reviewed and was not subject to the same treatment as upmarket fiction.[102]

Publishers for the working class were determined to continue to supply those who could not afford a three-volume novel or membership of a circulating library with reading material, and so met a need for a particular consumer. George Augustus Sala, as we have seen, provided Dicks with many of his novelettes. In 1877 he wrote to a friend: 'Dicks... gammoned [sic] me into promising to write him 100 stories, taking my own time, and as he pays more than double what anyone else does I could hardly refuse him.'[103] Dicks, as a successful publisher, knew what his readers liked and he commissioned the authors who could meet his customers' needs.

Publisher and scholar Michael Sadleir described in 1932 how there had been a change in the relationship between the publisher and author. In the nineteenth century all power had lain with the publisher but The Society of Authors, formed in 1884, had redressed the balance.[104] He said:

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[100] Preface to *May Grayson.*
[101] Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, p. 5.
[102] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 126.
[103] Dicks, p. 52.
[104] <http://www.societyofauthors.net/about-us/history>[accessed 12th November 2012].

> That strength was often and grossly abused … exercising in an atmosphere of portentous mystery a ruthless dominion over all authors, save the few great popular figures whose every written phrase meant gold.[105]

Authors were obliged to produce what the publisher demanded.[106] Just as Mudie's circulating library controlled what fiction was available for the upper and middle classes, businessmen like Lloyd and Dicks controlled what was available for the working-class reader. Charles Knight had calculated in 1850 how difficult it was for a publisher to make a profit from a periodical, and his calculations showed how little the publishers paid contributors.[107] Publishers needed to sell all, or most of, the copies they printed to make a profit. The successful ones were very astute businessmen, and their decisions were based on what had sold well before and which authors continued to attract regular readers. If a serial did not sell, the publisher would discontinue it, and if the sales of a periodical fell after a serial came to an end, the publishers and editors demanded another story from the same author.[108]

According to Louis James the publishers of popular literature and their agents were excluded from 'respectable' society. He gave the example of Abel Heywood, a Manchester agent and bookseller, who handled more than 80,000 periodicals costing 2d or less in 1850 and 75,000 copies of penny-issue novels every week by 1851. Heywood served on the Council and became mayor of Manchester by 1863, yet his presence was rumoured to be the reason why Queen Victoria did not attend the opening of the city's Town Hall. This may have been only a rumour but it is significant that he was considered a sufficient reason for her to choose not to attend.[109] However these publishers were capitalists in the true sense of the word. They were successful businessmen and some of them became wealthy as a result. To make these profits publishers and authors had to be able to predict readers' demands, skills and expectations, and these changed through the century.[110] Producers in the first half of the century believed the public had unsophisticated taste, but through the second half of the century, as the public gained more education and read more, and as more publishers produced affordable material, the consumer gained more choice and became more

[105] Michael Sadleir, *Authors and Publishers. A Study in Mutual Esteem* (London: J M Dent and Sons, 1932), pp. 9 & 33.
[106] Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists*, p. 6.
[107] Calculations reproduced by James, *Fiction*, pp. 35-37.
[108] Altick, p. 292; James, *Fiction*, p. 47.
[109] James, *Fiction*, pp. 23 & 49.
[110] James, *Fiction*, p. 113.

discerning.[111] Andrew King concluded, however, that ultimately the producer, and not the consumer, was in control of the content of the penny press.[112]

Hannah Maria Jones (1786?-1854)

Hannah Maria Jones was a prolific author of popular romantic stories sold in penny parts throughout the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. Edward Lloyd published her work in the 1840s and 1850s and a sample of these editions are analysed in Chapters 4 to 7. In 1839 she had claimed sales of 20,000 copies for three of her novels: *Emily Moreland, The Gipsy Mother* and *The Gipsy Girl*.[113] She was recognised by more famous authors: Edward Bulwer Lytton had recommended that the RLF give her financial help in 1833 and described her as 'the authoress of numerous novels,' and she received ten pounds as a result.[114] Charles Dickens, in an article in *Household Words* in 1853, confessed that he was once addicted to her work, though has now gone off everything except *Rosaline Woodbridge*.[115] Publishers considered that her name, and the titles of her previous novels, would be recognised and would sell more of her work. Their advertisements described her as a popular authoress of her time. An example from 1853, just a month before her death, is typical:

> FAMILY FAULTS; OR, A MOTHER'S ERRORS By Hannah Maria Jones. In penny numbers weekly… by this talented and popular authoress. The various workings of the human heart are exemplified in it in the most lively and touching manner, and an intense interest in its characters is kept up throughout; while its descriptions are unsurpassed for truth and fidelity to nature.[116]

Hannah had first applied to the RLF on December 12th 1825, evidently rather desperately stating that '…as a drowning man is said to catch even at straws for succour so am I impelled by the urgency of my distress to grasp at the slightest promise of relief.'[117] By this time she had written and had published at least five romances, and she was engaged in preparing two non-fiction abridgements for schools, described as a 'Natural History' and a

[111] Cross, *Common Writer*, pp. 205-06.
[112] King, *The London Journal*, p. 241.
[113] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.
[114] Extract from Minutes of the General Committee of the RLF, 3rd February 1833, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 2/1/2, Volume II.
[115] Charles Dickens, 'Bookstalls', *Household Words*, 28th May, 1853, pp. 289-95.
[116] Advertisement for *Family Faults; or, A Mother's Errors*, published by John Lofts, *Reynold's Miscellany*, 24th December, 1853.
[117] Letter to RLF, Dec 12th 1825,MS BL 96 RLF 1/553, item 1.

'History of England', for the publisher Thomas Kelly.[118] So why did such a talented and popular author need help from the RLF for her financial distress?

Jones was born in Rotherhithe between 1786 and 1799, but it is impossible without knowing her maiden name to identify the exact year.[119] Very little is known about her family or personal life except for the clues she leaves in her letters to the RLF, a few newspaper and journal articles, the census returns and the registration of her death. She said she started writing aged nineteen, and continued to do so until her death in 1854.[120] Jones claimed in 1831 that she was due to inherit £250 from her mother, who was nearly seventy. She repeated this claim in 1844, saying then that she stood to inherit nearly £300 from a relative 'now eighty-one years old and for the last two years utterly helpless with paralysis'.[121] Whilst not a fortune, this inheritance implies that Hannah did not come from the abject poverty in which she lived most of her life. Her language and skills as a writer, including an involvement in the preparation of school textbooks, indicate she received an education however she claimed to have had little experience of society. When she wrote to thank the officers of the RLF for a payment of £15 in 1826 she claimed:

> An almost entire seclusion from society for a great part of my life, added to natural diffidence of disposition, renders me at all times awkward in the expression of my feelings and I most sensibly felt this disadvantage during my interview with you sirs on Monday. My heart would have prompted the most forcible expressions of gratitude for your benevolent exertions, yet I quitted you without being able to give utterance to more than a few commonplace terms of thankfulness that however I did not feel less ardently and sincerely than if I had been more profuse in acknowledgements.[122]

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[118] She mentions *The Victim of Fashion; or The Gamblers* in her letter to the RLF, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 1. There are four other novels written by Jones published before 1825 available in the British Library. *Gretna Green; of the Elopement of Miss D- with a son of Mars* (London: George Virtue, 1821, and London: T Kelly, 1823), *The Forged Note; or Julian and Marianne, A Moral Tale* (J Jacques and W Wright, 1824), *The Gamblers, or the Treacherous Friend; A Moral Tale founded on Recent Events* (London: E Livermore, 1824) *The Wedding Ring; or Married and single, a Domestic Tale* (London: G. Virtue, 1824). There may have been more romances written by Jones before 1825 that have not survived; Dec 12th 1825, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 2

[119] Her age is given on her death certificate as 68 in 1854. In a letter dated 1844 she says she is 'nearly sixty years of age'. MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 26. However her age is recorded in the 1841 census as 45 (so born 1796), in the 1851 census as 50 (1799). In both census entries the column labelled 'Born in this district' is marked with a Y.

[120] *Police: GUILDHALL*, Newspaper cutting in file MS BL96 RLF 1/553 labelled 'Morning Post, January 1850'. Probably the same case reported in 'Literary Intelligence', *The Critic*, 1st February 1850, p. 81; Obituary, Anna Maria Jones, *The Critic*, February 15th 1854, p. 108. I am not sure why her name is inaccurate; General Register Office , Certified Copy of an Entry of Death, Hannah Mary Lowndes, DYD 314118.

[121] Letters to RLF, 6th July 1831 and 15th October 1844, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, items 9 and 26.

[122] Letter to RLF, 9th January, 1826 MS BL 96 RLF 1/553, item 4.

This paints a picture of a shy, reserved young woman, who had spent little time with other people, and who had found it difficult to express herself openly in the company of the officers of the RLF.[123] Jones was certainly able to express her feelings in writing, but not in person. There is no reason to believe she became less insular and more sociable as she grew older. She described herself in an undated letter to the RLF between 1841 and 1844 as having little contact with other people, and no one else to help her. She said 'from my retired habits of life, [I am] as destitute of friends as I am of other treasures.'[124]

In 1826 Jones gave an address off Mile End Road.[125] Her letter sent in June 1828 was sent from St Thomas' Hospital. The next legible address was in 1839, when she was living in Richies Place, Lower Deptford Road. This street, which faced Southwark Park, consisted of a short terrace of houses that were populated by skilled working-class people; the 1841 census records, for example, two police constables, a clerk, a gardener, a shipwright and a cooper. Hannah had married a compositor, John Jones. He experienced spells of unemployment between 1825 and 1831, and also suffered from ill-health.[126] Jones said in a letter written in 1831 that she was supporting herself, her husband and a child from her literary income.[127] It is not known if this was her own child or an adopted one; in 1839 she says she was supporting an orphan girl and another near relative, but she does not say if this is the same child or identifies the relative.[128]

In 1841 Jones registered on the census as Hannah Lowndes, aged 45, living in Seven Houses, Rotherhithe with John Joseph Lowndes, aged 40. They shared the house with another family. Little is known about John Lowndes. He is registered in the census as a printer, but was also a bookseller and writer.[129] He successfully applied to the RLF in 1839 as the author of various geographical works and received £5.[130] He also wrote to the RLF on behalf of Jones around 1846, but that application was not successful. By January 1850 Jones described Lowndes to magistrates as her husband, a 'dramatic bookseller' who had

[123] There is no record of who attended the meeting she is describing, but at this time the president of the RLF was the Duke of Somerset and the clerk was Joseph Snow, who held this position for 24 years. List of Principal Officers, Cross, *The Royal Literary Fund*, p. 26.
[124] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 21.
[125] Address given was 15, North Street, Mile End Road. Letter to RLF, 9th January, 1826, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 4.
[126] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, items 1 and 9. Unsigned letter to RLF, May 1828, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 6; 'Jones, Hannah Maria', *Oxford DNB*; MS BL96 RLF 1/553, items 1 and 9.
[127] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 9.
[128] Unsigned letter to RLF (from Hannah Maria Jones's address), MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.
[129] Minutes of General Committee to the Royal Literary Fund, Volume 2, 11th December 1839, The british Library, MS BL96 RLF 2/1/4; MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 29. This was probably written in 1846 or 1848.
[130] MS Royal Literary Fund Case File, John Lowndes, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 1/984. Minutes to meeting of RLF 11th December 1839, MS BL96 RLF 2/1/4, Volume II.

been in business for a long time, but had 'failed in his trade'; she said his misfortune 'played on his mind' and she described him as now suffering from 'impaired intellect' as a result.[131] An article, also published in February 1850 in *The Literary Gazette*, reported that Jones was the widow of the late Mr Lowndes, a dramatic bookseller, but this is inaccurate.[132] He was alive to report Jones's death in 1854; it is probable that John Lowndes died in Rotherhithe fifteen years after Hannah, in 1869.[133]

Jones was a prolific author. There are twenty-one titles bearing her name in the British Library collection, and there are others that were not preserved as part of this collection.[134] She claimed in 1839 to have written between forty and fifty volumes.[135] She was unable to remember the titles of all of them when she gave a list of thirty-eight of her works to a magistrate in 1850.[136] Some of her romances have been published in several editions (There are three editions of *The Gipsey Girl*: 1836, 1845 and 1865) and some by more than one publisher (*Rosaline Woodbridge*, for example, was published by both George Virtue and Matthew Iley). In 1828 she named George Virtue as her principal publisher.[137] The British Library collection also has examples of editions published by Thomas Kelly, E. Livermore, Matthew Iley and Edward Lloyd. Lloyd advertised several editions of Jones's work in his *Lloyd's Weekly London News,* for example *The Peasant Girl* and *A Woman's Life* in 1844 and *The Curate's Daughters* in 1846. John Lofts placed eight advertisements for his penny editions of *Family Faults, The Gipsy Mother, Emily Moreland, Scottish Chieftains* and *Rosaline Woodbridge* in *Reynolds Miscellany* between 24th December 1853 and 3rd June 1854. Henry Lea advertised his edition of *Rosaline Woodbridge* in six advertisements in *Reynolds Miscellany* in 1856 and 1857, and then advertised his edition of *Gipsy Mother* in 1857, several years after her death.

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[131] Press cutting labelled 'Morning post, January 1850' in case file MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 30. This event was also reported in *The Critic* on 1st February (1850), p. 81.

[132] 'Varieties', *The Literary Gazette*, 2nd February 1850.

[133] General Register Office , Certified Copy of an Entry of Death, Hannah Mary Lowndes, DYD 314118; The death of John Lowndes was registered in the Jan-March burial register 1869. It recorded the dead man was age 69, late of Rotherhithe. It is likely this is the John Lowndes that Hannah was involved with. There are no other men called John Lowndes of this age registered as being buried in this region in this period.

[134] She mentions *The Victim of Fashion*, a romance that is not in the British Library, in her letter to the RLF, and I have found advertisements for three others (*Family Faults; or A Mother's Errors, The Peasant Girl, The Adventures of a Gentleman in Search of a Wife.*) that are also absent from the British Library collection. MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 1; Advertisement for John Lofts: 'Hannah Maria Jones's Works In Penny Numbers' publisher, *Reynolds Miscellany*, 6th May 1854, p. 240; Advertisement for John Lofts: 'New Tale by Hannah Maria Jones', *Reynold's Miscellany*, 24th December 1853, p. 352; Advertisement: 'New Romance by Hannah Maria Jones', *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 11th February 1844, p. 12; 'To be Given Away, the Three First parts of the Best Romances Ever Written', *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 25th February 1844, p. 14; Advertisement for Henry Lea publishers: 'Uniform Series of Standard Novels', *Reynolds Newspaper*, 17th January 1858, p. 13.

[135] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.

[136] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 30.

[137] Letter to RLF, May 1828, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 6.

These publishers were publishers who produced cheap, penny numbers for the working classes. Jones was not happy in her relationship with her publishers. In 1839 she said 'It may perhaps be as well for me to observe that the payment I have received from the publishers into whose hands I unfortunately fell at my outset has been too scanty to enable me to provide for more than the passing day.'[138] She later described a publisher who has reduced her payment by half as 'the most ignorant and dishonest man that ever disgraced the respectable title of publisher.'[139] She could have been describing either William Emans or Edward Lloyd, as she published new novels for both of these in the early 1840s. What is clear is that she regretted working for the publishers who employed her and was not satisfied with the payment she received from them.

Jones may have become involved with these publishers because she had little confidence in her ability as a writer and the work she produced. She made several comments to the RLF that indicate her insecurities. In 1839 she had enclosed examples of her fiction and says:

> The number I enclose with this are all I possess… In placing them before you Gentlemen I disclaim all assumption on the score of their merits. No one can have a lower opinion of them than I have...[140]

This quotation provides an insight into her character. She may be being modest, a tone that perhaps yielded greater results from philanthropists at the time, but I think it is more likely a true reflection of her view of herself as an author. She said in 1825 that 'it cannot be the highly gifted and talented who need the assistance of charity and therefore I hope that my obscurity will not bar your doors to me'[141] indicating that she believed her lack of financial success was due in part to her lack of talent as an author, and she obviously saw herself as second-rate, like, or maybe because of, the publishers she worked for.

Jones also suffered constantly from illness. The application she made to the RLF for financial help in June 1828 was sent from St Thomas' Hospital.[142] In July 1831 she wrote 'I have suffered most severely from ill-health brought on me by a domestic affliction too painful for me to detail' (at this stage she still lived with John Jones. He was unemployed because his employer had gone bankrupt) and in 1839 she claimed her last five novels had been

[138] Letter to RLF, 12th March 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 15.
[139] Letter to RLF, July 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.
[140] Letter to RLF, 10th March, 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 14.
[141] Letter to RLF, 12th December, 1825, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 1.
[142] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 8.

written 'literally on a bed of sickness.'[143] Others supported her claim to ill health. In July 1831 the publisher William White wrote in support of her application to the RLF, saying poverty had made her 'ill and weak'[144] and a surgeon, Mr Bunker of Lower Deptford Road, described her in 1839 as 'suffering from dibility [sic] and pecuniary distress.'[145] At the same time Edward Bingham, a bookseller in Grosvenor Square described her as suffering from a 'continuance of bad health.'[146]

Poverty, lack of nourishment and poor living conditions obviously contributed to her illness, and the poor pay she received for her writing exacerbated this. Jones was being paid fourteen shillings a sheet in 1831, and was writing at a rate of a sheet and a half a week. Dickens was receiving 9 guineas a sheet for *Pickwick Papers* in 1836.[147] Poor pay prevented Jones from 'ever obtaining more than enabled me to provide for the necessities of that week.'[148] In 1839 she complained that her new publisher had compelled her 'to accept less than half the sum I have received for former publications.'[149] John Lowndes claimed in an undated letter (probably sent in 1846) that 'we have received but one shilling per page for our writings, which will account for our destitute condition.'[150] He hoped to obtain a 'situation' as a 'Reader to the press' in 1839, but could not apply for the job because he was 'prevented solely by inability to make that appearance which is considered by the world indispensable to respectability.'[151]

There are several possible reasons for the poor payment Jones received. There was an increase in professional writers, particularly female ones, competing to work, giving publishers the upper hand.[152] Jones herself felt that the public's taste was changing and she had not been able to keep up with these changes. Her view can be read in *The Morning Post*'s report of her exchange with a magistrate, Sir Peter Laurie, in 1850, when she complained that 'The taste of the public had so completely altered since she began novel writing at 19 years of age, that she could get nothing for such labour now.' He replied that 'she was not the only literary person suffering because of the changing tastes of the

[143] Letter to RLF, 6th July, 1841, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 9; Letter to RLF, 10th March, 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 14.
[144] Letter from Mr White to RLF, 20th July 1831, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 10.
[145] Letter from Mr Bunker to RLF, 12th March, 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 17.
[146] Letter from Edward Bingham to RLF, undated but accompanying her application made in March 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 18.
[147] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 176; James, *Fiction*, p. 29.
[148] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 9.
[149] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.
[150] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 29.
[151] MS BL96 RLF 1/984, item 1.
[152] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 175.

public.'[153] This claim was unfounded - publishers were actually still advertising some of her early works for sale up until 1857.[154] The payment system that had evolved meant that authors did not benefit when their work continued to be popular and was re-released. In 1846, for example, the publisher William Emans became bankrupt, and an auction was held to sell off his most valuable assets. The stock included 'Stereotype, steel and copper plates, and remaining stocks of books… Gipsey Girl by Hannah Maria Jones; Village Scandal by ditto; Child of Mystery by ditto.'[155] Jones had written before the 1842 Copyright Act was introduced, but even this legislation would not have protected her.[156] She would not have received any share of the sales her work raised for Emans in 1846, despite her urgent need for money at this point. The relationship between publishers and authors was not equal; publishers were able to pay little, make demands on their authors, and potentially make enormous profits themselves.

Jones described her living conditions rather graphically in August 1831:

> For the last five months a straw bed without even the common necessities of a sheet or a blanket has been our only resting place and a box our table and the same our substitute for a chair and we are now in debt £2 to our landlord for which we are incessantly solicited and threatened.[157]

At this point she was trying to support three people (herself, her husband and the child previously mentioned) on sixteen shillings a week.[158] Things had not improved by the time she applied for relief in July 1839:

> Since Christmas last I have not received one shilling and have been compelled to part with every available article to provide food and shelter the last of which I am in hourly expectation of being deprived of and driven literally into the streets for a debt of three pounds.[159]

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[153] Press cutting labelled 'Morning post, January 1850' in case file 96 RLF 1/553, item 30.
[154] Publisher John Lofts advertised *Family Faults* and *The Gipsey Mother*, *Emily Moreland*, *Rosalind Woodbridge* and *Family Faults* in *Reynold's Miscellany* on 24th December 1853, 18th February 1854, 25th February 1854 & 29th April 1854; Henry Lea advertised *Rosalind Woodbridge* and *Gipsey Mother* in *Reynold's Miscellany* on 29th November 1856, 6th December 1856, 13th December 1856, 20th December 1856, 27th December 1856, 10th January 1857 & 6th February 1857; George Vickers advertised *The Gipsey Mother* in *Reynold's Miscellany* on 13th February 1857.
[155] 'Re Emans, a bankrupt', *The Times*, Tuesday 7th July 1846, p. 12.
[156] Feather, p. 170.
[157] Feather, p. 170
[158] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 9.
[159] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 19.

John Lowndes wrote on her behalf seven years later and implored the officer of the RLF to visit them rather than write.[160] Jones's addresses document her fall into poverty. Between 1839 and 1841 she had moved from Richies Place (the house overlooking the park) to living with Lowndes in Seven Houses, Lower Deptford Road. They shared the house with another family: John Gardner, recorded as a cordwainer, his wife Catherine and their three children. By 1851 they were living in Anthony Street, Off Salisbury Street, Bermondsey. The head of household is recorded as Elizabeth Ward, a widow and 'plain needle-worker.'[161] Mariners, rope makers, dockside labourers and charwomen populated this street, just off the riverside and docks of Bermondsey. These houses were multiple-occupancy. Next-door twelve inhabitants lived in one house. This area was coloured black on Charles Booth's poverty map of London, meaning the lowest class, including criminals, populated it.[162] This survey was conducted forty years later, and it is possible that the area had deteriorated after Jones had lived there, but the multiple-occupancy housing indicates that the very poor lived there.

Jones was living in Anthony Street when she died in 1854. Her obituary appeared in *The Times,* which was significant in itself. She was obviously well-known enough at the time for this newspaper to decide to carry her obituary. It read:

> A SAD FATE – Anna [sic] Maria Jones, authoress of The Gipsy and other popular novels of the day, died on Tuesday at 17 Salisbury Place, Bermondsey, in the most abject poverty. Her remains await, in all probability, a pauper's funeral.[163]

The obituary was then repeated in *The Athenaeum* in February 1854 with the additional comment: 'Literature still has its calamities, more wretched perhaps than any other calling, because falling on a class of persons more acutely susceptible.'[164] It is possible writers were considered to be more susceptible to the impact of poverty for material reasons, as their payment is uncertain and sporadic, or because they were considered to be more sensitive and less able to cope with the complexities of 'modern' life.

The effect of a constant struggle to earn sufficient money on Hannah's health has been discussed, the impact on her writing is less easy to determine. She admitted that she wrote in sickness. *The Song of the Pen*, the poem she wrote to the RLF to support her 1844

[160] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 29.
[161] 1841 and 1851 Census records viewed at <www.Ancestry.co.uk>[accessed 3rd July 2012].
[162] <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/do.pl?sub=view_booth_and_barth&args=534600,179500,1,large,0> [accessed 22nd July 2012].
[163] Obituary, Anna Maria Jones, *The Times*, 27th January 1854, p. 5.
[164] 'Weekly Gossip', *The Athenaeum*, 4th February 1854, p. 151.

application (the first verse is given on page 92), described how she had been worn down by her need to earn money, and how she no longer dreamt of becoming a great writer:

> My head aches as if it were splitting
> I'm worn down to mere skin and bone
> Strange shadows around me are flitting
> Not one is so gaunt as my own
> They are shadows of days long departed
> When bright hopes of fame filled my head
> When heedless and young and light hearted
> I dream't not of writing for bread.[165]

Poverty had changed her attitude to writing, and her image of herself as a writer. Her publishers now controlled what she wrote. She asked the officers of the RLF to 'refer to the dedication of the Gipsey Mother:

> …the presumption of which the publisher alone is blamable, for it having been sorely against my will that I wrote it but which nevertheless I feel offers the truest and [illegible] apology that I can make.[166]

Unfortunately there does not appear to be a surviving copy of that edition, and so we cannot be sure what she meant by 'the presumption of which,' but the comment serves as evidence of the control her publisher had over her. She also told Sir Peter Laurie, the magistrate who queried her authorship of *The Scottish Chieftans* in 1850 (because the title was so like Anna Porter's popular novel *The Scottish Chiefs*) that 'piracy was a bookseller's device to which she had weakly yielded.'[167] Jones's poverty and desperation left her little room for negotiation, and gave her publishers the upper hand.

Although in the 1841 census Jones gave her name as Lowndes, it is unlikely that Jones and Lowndes had legally married, possibly because one of them was still married to someone else or because they could not afford the fee. There does not appear to be a marriage registered between 1831 and 1841, and Octavian Blewitt (who was the secretary of the RLF between March 1839 and November 1884[168]) inserted an undated note into John Lowndes case file that said:

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[165] Hannah Maria Jones, *The Song of the Pen*, (1844), MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 23.
[166] Author's underline. 10th March, 1839, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 14.
[167] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 30.
[168] Cross, 'The Royal Literary Fund'; Index to Minute Books, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 2/2/1.

> I have ascertained that John Lowndes has been living for several years with Mrs Hannah Maria Jones (Case number 553) who though calling herself latterly "Mrs Lowndes" was never married to him, as she herself has admitted to me.[169]

Jones mentioned a meeting with Blewitt in her 1844 letter, and it is likely to be the one Blewitt mentions. It is obviously a painful memory:

> With the recollection fresh on my memory from which it will never be effaced of my last interview with you – I believe four years since – it must be indeed a powerful motive that could induce me to [illegible] an application to the Literary Fund Society. That motive, sir, is the most powerful that can influence any human being the desire – I dare not say the hope – of being rescued from a state of not merely penuary [?] but absolute want and destitution.[170]

Despite an obviously uncomfortable, embarrassing meeting, Jones was once again desperate for financial help.

The RLF had relieved Jones four times between 1825 and 1833 when she was married to John Jones, giving her a total of forty pounds, but Blewitt, and the other officers of the RLF refused all her applications made after 1839. The labelling of her case file reflects their attitude to her: 'Mrs Hannah Maria Jones, alias Lowndes [*passing as the wife of* John Lowndes.]'[171] Octavian Blewitt was the son of a prosperous London merchant and a staunch Anglican.[172] The RLF paid him a salary of £150 a year in 1842, which had increased to £380 by 1875. The committee met all his funeral expenses after his death in 1884, and his widow was awarded an annuity of £100.[173] Charles Dickens challenged the way the RLF made their decisions, in particular the costs of running the fund compared to the amount of relief given to authors, but 'he was defeated by the practical, dogged, conservative Blewitt.'[174] Blewitt had considerable power to influence the decisions made by the RLF committee; he 'cost the immoral author dearly' according to Nigel Cross: 'If Octavian Blewitt did not consider an author to be of good moral character, their application was rejected.'[175] He refused to relieve wives and widows who could not produce a marriage certificate, and Jones was an example of an author who paid the price for not corresponding to his notion of respectability.

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[169] MS BL96 RLF 1/984, item 7. Speech-marks are used by Blewitt.
[170] Letter to RLF, 15th October 1844, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 26.
[171] My italics. Front of case file, MS BL96 RLF 1/553.
[172] Cross, 'The Royal Literary Fund', p. 16.
[173] Index to Minute Books, MS BL96 RLF 2/2/1.
[174] Cross, 'The Royal Literary Fund', p. 20.
[175] Cross, 'The Royal Literary Fund', p. 16.

Both Jones and Lowndes were judged for the quality of their work and for being involved with the lower tier of publishers. At the same meeting in December 1839, when the committee decided to award John Lowndes £5, Mr George Burgess, a scholar of Greek and the classics, was awarded £50.[176] Blewitt inserted a note into John's file sometime after his successful 1839 application that read:

> The only works to which the name of John Lowndes are attached are not a shade better, if indeed they are as respectable as those of Mr Pierce Egan, who was not considered a proper object for relief….
>
> They have been working and writing together for the lowest class of publishers and have become well known to the Mendacity Society as Begging Letter Writers.[177]

Pierce Egan Senior, the author of penny serials *Life in London* and *Tom and Jerry*, had been rejected for relief in 1830 'his writing being deemed of improper tendency.'[178] Egan tried again to get financial help from the RLF in May 1842, but once more met with rejection. He describes in a letter, obviously full of anger, how he collected a copy of the 'rules' of the RLF and was told by the secretary (Blewitt) not to bother with an application because a precedent had been made to reject him because of his works.[179] Blewitt had established the notion that works not deemed as respectable excluded their authors from any financial help. Jones was being judged based on the publishers she worked for, not for the work itself or its contents and messages. These 'lowest class of publishers' included both George Virtue and Thomas Kelly even though they were both subscribers to the RLF.[180] Jones was additionally judged for her relationship with Lowndes, and for living with him while not being legally married to him. Lowndes was granted £5 on 11th December 1839, five months after Jones's application had been rejected.[181] The committee had taken Jones's behaviour and personal life into consideration, and she was punished for not meeting their ideals, however Lowndes's morals were not considered relevant to his application. It is perhaps no surprise that in her fiction heroines who do not protect their virtue and who break the moral codes of the day are punished, but not the men they are involved with.

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[176] Minutes of the General Committee, Volume IV, Meeting 11th December 1839, MS BL96 RLF 2/1/4.
[177] MS BL96 RLF 1/984, item 7.
[178] MS Royal Literary Fund Case File, Pierce Egan, November 1830, The British Library, MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 1.
[179] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 3.
[180] Cross, *Common Writer*, p. 178.
[181] Minutes of the General Committee, Volume IV, Meeting 13th March 1839, 10th July 1839, 11th December 1839, MS BL96 RLF 2/1/4.

A series of press cuttings in Jones's file reveal a bizarre incident in 1850 which indicates that Blewitt and the RLF committee also doubted Hannah's honesty, and even her identity. The first reported how a 'shabbily attired woman' calling herself Sarah Jones, but saying she wrote as Anna Maria Jones, had addressed Alderman Corden claiming to be the authoress *of Ada the Betrayed*, *Jane Brightwell, Brentwood* and other titles. She claimed to be a widow with a daughter living in India and that her mother was a sister of the Earl de Clifford and her brother the Sheriff of Calcutta. She asked for shelter in the workhouse where she could continue writing, claiming to have been offered 60 guineas for her next completed work. She admitted she was 'disposed to insanity.' The Alderman sent her to the City Union for relief.[182]

Hannah Maria Jones was not the author of any of the publications claimed by the woman who had appeared before the Alderman, and Jones herself appeared before a magistrate shortly afterwards (it was reported on 1st February 1850) to complain about the woman impersonating her. She was described in this article as 'a respectable woman' who wanted the newspapers to publish an announcement that the woman asking for relief was an impostor. She said she was in straightened circumstances and could no longer support herself with her pen, but did not want her friends to be worried about her, and she did not need help from the parish.[183] The impostor was probably the Sarah Jones, registered in the 1841 census as the wife of labourer William Jones living in Richies Place, Lower Deptford Road, where Hannah had lived when she wrote to the RLF in 1839. It is possible this Sarah Jones was the woman Blewitt describes as well known to the Mendicant Society as the writer of begging letters, but this could have been Hannah Maria Jones.[184] The fact that these cuttings have been placed in Jones's RLF file indicates that the committee were aware of the impersonator, and it added doubt to her reputation.

Jones died at 17 Salisbury Place on the twenty-fifth of January 1854. Her death certificate records the cause of death as 'Decay of nature, no medical attendants.'[185] Lowndes, listed on the death certificate as a printer, was present at her death. Hannah Maria Jones despite being a popular, bestselling author, was a victim of a competitive market place, profit driven publishers, copyright laws that favoured the publisher and a literary establishment that discriminated against her for working for the lower tier of publishers and for living with a man that she was not legally married to. Lowndes had written to the RLF before Hannah's death

[182] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 30. This was also reported in 'Distressing Case', *The Examiner,* 19th January 1850, p. 43.
[183] MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 30. This was also reported in 'Literary Intelligence', (1850), p. 81.
[184] This Sarah Jones may be the same woman, address: Commercial Docks, Rotherhithe, who was buried on November 27th 1855, Burial Records, <www.Ancestry.co.uk>[accessed on 20th June 2012].
[185] Hannah Mary Lowndes, Certified Copy of Entry of Death, General Register Office, DYD 314118.

(in an undated letter, but the address corresponds with one used by Hannah in 1846) describing her as his 'poor creature', saying that he was telling them truthfully how desperate and deserving they were so that 'afterwards' they couldn't say 'had I known their real situation I would have looked into it.'[186] It seems that judgements had been made about the way she lived her life, and the committee of the RLF had chosen not to help, despite her popularity as an author, because of the moral codes she was breaking.

Pierce Egan Junior (1814-1880)

Pierce Egan, born in London in 1814, was a popular and prolific author of romance stories that were serialised in the *LJ* from 1857 until his death in 1880. His serials were described as 'enormously successful', and his name a 'household word' in Britain, the United States and Canada, and his work was translated into French, German and Italian.[187] *The Times* described how much Egan Junior, along with J F Smith and G W M Reynolds, could influence the sales of the periodical he wrote for, claiming the regular circulation, in the hundreds of thousands would drop by 40,000 or 50,000 after one of his serials came to an end.[188] His life story contrasts with Jones's in many respects.

Egan came from a fiction-writing family. His father, Pierce Egan Senior, was a sporting journalist who also produced fiction that utilised his knowledge of the sporting world.[189] He was the author of the extremely popular penny serial *Life in London*, believed by some scholars to have influenced Dickens's *Pickwick Papers.*[190] This penny-a-part serialised tale described the adventures of Jerry Hawthorne and his friend Tom as they experienced a sporting life in London, described as 'graphic sketches of metropolitan life.'[191] It was first published in 1823, and introduced what James describes as 'London low-life and its idioms' into British fiction.[192] It was extremely popular; sixty-seven derivative publications have been recorded, and it was 'speedily dramatised'.[193] Eight other popular serials published between 1818 and 1832 were mentioned in Egan Senior's obituary.[194] Despite his popularity and success Egan Senior applied to the RLF for relief in 1830, but was rejected on the grounds

[186] Undated letter from John Lowndes to RLF, MS BL96 RLF 1/984, item 9.
[187] 'Death of Mr Pierce Egan', *The Orchestra*, August 1880, p. 18.
[188] 'Great Expectations', *The Times*, Thursday 17th October 1861, p. 6.
[189] James, *Fiction*, pp. 180-81.
[190] James, *Fiction*, pp. 68-69.
[191] *Obituary Notices*, 'Mr Pierce Egan', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1849, p. 614.
[192] James, *Fiction*, pp. 68-69.
[193] James, *Fiction*, p. 69; *Obituaries*, 'Mr Pierce Egan', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, November 1849, p. 548
[194] *Obituaries*, 'Mr Pierce Egan', (1849), p. 548.

'his writing being deemed of improper tendency.'[195] Egan Senior refuted these accusations strongly, saying:

> I have always avoided anything against propriety; and thoroughly endeavoured to point out the follies and vices of mankind that they might be shunned.[196]

He says how Lord Eldon, a man he described as the 'scrupulous, high-minded, conscientious Chancellor of England' had told him that his name would sell any book, and permitted him to dedicate a volume to him. He continued:

> I will candidly admit that though works of mine were of a peculiar character, and perhaps not suited to the tastes of all readers, but still there was nothing against Religion in them.[197]

Egan Senior was described in his obituary as a 'kind, warm hearted man, and a delightful and entertaining companion.'[198] In a letter to the RLF he showed how he valued humour saying 'a little mirth in this life is a good thing.'[199] He was obviously very proud of his son, writing to the RLF when Egan Junior was only 16:

> I have brought up six daughters and a son, also a student in the Royal Academy, an artist and Author of Celebrity; a credit to themselves and an honour to me.[200]

Little is known about Egan Junior's mother, Mary Sarah Egan, except that she was born in 1773, had married in 1829 and was left destitute by her husband's death. She applied, unsuccessfully, to the RLF for relief from poverty in 1849, saying she had been left 'entirely un-provided for' and was caring for Egan Senior's eldest daughter (from a previous marriage) who was incapable of looking after herself.[201] The available evidence indicates that Egan Junior had a loving upbringing, with a supportive father involved in the literary world, albeit for the lower tier of publishers. He experienced first-hand an author's precarious living and understood the lack of financial stability they had. His father did mix with some distinguished members of society, but he provided reading material for the working class. Egan Junior had also, presumably, enjoyed reading the material his father published, which

[195] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 1.
[196] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 3.
[197] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 3
[198] *Obituary Notices*', Mr Pierce Egan', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1849, p. 614.
[199] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 2.
[200] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 3.
[201] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 4.

his father insisted had a moral message. He had then, grown up with an understanding of the market he went on to serve.

Egan Junior was educated as an artist, studying at the Royal Academy.[202] He illustrated his father's serial *The Pilgrims of the Thames in Search of the National* in 1837, and produced frontispieces for plays.[203] Egan joined the *Illustrated London News* in 1842 as an artist, but obviously preferred writing.[204] During his early writing career he wrote adventure and historical novels (for example *Wat Tyler*, in 3 volumes, 1841; *Robin Hood* in 1842; *Paul Jones, the Privateer*, published in 2 volumes in 1842) but he found his forte was romantic fiction serialised in periodicals. In 1849 he moved to *Home Circle*, where he became editor, and also wrote for *Reynolds's Miscellany*.[205] Egan's most successful involvement with a periodical began when he joined the *LJ* in 1857. Apart from a brief spell when owner George Stiff sold the title, Egan wrote for or edited the *LJ* as one of its most active and prolific participants until 1880, the year he died.[206]

Egan married his wife Charlotte, eleven years his junior, sometime between 1841 and 1851. They had at least three children, Pierce (born 1845), John (born 1846) and Violet (born 1850), who appears to have died between 1851 and 1861. The family became increasingly prosperous, keeping one servant in 1851 and two by 1871. All the others registered as living in Egan's street in the 1871 census had servants, and his neighbours were merchants, manufacturers and bankers. Egan's eldest son trained to be a barrister-at-law. The literary periodical *MacMillan's Magazine* wrote about his success in 1866, saying he lived in luxury and mixed with 'the highest levels of society.'[207] The article described Egan's popularity as an author, calling him a 'mighty potentate' and 'one of the greatest writers of his age.'[208] This article demonstrates how the literary establishment visualised a clear demarcation between literature for the masses and that for 'educated' people, it celebrated Egan's success and influence.

[202] MS BL96 RLF 1/686, item 3; 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), pp. 247-48; 'Death of Mr Pierce Egan', (1880), p. 18.
[203] He registered in the 1841 census as aged 25, living at Grove Street, St Pancras, Islington and his occupation is given as 'Artist', <www.Ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 3rd July 2012].; Pierce Egan, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922), p. 562.
[204] 'Death of Mr Pierce Egan', (1880), p. 18.
[205] His occupation in the 1851 Census is given as 'Author'. He was living at 148 Stamford Brook Cottages, Hammersmith. Ancestry.co.uk [accessed 3rd July 2012].
[206] King, *The London Journal*, p. 149.
[207] 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 104.
[208] 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 96.

The *LJ* had celebrated Egan's popularity as an author in October 1863 in an article entitled 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan as a Novelist', which included the portrait of him in Fig 3.1. The article started by outlining Egan's popularity:

> At the present moment, there cannot, considering the enormity of our circulation, be less than about a million of people in these islands and in the British colonies, and also in America, who are in the habit of reading the romances of Mr Pierce Egan.[209]

Egan was described as having virtues of amiability, frankness, gentleness and sociability.[210] He was a member of the Newsvendors Benevolent and Provident Institution, which aimed to help newsagents who were facing financial difficulty.[211] The article extolled Egan's virtues but the periodical was not impartial; he was the editor at this time, and a regular contributor. The article is, however, useful because it enables us to see why Egan was valued by his contemporaries. It says his success was due to the fact that he is English, and so has feelings and a moral code in accord with the people he is writing for.[212] Fundamental to this was his love of liberty and freedom that, according to this article, was so dear to English hearts of all classes. He had developed a style of his own, one that his readers could recognise, and it was praised highly:

> He can tell a story. He carries you along with him when you begin a book of his. Dulness [sic] and he take up their positions at quite the opposite poles of the nature of things. He is fresh, energetic and picturesque; humorous sometimes, always pleasant, and taking a healthy view of everybody and everything.[213]

The article continued:

> ….All his romances have an air of culture and refinement about them. They are exercises of a fine fancy: graceful and careful in language, with a slightly pensive tone, and all may be read with a quiet pleasure and a harmless conscience.[214]

[209] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 247.
[210] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 247.
[211] 'Dinner held by Newsvendors' Benevolent and Provident Institution', *The Times*, Thursday 6th June 1867, p. 7.
[212] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 247.
[213] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 247.
[214] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 248.

Fig 3.1. Portrait of Pierce Egan

'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan as a Novelist', *The London Journal*, 38: 975, 17th October (1863), pp.247-8 (p.248).

[PIERCE EGAN, ESQ.—*From a Photograph by Mayall.*]

This mention of conscience was telling readers to read his stories without feeling guilty because they were morally acceptable. *MacMillan's Magazine* also praised him for this, saying penny journals have become 'increasingly moral in tone.'[215] He was celebrated for making even the most powerful in society seem human, and responded to passions, desires and emotions, while giving minute descriptions that allowed the reader to see the places he was describing.[216] 'The Flower of the Flock', Egan's romance story serialised in the *LJ* between December 1857 and May 1858, is praised in particular for its realism: 'The characters walk out of the canvas – you recognise individuals who you have seen; many of the incidents come home to you with a startling force, as scenes you have witnessed yourself.'[217] The article went on to link Egan himself, and his personality, to the success of his stories:

> There is a fine and noble heart in action, and a clear and keen enthusiasm at play, and a shrewd and cheerful intellect at work; and with a tolerance of all kinds of characters, he takes you among all sorts of people and to all sorts of places.[218]

Egan was described in the DNB as 'liberal in politics'[219]; The *LJ* article used *Wat Tyler* and *Robin Hood*, Egan's early, popular stories, to explain his political stance: that if groups in society became 'degraded' by their rulers they would become dangerous or mischievous – and that the working-classes must act 'with discretion and coolness' if they were to succeed in gaining control over their lives.[220] Egan continued to include working-class heroes in his stories.[221] He evidently saw the inequalities in Victorian society and used his stories to highlight them, but he did not advocate revolution; he celebrated the work of the lower classes instead, and told them to be content with their lot:

> …he inculcates the doctrine of contentment. Appealing, as he does, to the million, he endeavours to make them contented, nay, happy with their lot, by showing them that there is nothing to be envied in the condition of the rich and great... for that wretchedness and vice are but too frequently the accompaniments of riches and position.[222]

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[215] 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 97.
[216] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), 248; *MacMillans Magazine* also praised 'The Flower of the Flock', saying it was Egan's best work. 'Penny Novels', (1866), p. 103.
[217] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 248.
[218] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 248.
[219] Pierce Egan, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922), p. 564.
[220] James, *Fiction*, p. 86.
[221] James, *Fiction*, p. 87.
[222] 'The Merits of Mr Pierce Egan', (1863), p. 247.

This image, of a kind, moral writer who was sympathetic to the working classes yet promoted and maintained the status quo was echoed in the *MacMillans* article:

> Morality is at last triumphant; the law is fulfilled; the commandments are glorified; the readers of penny journals are pleased with approving consciences; and Mr Pierce Egan, with his thumbs in the arm holes of his waistcoat, walks the earth as a master of spirit, showing kindness to human frailty, while doing obeisance to eternal law.[223]

Egan became the editor of the *LJ* in 1860 after George Stiff bought the title back from Herbert Ingram.[224] This increased his power, and the extract above evokes a picture of a powerful yet benevolent figure. Egan was responsible for developing a format that persisted throughout the 1860s and 1870s, with more 'polished' fiction produced by American female authors and British male ones dominating the content.[225] Louis James thinks Egan's success was due to his ability to change the content of his stories according to popular taste.[226] He certainly enjoyed financial reward for his success. When he died he lived in Burnt Ash Hill, Lee, a leafy suburb of large Victorian villas.

Conclusions

Jones and Egan were both popular authors, the analysis of their work in the following chapters shows them to have equal talent and their stories were published repeatedly and read by large audiences, yet their experiences as authors varied. Jones could not earn enough to support herself and was subordinate in the author/publisher relationship. Egan enjoyed both financial success and a degree of power in his relationship with his publisher. There could be several reasons for this. Firstly it is difficult to know if they were typical. The way Jones was judged by the RLF for her marital status certainly affected her particular case, and this may mean she was exceptional however Cross's evidence indicates women authors routinely needed help from the RLF. Egan was particularly well suited to the *LJ* - I get the impression he had found his niche. His relationship with his publishers could be described as co-dependent. There are other possible reasons for their difference in remuneration. Egan was born into the trade, he had received some formal schooling and Jones had probably not, and this may have given his work a greater perceived value. Prest lacked a formal education and also suffered poverty. Another explanation could be found in

[223] Penny Novels', (1866), p. 105.
[224] King, *The London Journal,* p. 136.
[225] King, *The London Journal*, pp. 144-45 & 149.
[226] James, *Fiction*, p. 113.

the male breadwinner ideology which resulted in the perception that men needed to earn more money than women to support their dependent families. The evidence above demonstrates that women could also have dependents, and needed to earn a family wage, but both Jones and Robinson were unable to earn enough to support their families. Another important point is that Jones wrote earlier in the century when the penny-publishing market was in its infancy and Egan wrote when the industry had established itself and could make greater profits, although Emma Robinson's experience was closer to Jones's and she wrote at the same time as Egan.

Most identifiable authors of penny romantic literature were from middle-class backgrounds and came from families involved in popular literature or the arts. They wrote for the penny press not because they were poor writers, but for other reasons. Egan followed in his father's footsteps, others needed the money and were forced to make deals with the lower tier of publishers. It appears that, certainly in the mid-century, once an author had become involved with the penny press it was very difficult to be published by the publishers of middle-class fiction. These authors lost control of both their work and their reputation. The balance of power lay with the publisher and the literary establishment. Jones was a key example; she wrote popular, high quality novels, but she could not earn a high enough fee to afford to support herself from the proceeds. There are several possible reasons for this. She was writing when the penny press was in its infancy and she was involved with some of the very astute businessmen who populated that sphere (Lloyd for example). She was not able to negotiate with these men – by her own admission she was a quiet and shy woman who lacked experience of the world. She also violated codes of respectable behaviour by living with Lowndes without being married to him and this excluded her from help from the establishment. It is also possible to argue that her gender determined her poor rates of pay.

Some authors felt an obvious shame at being associated with the penny press and so wrote anonymously or using pseudonyms. Their reluctance to admit to being associated with this industry was justified; the literary establishment, represented here by the RLF, judged the writer's morals according to his or her publisher. Egan Senior is a prime example.

Some of these authors wrote at great speed, under pressure to produce the next instalment or novelette. This must have impacted on the quality of their work, as did the poverty and hunger some were suffering while working. Others responded well to the pressure and became famous, successful and earned a comfortable living, but these were probably in the minority. Ultimately they were judged according to the popularity of their latest serial, and their publishers made this judgement.

CHAPTER 4: POPULAR ROMANTIC FICTION 1839-1889: THE FORMULA

> The heroes for the most part are handsome majestic, fashionable young men, much given to the seductive arts of flirtation; the heroines, of angelic beauty, accomplishments, and rare fascination. The rogues and naughty people are seldom too naughty, and things generally come right at last. If there is a good deal of padding and twaddle, the twaddle is at least innocuous.[1]
>
> *The Edinburgh Review*, Jan 1887

By the time the author of this 1887 article described the features of penny fiction as he saw them, a clear formula had developed. In chapter two I argued that romance stories were tailored to meet readers' demands and contained elements of the gothic, silver fork, domestic and sentimental novels, plus features of melodrama. This chapter will examine the formula that developed for romantic fiction, and will discuss the common features and plot lines of these stories.

Style and form: some common characteristics

Most serialised novels contained a very wide cast of characters, and even the authors lost track of them all and their names. An example was the main villain, Lester Esmond, in Pierce Egan's 'The Flower of the Flock' (serialised in the *LJ* 1857-8) who was called Lester Raymond by the end of the chapter six.[2] A servant who appeared early on in *Ela the Outcast* was called Anthony at the start of the story, but Andrew in chapter 27. This can also make them confusing, complicated and difficult to follow. The reader would have to concentrate to gain a *full* understanding of a novel read in parts, but it was possible that readers enjoyed these serials despite this. The reader who picked up an issue at random and read it out of order would not know the overall plot and story, but she would have been able to determine quickly who was a heroine or a hero, a villain or anti-heroine. Some readers who enjoyed the first part of a serial either continued to buy it in parts if they could afford it, or bought the periodical it was published in, until they either grew bored with it or until it finished. However it was established in chapter 1 that some readers borrowed their reading material, or had it handed on to them by friends, and it was possible they read these

[1] 'The Wide-awake Library' (1887), p. 53.
[2] Pierce Egan, 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 5th December 1857- 8th May 1858.

stories out of numerical order. It is hard to imagine that they would have made full sense of every instalment if they read them this way, but this suggests an inherent enjoyment in them independent of the over-arching narrative of the story, perhaps from the language or description, or from the joy of reading as an act in itself. The act of reading them was more important than the resolution of the story.

These serials had predictable endings - as soon as the 'good' characters met they fell in love and it was possible to determine who would marry whom, and guess the outcome. What it was not possible to predict were the details of the difficulties the heroine and hero faced, or how they overcame them. The similarities provided the reader (then and now) with a clear set of messages and a safe sense of predictability, but the variety of characters, storylines and events meant that they could still seem different and provide entertainment.

Many of these serialised stories also contained lots of padding. There is the sense that the author had been asked for a quota of words or lines, especially in the magazines, and he or she used unnecessary repetition or dialogue to fill the space. The unnecessary dialogue means that short sentences filled up lines, allowing the author to start a new line, and filling the space on the page before having to develop new storylines or action. This was evident, for example, in James Malcolm Rymer's *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* where chapters 54 and 55 contained lots of dialogue that repeated the action in the proceeding instalments, and Rymer filled pages with repetitive dialogue. The following exchange was between Phoebe and Giles, who was in love with her but superfluous to the plot:

> "To George?" said Phoebe.
> "Yes, to George Andrews"! Replied
> Giles. "While I live---"
> "Cease, cease Giles. It is of George
> I come to speak to you."
> "Curses!" cried Giles.
> "Curse him not, Giles, oh, curse him
> not."
> "Be it so. It be no use cursing. No,
> no, but the time will come when he – but
> no matter – no matter."[3]

[3] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid (*1842), p. 263.

The text on these pages was arranged in two columns, this conversation continued over both columns on that page and was very similar to earlier conversations they had, and did not advance the storyline at all. The repetition may not have been evident to the readers; they either read them with a week between instalments or read them out of order. And while the unnecessary dialogue may have been frustrating, as it stalled the progress of the story, it may have added to the sense of suspense.

All of the long serials and penny-a-part novels contained improbable co-incidences. In *The Trials of Love* (1848), for example, a lonely unprotected Ada Mortimer met Mary-Ann Emlyn, in a cemetery in Bologne. Mary-Ann's mother was the landlady in the house in London where Ada was born fifteen years before. Despite not seeing her since she was a small baby, Mary-Ann recognised her instantly, and when she returned to England, told Ada's father where she was. On the boat home, a mysterious stranger rescued Ada. He turned out to be Reuben Mortimer, a soon to be very rich relative she did not know she had. The story ended with their marriage.[4]

These improbable coincidences allowed the plots to move on and characters to meet each other, but they also played a reassuring role. The world these characters inhabited became a small one where people that you knew rescued you. There was a comfort in this, and it reflected the disrupted, yet essentially small, worlds that working-class people inhabited in this period. Migration was common, and this disrupted family relationships, but Michael Anderson found in his study of mid-century working-class life that most people moved a short distance only, and kinship relationships were maintained, particularly between mothers and daughters.[5] These stories told readers that the world they inhabited may appear to be large, particularly when they experienced a big city, but they would still encounter kin and friends, who represented safety and security, if they behaved in the way these heroines did.

Some of the stories implied that co-incidences were a result of pious behaviour on the part of the hero and/or heroine and their constant prayer. Boyd Hilton suggested that intellectuals in the early part of the century considered moral trials in the temporal world to be necessary, and that people would be rewarded when they made the correct moral decision, either in this world or in the spiritual world, in heaven after death.[6] In *His Brother's Keeper*, written in 1889, Darrell Hastings took the blame for his brother's fraud to protect him, and was forced

[4] *Trials of Love* (1848).
[5] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1971), pp. 32-34, 43 & 77; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p. 172.
[6] Hilton. *Age of Atonement*, pp. 3-31.

to leave home.[7] He emigrated and became manager of a large ranch in America through hard work and honesty. His brother, Hedley, was forced to emigrate many years later as a result of his further criminal activity, and after he has been shot was taken to the nearest ranch to die. By a very improbable co-incidence it was the ranch Darrell managed and the brothers were reunited. Darrell forgave Hedley, who wrote a confession to clear Darrell's name. Darrell could then return home to his father, be forgiven, and marry his childhood sweetheart, the pious Dolly, who had prayed constantly and patiently waited for him to be returned to her. This (absurd) coincidence enabled the 'good' to be rewarded; it allowed for the happy ending that the deeply religious and honest hero and heroine deserved. Coincidences show that God, luck and good fortune would be on your side if you were a 'good' person and would turn a desperate situation into a better one. These endings promised a divine intervention that would reward those who deserved it, implying that readers who deserved it would also be rewarded.

Common themes and plotlines

French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, discussing myth, concluded that it was possible to determine an underlying set of universal structures or themes. Other scholars have applied this to literature, for example Vladimir Propp reduced folk tales to seven 'spheres of action' in 1928.[8] Analysing a genre of literature to identify the common messages can allow for the identification of a set of possible meanings, which can be extremely useful for the historian using literature as a source.[9] It is, however, important to carry out the analysis in much the same way the ethnographer looks at a culture, reading the material from the viewpoint of the intended reader and endeavouring to see them with as much information about the world in which the reader lived as possible.

Obstacles, trials and the 'dilemma'

> Beneath exciting serials and sentimental stories alike lies the assumption, never questioned, that romantic love is the chief topic of the writer and the most important thing in life. The author's business is to put obstacles in the way of true love, to surround his radiantly beautiful heroine with dangers and difficulties, and not to abandon her until she is safely married or dead.[10]

[7] Sydney Watson, *His Brother's Keeper* (London and Dublin: W B Horner and Sons, c. 1889).
[8] Eagleton, pp. 90-93.
[9] Eagleton, p. 95.
[10] Dalziel, p. 34.

Dalziel examined popular literature published in the 1840s and 1850s and found that fundamental to all the stories she read was the belief that romantic love was the most important thing in life, but before the hero and heroine could come together they faced a series of trials and obstacles that kept them apart.[11] I have found this to be the basic plotline of all serialised romance novels, in penny-a-part form and serialised in periodicals. The way that the key characters dealt with these trials formed the core of the story: the obstacles provided 'the dilemmas,' the moral choices that had to be made. They gave the heroine the opportunity to prove herself capable of making the 'right' choice, in particular to protect her virtue and prove herself a suitable wife for the hero, and the hero was given the opportunity to prove his bravery, steadiness and suitability as a husband.

These trials also distinguished one novel from another. The basic characters, and their characteristics, were very similar, and it was the setting and the trials the couple faced that made one story different from another. The authors needed to be inventive about ways to keep the heroine and hero apart, and set up situations where the characters could make the 'right' decisions to overcome them. The stories also needed to be entertaining to be distinguishable from others. The underlying message is that decisions and choices had to be made when courting, and a heroine is responsible for her own future, so she needed to make the 'right' choices.

Obstacles were most commonly a result of the actions of villains and anti-heroines, to force the heroine to prove her moral fibre. *The Trials of Love* (1848) concerned the trials faced by Amy Mortimer and then her daughter Ada, most of which are caused by the villain, the bigamous Mr Stanley. He seduced Amy, eloped with her and tricked her into marriage. Amy died giving birth to Ada and then Ada struggled with an adopted mother, a cruel head-teacher, and the desperate situations her father put her in, for example he removed her from school and abandoned her in London.[12] This theme continued to be central to serialised novels. In 'A Daughter of Fortune' (*LJ,* 1875) the villain, Aubrey Kesterton, separated the blind heroine, Aimee, from her sister (and protector) Suzanne. He believed he could make money from Aimee's mother and was very attracted to Suzanne. He tricked Suzanne into boarding a different coach, which took her to a house of ill-repute. She made a daring escape when she discovered what kind of household she was in, determined not to spend even a single night there, and she had to overcome a series of obstacles before finding a

[11] Dalziel, p. 33.
[12] *The Trials of Love* (1848).

relative and then searching tirelessly for her sister. They were not re-united until the end of the story.[13]

The obstacles could have a financial aspect, or be the result of a class imbalance. Lotte Clinton, a poor cap-maker, felt she cannot possibly marry Mark Wilton because he was a gentleman and she was so much his social inferior.[14] Sometimes parents or guardians disapproved of the match and prevented the couple coming together, for example in 'Christmas Day in the Country' (*LJ,* 1864) Lucilla Lansdowne was forbidden to marry Captain Hilton, because he was poor.[15] Her aunt wanted her to make a 'better match' and therefore she became the obstacle to their union. Hilton was forced to go off in search of his fortune, but failed to make one. On his way back a year later, to break the news to Lucilla, he discovered by chance he was the heir to a rich and reclusive gentleman and returned just in time to marry her. Lucilla had spent the intervening time thinking about Hilton, avoiding the attentions of other suitors and making an effort not to mislead them into thinking she would marry them. These suitors, along with her aunt, provided the trials she must face, and pass, so that she was available when Hilton returns to marry her, having successfully overcome his obstacle.

'Christmas Day in the Country' (*LJ,* 1864) was a short story, and, like the novelette format, the authors of these were not given the time to set up a variety of complicated obstacles, and so the plots tended to be relatively simple. In 'The Love Letter' (*LJ*, 1855) Lucy and Aunt Lu's obstacle was their grand-father/father, who wished for one of them to remain at home, unmarried, to take care of him.[16] He was eventually persuaded that their love for their respective heroes was genuine and he allowed them to marry. In 'The Trip by Rail; or the Third Class Passenger' (*LJ,* 1864), the middle-class heroine had to endure a train ride home in third class because she had given all her spending money to charity. The train crashed and she was rescued by her hero.[17] These short stories may be less complicated, but it was still possible to reduce them to 'the trial'. These trials often represented a threat to the heroine's virtue, as chapter 5 will explore, and the heroine must pass all the tests set her by protecting her virtue, or she would not gain the ultimate reward: marriage to the hero.

[13] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ,* 24th July 1875, chapter 14.
[14] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ,* 20th March 1858, chapter 34.
[15] 'Christmas Day in the Country', *LJ*, 31st December 1864, pp. 428-29.
[16] 'The Love Letter', *LJ*, 16th June 1855, pp. 245-7.
[17] L.G, 'The Trip By Rail; Or, the Third Class Passenger', *LJ,* 1st October 1864, p. 213.

An exception to these stories was *The Lovers of Gladys Thorne* (1889) because the eponymous heroine set the trial for the hero, her neighbour, Arthur Stanley who declared himself to be in love with her. Gladys thought he:

> ..would make a model husband; but there is nothing heroic about him – nothing to make me look up to him as one stronger and braver than other men, stronger and braver than myself.[18]

She had based this assessment on a test she had set him while skating. She had thrown her glove out of reach on a stretch of ice that was thought to be dangerous and was disappointed in Stanley's decision to retrieve it with a stick. Her father accused her of having a 'romantic nature' that is 'unjust.'[19] Gladys became engaged to the dashing, handsome, but ultimately unsuitable Jack Railton. Later in the story Gladys was placed in real danger (in a fire where her father perished) and Stanley rescued her without hesitation while Railton saved only himself. Gladys realised her mistake and that she was in love with Stanley. This was a later story and the message was more nuanced. It appeared to question the notion that a hero had to be brave, yet ultimately that was what Stanley had to prove himself to be to win the heart of the heroine. The real message was that a hero was only brave when it was truly necessary. Despite the fact that Gladys set Stanley the trial, she was shown to have learnt from her mistake, and she was punished for her foolishness because she suffered the death of her beloved father. She was humbled and made the correct decision in the end, apologising to Stanley, and becoming his wife.

Women need protection

The theme of protection and the 'unprotected' heroine was common to these stories, and a heroine's potential vulnerability is constantly highlighted. 'Unprotected' in the context of these stories meant the heroine was not living with, or under the care of a relative, ideally her father, brother, or 'strong' mother, and so she faced the obstacles and trials alone. 'Unprotected' women were represented as without moral guidance or advice and without a defender to protect them from those with dubious motives or reputations.

Migration for work was one of the few options available to some young, unmarried working class women in the nineteenth century, and there was increasing concern amongst the upper and middle-classes that young people who achieved independence as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation would no longer be under the control of their rural families

[18] 'The Lovers of Gladys Thorne', *LJ: Monthly Supplement,* 127, 1st July 1889, p. 2.
[19] 'The Lovers of Gladys Thorne', (1889), p. 4.

and communities.[20] They were not thought to be able to make appropriate decisions without family guidance, and this would lead to a loss of virtue and therefore illegitimacy, loose habits and even prostitution.[21] Mill girls, because of their contact with men at work and in the street, were thought to be particularly vulnerable.[22] Cities were considered as dangerous spaces for women.[23] J F Smith wrote 'Woman's Love; or Like and Unlike' in 1869 when migration to cities had been common practice for rural girls for half a century.[24] One of the heroines, Eltha Whynne, had decided to run away to London. Harry Hartley said to her:

> London? Without protection or friends? Impossible! You do not know its snares, its trials, its temptations! Vice will assail you in its insidious forms. Its approaches to unguarded innocence are like those of the serpent. It glides instead of startling by the sudden spring.[25]

It is clear that Smith was advising girls that they needed 'protection' if they had to migrate to London. There was no ambiguity about his message. Hannah Maria Jones was a resident of London her entire life, yet she described heroines in the 1840s that were afraid of life in the city. Amy Mortimer, the heroine of *The Trials of Love*, was terrified of London's streets, and her daughter expressed the same fears and concerns. [26]

There is evidence that working-class women did move around cities alone freely and unmolested. Maid-of-all-work Hannah Cullwick described moving happily and freely around the streets of London. She felt most comfortable if she dressed in her work clothes:

> That's the best o' being drest rough, and looking '*nobody*' – you can go anywhere and not be wonder'd at. Besides I have got into the way of *forgetting* like, whether I am drest up as a lady or drest in my apron & cotton frock in the street. It matters not much to me, but I certainly feel more at *ease* in my own dress.[27]

Her lover (she married him secretly later in her life) Arthur Munby described London Bridge as 'more than any place I know here, seems to be the great thoroughfare for young working

[20] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, pp. 1-2 & 34-40.
[21] Gillis, p. 116.
[22] Ittmann, pp. 152-53.
[23] Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon. People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London*. (London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 65-73.
[24] Gillis says that since the 1820s and 1830s daughters of rural families were most likely to migrate to cities for work, often as domestic servants and then to factory towns. Gillis, p. 169.
[25] J F Smith, 'Woman's Love; Or, Like and Unlike', *LJ*, 10th April 1869, p. 228.
[26] *The Trials of Love*, (1848).
[27] *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant*, ed. by Liz Stanley (London: Virago, 1984), p. 274.

women and girls.[28] Henry Mayhew's account of street life in the early to mid-century certainly included many descriptions of women walking unmolested, working as street sellers.[29] At London street-markets on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, he said 'women run about and push their way through the throng, scolding the saunterers, for in half an hour the market will close.[30]

These extracts indicate that the streets of London were places where working-class women could venture alone, indeed they had to, but concerns persisted about the 'unprotected' young woman, especially when she was a rural girl who had moved to the city. One reason for this concern could be connected to the intense debate that raged in the press during the mid-nineteenth-century concerning the risks young, respectable middle-class women faced when walking alone on the streets of London. They were presumed to be open to sexual flirtation. Lynda Nead analysed this debate and found that various correspondents made it clear that women must slip quietly and unobtrusively through the streets, eyes downcast, if they wanted to avoid encounters with unsuitable men.[31] This discourse evoked something Nead called the 'scopic promiscuity' of London's streets, where people looking at each other 'sexualise' the space.[32] This debate made the women themselves, and their behaviour, responsible for any unwanted attention they received. Working-class women were not discussed as part of this debate, except to suggest that prostitutes may be responsible because they encouraged men to approach women walking on their own, and yet it raised concerns about the safety of cities for girls of all classes.[33] This debate concerned the areas of London frequented by the middle- and upper-classes and did not discuss the working-class streets that readers were more likely to have walked, but authors gave their heroines a fear of walking in cities unprotected.

Michael Anderson has discussed how the growing cities were not always as anonymous as they appeared. Parents and other kin still exerted control over physical and moral aspects of

[28] Cited by Barry Reay, *Watching Hannah. Sexuality, Horror and Bodily Deformation in Victorian England* (London: Reakton Books, 2002), p. 16.
[29] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and The London Poor* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2008, first published 1851). For example see the lives of the costerwomen and girls, pp. 56-65 for flower girls, pp. 177-81, Mary, pp. 229-33.
[30] Mayhew, p. 423; Other examples: 'The pavement and the road are crowded with purchasers and street-sellers. The housewife in her thick shawl, with the market basket on her arm, walks slowly on, stopping now to look at the stall of caps, and now to cheapen a bunch of greens', Mayhew, p. 419; 'The road and footpaths are crowded, as on the over-night; the men are standing in groups smoking and talking; whilst the women run to and fro, some with the white round turnips showing out of their filled aprons, others with cabbages under their arms and piece of red meat dangling from their hands', Mayhew, p. 422.
[31] Nead, pp. 65-73.
[32] Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 66.
[33] An article in *The Saturday Review* entitled 'The Rape of The Glances' blamed the problems women encountered on the ubiquitousness of prostitutes on the streets of London. Nead, *Victorian Babylon,* p. 65.

many factory girls' lives by the end of the nineteenth century; indeed there is evidence that obedience towards authority was still inculcated in the family.[34] His research has shown that many young factory workers still lived at or near home, and the majority of workers moving to factory towns tended to live with or near relatives and ex-neighbours, and they had moved only a short distance from their place of birth.[35] This was especially true of unmarried women. Relationships between female members of families remained strong, despite the upheaval and disruptions caused by migration, as kinship cohesion helped solve some of the major problems inherent in these changes. Ittmann described a web of paternalistic institutions that sprang up to protect mill girls in Bradford, like The Bradford Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless Girls.[36] Domestic servants were often under the supervision of their employers, worked long hours and the majority were the only servants and so led isolated lives. The dangers they faced were more likely to be from this isolation than from the streets of London, as will be discussed later in this chapter.[37] Many women had little opportunity to encounter the 'dangers' that middle-class commentators were concerned about.

Young women were migrating to cities to meet the needs created by those who wanted to employ servants, yet these employers were the same groups who expressed concern about the dangers of the city street for young girls. These concerns were at the heart of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), which was founded in 1874 to enable 'respectable' working-class girls, no longer under the protective eye of their families, to associate with each other under the watchful eye of female middle-class volunteers.[38] Membership depended on virginity.[39] Domestic servants, usually girls from rural areas who migrated to the cities to work, made up a substantial proportion of their members, and the organisation 'aimed to inoculate country-girls with religion and other ideas which would protect them against urban dangers.'[40] The GFS used propaganda, in the form of their newsletters and their own cheap fiction, and example-setting to portray women's lives as beset by temptations that needed to be resisted, emphasising the importance of virtue and the need for Bible reading and prayer.[41]

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[34] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, pp. 43-45.
[35] Michael Anderson found only 10% of teenage girls and 25% of girls in their early twenties living in lodgings and not with a family. Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 53.
[36] Ittmann, pp. 149-51.
[37] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 11-14, 44-46, 169, 172 & 176; Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, pp. 1, 42, 44-45, 53, 55-57 & 77; Gillis, pp. 173 & 255; Burnett, *Useful Toil*, pp. 165-72.
[38] Brian Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls' Friendly Society 1874-1920.' *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 107-38 (p. 109 & 113).
[39] Vivienne Richmond, '"It is Not a Society for Human Beings but for Virgins": The Girls' Friendly Society Membership Eligibility Dispute 1875-1936' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 20 (2007), 304-27.
[40] Brian Harrison, pp. 117-18.
[41] Brian Harrison, pp. 118-24.

The social purity movement, an umbrella term that included a host of different parties and pressure groups including the GFS, campaigned from the 1860s to the end of the century against the sexual abuse of women and eliminate or regulate prostitution. The movement challenged the sexual double standard that allowed men's sexual behaviour outside of marriage to be explained as 'natural', yet condemned all women who took part in any such activity. J Ellice Hopkins, an influential figure in the social purity movement from the mid-1870s, aimed to curb male sexual behaviour. She identified men's inability to control their sexual desires as a primary reason for the existence of prostitution, and pointed out that poverty made a woman even more vulnerable to men's advances. She also saw the importance of helping and protecting young girls living in cities.[42]

For some working-class girls living independently *could* mean more risk and an increased vulnerability. Pre-industrialisation women would be 'protected' by family pressure on their partner to marry if they became pregnant outside of marriage, but parents could lose these 'sanctioning powers' in large towns, and there were fears that working-class girls, no longer under the protection of a parent, were more likely to be seduced and then abandoned.[43] These girls could not independently support an illegitimate child.[44] Girls who worked as servants could face the danger of unwanted attention from their employers, for example Lucy Luck, who was born in Hertfordshire 1848, was orphaned at fifteen, which she said was 'just the time when a girl needs her mother's care the most.'[45] She went into service in Kent where her employer, a man:

> … who had a wife and was a father to three little children, did all he could, time after time, to try and ruin me, a poor orphan only fifteen years old. He would boast to me and even tell me the names of other girls he had carried on with. God alone kept me from falling a victim to that wretched man, for I could not have been my own keeper.[46]

Lilian Westall, a house maid in the early twentieth century, also experienced unwanted sexual advances, this time from her employer's nineteen year old son 'who thought me fair

[42] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies. Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1997), pp. 6-26; Lesley Hall, 'Hauling Down the Double Standard: Feminism, Social Purity and Sexual Science in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain' *Gender & History*, 16 (2004), 36-56.
[43] Louise Tilly and Joan Scott. *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1978), pp. 96-97 & 121-22; Gillis, pp. 127-30 & 178; Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 99.
[44] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution. English Women, Sex and Contraception 1800-1975', in *The History of Sexuality in Europe: A Sourcebook and Reader*, ed. by Anna Clark (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 118-29.
[45] Lucy Luck, Burnett, *Useful Toil*, p. 71.
[46] Lucy Luck, Burnett, *Useful Toil*, pp. 71-72.

game and kept trying to corner me in the bedroom.'[47] These examples demonstrate how vulnerable girls in service could be; rather than being under the 'protection' of their employers; they were under attack from those who were supposed to protect them.

The content of penny romance stories was consistent with many of the principles upon which the GFS was founded, yet the GFS actively discouraged the reading of 'light' literature, describing it as 'senseless twaddle.'[48] This is probably due to the reputation the penny bloods had earned. However these publications advertised the disastrous consequences of an unprotected heroine. Middle- and upper-class commentators were transposing their fears of the street onto working-class women, and one way that this was done was through the penny romances' responses to the unprotected heroine in the city. The stories usually started with her protector still present, then he or she died, or had to go abroad or leave the heroine for a while, usually for an 'honourable' reason. Cities, London in particular, were represented as places where young, unaccompanied women were in danger.

These popular romance stories promoted a rural idyll; they painted a picture of family harmony and security in the countryside. They represent the city as a place where girls could easily be tempted into vice. In Hannah Maria Jones's *The Curate's Daughters. Or the Twin Roses of Arundel* (1853) Bell and Bess Leslie were brought up in 'the peaceful vale of Arundel' with their curate father and their weak mother.[49] Bell had a tendency to be vain and selfish; Bess was shy, family orientated and selfless. They were invited to London to stay with Mrs Leslie's brother but Mr Leslie was reluctant to allow them to go, concerned that the girls' minds would be 'perverted by the frivolities of London manners and fashions.'[50] He felt that the relatives they were staying with could not offer suitable moral protection because their aunt was extravagant, enjoying a busy London social life, while their uncle was weak and not in control of his household. London was represented as a setting where temptation was rife. Bell Leslie could not resist temptation; her already frivolous nature led her to value clothes and parties above all else, and after her father died she eloped with the Marquis of Ledbury, a well-known womaniser and gambler. This led to her downfall and she died in poverty.[51]

[47] Lilian Westall, Burnett, *Useful Toil,* p. 217.
[48] Brian Harrison, pp. 118 & 123.
[49] Hannah Maria Jones, *The Curate's Daughters, or the Twin Roses of Arundale*, (London: E Lloyd, 1853), p. 38.
[50] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), p. 37.
[51] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapters 14 and 27.

Heroines needed to choose to be protected, if possible. Two ruffians forcibly removed Ela, the heroine of *Ela the Outcast* from her father's protection.[52] She then found herself in London, where Edward Wallingford confessed to organising her abduction because he could not bear her to marry the man her father had arranged for her to marry. Ela allowed herself to be persuaded by Wallingford to stay with him, even though the author made it clear to the reader that Ela should return to her father and that to remain in London would be disastrous for her. Wallingford promised to organise their marriage and then seduced her: 'That fateful night saw her ruined, degraded and hateful to herself.'[53] She could not now return to her parents' house, and married Wallingford in a mock ceremony he set up. These choices caused her downfall: she became pregnant and Wallingford deserted her. She paid for her decision to give herself to him and not marry the local farmer's son that her father had chosen for her; she ended up homeless, destitute and an unmarried mother. The clear message was that she should have returned immediately to the protection of her father. She should also have listened to his advice before getting involved with Wallingford – he wanted her to marry a local man who was suitable and reliable. She had no choice but to join the gypsy community, one considered marginal and immoral, as the 'Outcast' of the title.

There were several kinds of legitimate protectors in these stories; they could be a younger or older male blood relative, someone unrelated who is older and considered to be a gentleman, or a strong mother figure. For example Ada Mortimer (*Trials of Love*, 1848) was protected by an unrelated gentlemen when she was a child (Mr DeLisle) then by her cousin (Reuben Mortimer), and at one point by the doctor who took care of her mother.[54] The heroine of *Phoebe the Miller's Maid. A Romance of Deep Interest* (1842) was believed by all to be the miller's daughter, but in fact he had taken her in as a child when he found her during a storm. When it was discovered by the villain that she was not the miller's blood relative, the miller was deeply concerned that this made Phoebe vulnerable, probably because he was not a gentleman, and he hurried to make arrangements for her marriage because he worried she was now without legal protection.[55] Harry Hartley was a gentleman but he did not consider himself a legitimate protector for Eltha in 'Woman's Love' (*LJ*, 1869). He was not a relative, and so his age (he was the same age as her) and the fact that he was engaged to another woman were relevant factors when he made it clear to her that he was not suitable to act as her protector. If Harry were her brother, his age and marital status would have been irrelevant.[56]

[52] *Ela the Outcast* (1841), chapter 6.
[53] *Ela the Outcast* (1841), p. 37.
[54] *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[55] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapter 33.
[56] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 17th April 1869.

Authors used a variety of storylines that resulted in their heroines becoming 'unprotected.' Evelina Marsden was the motherless heroine of *Evelina the Pauper's Child* (1851) whose father was transported for a crime he did not commit. She spent most of her childhood in a workhouse, but escaped and was found in the snow by Paul Langston. He offered her protection, but throughout the novel his stepson, Stephen Blackthorne, and the 'libertine' villain Lord Vernon Sidley, threatened this safety. Evelina was aware of her lack of protection when she was abducted by one of Sidley's henchmen and articulated this fear to her rescuer, Lord Sidley's son, Westbourne.[57] Paul Langston turned out, by an absurd co-incidence to be her mother's uncle, and he was able then to protect her fully. These stories made it clear that the notion of legitimate protection from a man involved a complex set of conditions, and these stories told working-class girls that they should only entrust their care to their mother or father or an older relative.

The importance of a strong mother figure was another key message in these stories. Motherhood is both biological and cultural, and in nineteenth-century England, working-class homes were matrifocal. Working-class mothers were responsible for their children's education, discipline, health and sense of morality. One of the most important roles of a mother was the protection of her children; this was her main charge.[58] For example the behaviour that leads Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) to become a 'fallen woman' is explained and excused in part by Gaskells' sympathy for her motherless state as a young woman.[59] Most of the heroines in these stories lost their mothers through death, although there were other reasons. All of the action of *During the Honeymoon* (1880) took place after Freda Lemington's mother re-married and went away on honeymoon.[60] Freda was persuaded, against her better judgement to elope with her tutor. The lack of a mother figure, and the problems heroines therefore faced making their moral decisions, was common in both popular and quality literature during the same period.

Some heroines had a present, but weak, mother. In 'The Flower of the Flock' the mother of the unmarried Lady Helen Grahame was depicted as foolish, obsessed with her ancestry and determined for Helen to marry an aristocrat. Her father neglected his family to attend to his failing business, and when Helen was discovered to be pregnant, her nurse, Mrs Truebody, blamed Helen's mother because she had not given the girl enough attention:

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[57] *Evelina* (1851), chapter 19.
[58] Ross, *Love and Toil*, pp. 4, 8, 9, 23, 25,& 57; Gillis, pp. 254 & 256; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 110.
[59] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, first published 1853).
[60] *During the Honeymoon* (1880).

> If the haughty mother of this frail, sinful girl had been but as proud of being a good watchful, loving parent as she has been of her long line of ancestry, this dreadful thing surely had not happened.[61]

There was an interesting contrast in this story between the upper-class Helen Grahame and Lotte Clinton, a working girl who supported Helen when her pregnancy forced her to leave home. Lotte was a servant-turned-cap-maker who had experienced poverty and hardship when she lost all her materials in a fire. She was helped by Flora Wilton, a wealthy young lady, but it was made clear that her own labour as a needle-woman provided her with a home, furniture and the means to support herself. Lotte's brother had gone to America, and the author, Pierce Egan, celebrated how Lotte, through hard work, diligence and thrift was able to support herself and Helen Grahame, despite her lack of a protector.

Lotte was one of the few working-class heroines in these stories. She was a friend of Flora Wilton's, but Flora did not play a 'protector' role; Lotte protected herself. Egan was recommending that working-class girls who lived in cities without a male relative settle to hard work as a way to keep safe.[62] Lotte selflessly helped Helen Grahame despite her own lack of resources. Helen was surprised and humbled and thought to herself 'If this it is to be humble, how large the price paid by rank to become ignorant of human worth!'[63] Egan was making a comment about class as well as gender here, evoking the notion of the noble poor. The key message was that Lotte earned her status as 'the Flower of the Flock' by her hard work and thrift, and by living quietly and sensibly. Lotte did a feminine job in a domestic setting, and stayed away from men. When she was 'accosted' (followed) in the street by three men she screamed and got away as soon as possible.[64] She was the model for working-class girls who lived alone in cities without a protector.

The unprotected heroine arguably acted as a signifier to mid-nineteenth-century readers. Repetitive reading of these stories may have helped the reader recognise the predictable circumstance of becoming unprotected and the protagonist as being 'in danger' in a way that a modern reader may not. Middle-class life in the mid-nineteenth century could be very eventful, as fortunes could be won and lost 'with a speed and frequency we can hardly

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[61] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ*, 30th January 1858, p. 340; The twins Bell and Bess Leslie lose their wise and protective father when they are about sixteen. Their mother is weak, often ill and indecisive. She can offer them no protection. *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[62] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ*, 23rd January 1858, chapter 16 & 6th May 1858, chapter 45.
[63] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ*, 6th February 1858, p. 355.
[64] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ*, 6th February 1858, chapter 20, p. 355.

recognise.'[65] Instability, and the possibility of a sudden change in fortunes, was not unfamiliar to working-class families either. Eric Hobsbawm described how easily working-class populations could descend into poverty and misfortune in the first half of the century. He says this could happen as a result of economic changes in industrialised areas, for example the slump in the cotton trade in 1842 which left two-thirds of Bolton's textile workers unemployed, or as a result of farming misfortune, such as the bad harvests in 1832 and 1847.[66]

These romance stories reflected a concern over the family's potential loss of control, and a *stabilising message* can be found in them. The message that the world was a dangerous place for a girl alone could undermine both the girls' confidence in themselves and their abilities to deal with life away from home without a protector, and undermine the confidence their families had in them to do so. Girls who stayed at home, under the guidance of their parents, did not run the same risks as girls who tried to live without this guidance. This message reinforced the need for a husband, parent, older relative, or caring employer (in the case of domestic servants) to oversee the movements and decisions made by women old enough to earn a living. The message in the stories was, as Elizabeth Roberts argues, that young women remained morally dependent, even where industrialisation gave some of them financial independence.[67]

This period was characterised by flux, change and uncertainty, and the character of this literature reflected concerns about the loss of inherited value structures, and the need to work out the new moral dilemmas people faced.[68] There was a strong message that reinforced the respect that young women should show their parents and older relatives, particularly concerning matters relating to courtship and marriage and this helped maintain existing idealised value structures. The women in these stories who did not follow the advice of their parents or guardians were exploited by the 'wrong' sort of men, and ended up abandoned and unhappy, and often die early (Amy Mortimer, Ela, Bell Leslie). Those who followed their parents' advice ended up with the 'right' sort of man, one who was honest, hard-working, and respectful. Elizabeth Roberts found that late nineteenth-century children appeared to have followed the implicit and explicit moral and social guidance they had received from their parents, yet these stories suggest to me that there was a perceived need to continually warn girls what would happen if they did not.[69] The message in these stories

[65] Dalziel, p. 32.
[66] Hobsbawm, pp. 250-54.
[67] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 43-44.
[68] Vincent, pp. 205-07.
[69] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 11.

was that young women should follow the advice of their elders, and this played a role in maintaining existing patriarchal structures that placed women in the domestic setting and kept them dependent on others.

Women need to be rescued by men

A common theme related to the notion of protection was the idea that women could find themselves in a situation where they needed to be rescued by a man. There was usually an element of physical bravery required from the hero. Ada Mortimer, on a boat crossing from France, was rescued, from a man who was trying to get her to join in with some drunken singing, by a mysterious stranger who said '"Release the young lady instantly, rascal!"' He then revealed that he had been watching them, and proved that these men had been stealing from Ada's father.[70] The most dramatic rescue I came across was carried out by Captain Ashurst in *Tangled Lives or the Secret of Deep Tarn* (1879). He was determined to find Grace Alhoun, his fiancée, who was lost in the snow in the Highlands of Scotland and refused to be told by his guide that the blizzard was too bad for a rescue party to continue. He strode in front of the guide until he spotted Grace's hand showing up through the snow. These heroes always proceeded with confidence towards the danger, and dealt with the situation without considering their own safety.[71]

A heroine could be strong morally and physically in certain circumstances, for example Ada Mortimer had rescued her friend and her headmistress from a fire at her school in France, yet could not cope with the drunken revellers.[72] Eltha, heroine of 'Women's Love' (1869) needed rescuing from a sailor trying to kiss her, but later dressed as a man, mounted a horse and helped Harry Hartley escape smugglers.[73] Grace Alhoun met with her blackmailing ex-husband at midnight at the Deep Tarn, they struggled, and a gun he was holding shot him dead.[74] There appears to be a contradiction here, as some of these women have faced greater challenges than the ones where they required rescue. I think the occasions where women show bravery serve to highlight her goodness and selflessness.

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[70] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 426.
[71] There are many other examples: Bess Leslie is saved from drowning by Mr Hastings, *The Curate's Daughters* (1853); Phoebe is rescued from her abductors three times by George, *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842); Eric Drummond runs to grab the bridle of more runaway horses and he falls in love with one of the passengers of the chaise he manages to bring to a halt, Fannie Eden, *The Winning of Beaulah* (London: W B Horner, c.1889); Captain Ponsonby rescues his heroine when her clothes get caught under the wheels of a train, 'The Trip By Rail', *LJ,* 1st October 1864, p. 213; The Marquis of Tremaine (in disguise as a servant) puts out Cecelia Creswyke's burning dress at a ball when everyone else runs away. He then saves her when her horse bolts, *In Spite of Herself*, Bow Bells Novelettes, Vol.2 No. 26 (London: John Dicks, 1879).
[72] *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[73] 'Woman's Love', *LJ,* 3rd April 1869, p. 211-12.
[74] *Tangled Lives or the Secret of Deep Tarn*, (1879).

The 'rescue by a hero' trope is necessary to build the strength of masculinity and contrast it with the weakness of femininity. Where a hero was present, the heroine was weak and submissive and allowed herself to be 'saved'.

The language these men used was indicative of their strength, and the weakness of the women they saved. An example was when Westbourne Sidley rescued Evelina from one of many kidnap attempts. He said:

> Stand back scoundrels! What villanous [sic] outrage have you been guilty of? This helpless and insensible maiden claims my protection, and she shall have it, at the hazard of my life! [75]

The use of terms like 'scoundrel' and 'villain' clearly identified his opponents as his opposites, as anti-heroes, and himself in the role as 'protector'. The rescue often legitimised him as a suitable husband, for example in 'Nothing Venture, Nothing Win' (*LJ*, 1876) Mabel Martin's father refused to allow her to marry him, but after he rescued them both from a fire he gave his blessing.[76] The heroine of 'A Swim for a Wife', a later short story in the *LJ* by the same author, is persuaded of a clergyman's suitability as a husband (he had previously been considered too bookish) when he rescued her from drowning.[77] This theme continued, seen again in the 1886 short story, 'Only a Wish-bone', where the 'right' suitor, the hero and eventual husband, rescued the heroine.[78]

The heroine in these situations was identified as someone who cannot look after herself. The melodramatic phrasing drew the reader an imaginary picture: he or she can see the hero as young, strong and determined. The obvious roles the heroine and hero played invited the reader to identify with the stereotypical characters in the story, and to imagine themselves in the hero/heroine roles. In *During the Honeymoon* (1880) Mr Ennismore had already rescued Freda from a physical danger, being lost in a forest at night. He later confronted and physically overwhelmed Freda's ex-tutor to retrieve her love letters, which had been used to blackmail her.[79] This rescue represented a *moral* rescue as much as a physical one, saving her from disgrace, and was related to how unprotected women could fall prey to unscrupulous men and could not resolve the situation themselves.

This rescue motif provided a fantasy, a daydream for the reader that could be seen as an escape from the drudgery and dullness of their physical lives, but repeated exposure to this

[75] *Evelina* (1851), p. 96.
[76] A.H.B, 'Nothing Venture, Nothing Win, *LJ*, 3rd June 1876, pp. 356-57.
[77] A.H.B, 'A Swim for a Wife', *LJ*, 4th June 1870, pp. 363-64.
[78] 'Only A Wish-bone', *LJ*, 7th July 1886, pp. 45-46.
[79] *During the Honey moon* (1880).

message might have undermined a young woman's confidence in her ability to deal with an emergency situation on her own, or the sense that she had the right to do this. It encouraged her to defer to a man, to allow him to make decisions about the direction her life will take. These stories served to draw a picture of heroines as *women in need of saving*. I argue that it reinforced the idea of male hegemony and female dependency. In my view, the fact that these messages operated in the female imagination gives them added power and agency.

The anti-heroine

There was often a character who acted as the 'anti-heroine,' who did not make the right decisions when faced with these trials, and these characters were usually punished, by poverty or early death. This was a vitally important theme, or device, to make desirable behaviour and characteristics completely clear. Anti-heroines were used to contrast the 'goodness' of the heroine, and to show how she was rewarded for always making the right moral decisions. Mairaid Owen discussed women's reading of popular fiction, and said that polarities and binary oppositions underlie all myths. As the heroine made her choices, the polarities of the characters 'illustrated' the journey through her consciousness; the heroine made a decision to reject what the villain stood for and selected the drastically different hero.[80]

This heroine/anti-heroine plot-device was central to Hannah Maria Jones' *The Curate's Daughters* to show what qualities a heroine should have had, and what could befall her if she did not have these.[81] Twin sisters, Bell and Bess Leslie were portrayed as extreme opposites. The twins behaved completely differently when their father died. Bess had nursed him tirelessly, and then went into deep mourning, and comforted her mother as much as she can. Bell stayed away and enjoyed the social life their aunt, Lady Jane, had organised for her, and then complained that mourning clothes did not suit her. In the penny novelettes these contrasting characters were even more crudely drawn as there is less time for them develop. In *His Brother's Keeper,* Darrell Hastings was hardworking, industrious and deeply religious. His brother, Hedley, gambled, consorted with moneylenders, and tried to gain money fraudulently from his father's account, all within the first page of the story![82] It was obvious to the reader very quickly who was a heroine/hero and who was an anti-heroine/villain.

[80] Mairaid Owen, *Women's Reading of Popular Fiction*, unpublished Phd Thesis, Liverpool University, (1990), pp. 122-23.
[81] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[82] *His Brother's Keeper* (c.1889).

The formulaic nature of these stories meant that the regular reader could arguably begin to predict the outcomes for the different characters after reading only a few novels, and the messages in these stories, in my opinion, were made all the more powerful by the repetition of the predictable outcomes. The readers were playing a role in this process by bringing their own culturally specific set of morals and value judgements to their reading, and they expected the outcome that they inevitably got. These stories were therefore clearly didactic: they taught their readers that if they behaved in the same way as their heroines they would be rewarded. I have not read any stories where this was not the case. Readers had learnt from previous experience that good things happened to people who were 'good', and bad things happened to people who did 'bad' things.

Joining the aristocracy

These plotlines highlight the complex interaction between issues of class and gender. Heroines and heroes invariably ended up with wealth and title, sometimes inheriting them without being aware of his or her familial relationships to members of the aristocracy, for example the man Bess Leslie had loved for years came back from Canada and discovered that, due to his cousin's death, he had inherited his aunt's vast wealth and his uncle's title.[83] Many heroes and heroines were gentlemen or the daughters of gentlemen who have fallen on hard times. Flora Wilton's father in 'The Flower of the Flock' was working for a goldsmith while he tried to resolve a conflict over his claim to title and wealth.[84] Another common theme was the lower-class girl being pursued by an aristocrat, sometimes in disguise.[85] These storylines demonstrated a clear aspiration for their heroes and heroines: independent wealth and social status.

Peter Brooks discussed how melodrama helped make sense of the world for those who experienced it, discussing its important role in an increasingly secularised society. He considered melodrama in post-revolution France, but his theory that the moral absolutes of this form were essentially democratising, and provided a way of understanding the complex

[83] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853); Other examples are: Reuben Mortimer inherits money from his uncle in America, *The Trials of Love* (1848); Gerald Ennismore's uncle, Lord Ennismore, dies leaving Gerald both rich and titled, *During the Honeymoon* (1880). Both of these men were penniless when they met their heroines, and so there can be no suspicion that these women were attracted to their wealth.

[84] This situation enables Flora to meet her hero, Hal Vivian, and Lotte Clinton, the cap-maker, to meet Mark Wilton',The Flower of the Flock' *LJ,* 1857-8; Ela's father turns out to be an Italian nobleman down on his luck. She gets a surprise inheritance, *Ela the Outcast* (1841). Aimee Rouget is brought up by circus performers, but is really the daughter of the Marquis D'Angelier,who abandoned her mother when she was pregnant. She eventually inherits his family fortune, 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ,* 1875.

[85] Cecelia Creswycke is pursued by an aristocrat in disguise, *In Spite of Herself* (1879).

relationships of a changing world, can equally be applied to popular penny fiction in industrialising and industrialised Britain.[86] Within this is the understanding of social status and class. Patrick Joyce drew on Brooks's analysis and argued that the melodrama in fiction was democratic, and offered a world divided by rich and poor, yet a utopian aesthetic that goodness and justice were still valued. He discussed the work of J. F. Smith, author and editor of the *LJ*.[87]

The aristocracy was generally portrayed in a negative way in the fiction I have examined. In Hannah Jones's *The Curate's Daughters* (1853) a story is told of Lady Springtown's cruelty to her governess, and when Bell Leslie said surely not all gentry are so cruel, the author said 'Alas, Bess Leslie knew little of the world!'[88] Sir Herbert Foster, described as a 'libertine,' was very much the villain of *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842) as he was driven by an uncontrollable lust for Phoebe, commanding his subordinates to get possession of her at all costs.[89] He was described as greedy, lazy and physically deteriorating because of his lifestyle, yet because of his wealth and position the men around him pretended to admire him, they deferred to him and catered for his every whim or desire.[90] The Duke of Castle-Rose was comedy character in 'The Flower of the Flock', described as tall, stout and knock-kneed with no whiskers or hair on his face. He also had a speech impediment that made him appear ridiculous:

> Weally, Miss Gwahame, I gwow evwy day moah convinced that the wegulation which dwives the ladies fwom our society, though only faw a time, is absolutely bawbawous; and the fashion which pwescwibes a limit to the sepawation, an intwoduction of the most admirwable kind.[91]

How did these two attitudes to the aristocracy exist side-by-side, the view that they were cruel, lazy, exploitative, immoral and ridiculous and yet to be a member of this class remained the ultimate aspiration?

According to Jose Harris the reality of nineteenth-century England was a society 'ridden to its deepest roots by both objective and subjective indices of social class.'[92] All experiences,

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[86] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. xiii & 201.
[87] McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 69-70.
[88] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 148.
[89] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapter 25.
[90] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid*, (1842), chapter 30.
[91] 'The Flower of the Flock' *LJ*, 19th December 1857, p. 244.
[92] Jose Harris, p. 7.

conventions and habits depended on social class.[93] The social hierarchy 'flourished and flowered' through the nineteenth century, it was not destroyed by the industrial revolution, instead new hierarchies formed to reinforce those of the past centuries.[94] The view that society consisted of 'them' and 'us' was, and is, according to the historian David Cannadine, a 'stark over-reaction of febrile imaginations,' and the view that an increase in middle-class membership (and power) in the nineteenth century formed a tripartite system, was over-simplified, it ignored the groups within social groups. Cannadine saw the class structure as a nuanced system of social graduations, forming a chain of relationships, rather than a set of two or three distinct and separate groups.[95] There were also many 'vertical' divisions within society, for example religion, regional identity, political affiliations.[96] Engineer Thomas Wright and social worker Helen Bosanquet both commented on these groupings within the working class, Wright in 1867 and Bosanquet at the end of the century.[97]

The view that there were multiple gradations of social class was reflected in these romantic stories. Most of the heroines who married 'well' in these romances did not make vast leaps up the social scale; they moved up a rung of the social ladder. They tended to be middle-class or upper-class girls already who were, for some reason, down on their luck and had been forced to live with the lower orders. They married up one level in the social hierarchy. The eponymous heroine of *Evelina the Pauper's Child* (1851) was a typical example. She was the daughter of Mr Marsden, a man of rank (but no title) from a wealthy family who had been disinherited for marrying a woman of humble birth. He was wrongly accused of murder and had to leave the country. Evelina grew up in the workhouse, went into service, was cruelly treated and ran away aged 16. Eventually, after overcoming many trials, her father's innocence was proven and he was 'restored to the property of his ancestors', and she married the hero of the story, Lord Westbourne Sidley and became Countess Sidley. Her faithful friend Helen, a farmer's daughter, also stepped up one rung of the ladder by marrying an officer of the army.[98]

Some stories deliberately articulated that people should *not* marry those from a lower social group than their own. Darcy Gower, the gentleman hero of Clement Montague's 'A Daughter

[93] McKibbin, p. 171.
[94] Cannadine, p. 107.
[95] Cannadine, pp. 56 & 59-109.
[96] Alistair J. Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relationships in Britain 1850-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 54.
[97] Thomas Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes*, (1867), <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/habits-1.htm>[accessed 11th November 2011]; McKibbin, p. 178.
[98] *Evelina* (1851).

of Fortune' (*LJ,* 1875), was advised not to fall in love with Suzanne Rouget, a French showman's daughter. A nun, who was caring for Suzanne, warned him:

> For the sake of your pure blood and unstained name … have you not showed me the pedigree of the Gowers? How all the men are *sans peur et sans reproche* and all the women of noble birth and stainless honour? Don't belie your bringing up, my son, for the sake of fancy.[99]

Gower had fallen in love with Suzanne the minute he saw her, but had doubts about getting involved with her because:

> [T]he inexorable law of caste forbade that a gentleman should mate with a showman's daughter.[100]

Later he discussed his feeing with Lady Lennox, a family friend. She tried to convince him to marry someone from his own rank, and when he said he could not forget Suzanne, Lady Lennox offered to meet her and find out if she is the right 'sort' to be the mistress of Gower Magna. She said:

> I only want to find out if her mind is pure – her ideas free from stain. Think what her antecedents have been Darcy – a showman's booth and a fencing school! Let me prove that she is worthy of you before you take her to the altar and put her in your mother's place.[101]

Suzanne became a regular visitor to Lady Lennox's home and she:

> …was fain to confess presently, though she did it with reluctance, that there was nothing in the young girl herself to make the marriage undesirable. That she was a showman's daughter was her misfortune, not her fault – she was pure-minded, sensible and affectionate, and quite refined enough to mix with any society.[102]

Lady Lennox told Darcy he may propose to Suzanne, but suggested that they deny her origins in society. She grew up in France and they decided this made it possible to be vague about her family and connections. Darcy was grateful to Lady Lennox for offering to hide Suzanne's background and introduce her into society. The important point here was that Suzanne had all the characteristics of a lady. Her behaviour, in particular her pureness,

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[99] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ*, 21st August 1875, p. 121.
[100] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ* , 21st August 1875, p. 121.
[101] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ* , 11th September 1875, p. 166.
[102] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ*, 11th September 1875, p. 166.

made her a suitable partner for a man who belonged to a much higher social group. Her French up-bringing, her parent's insistence on education and the fact that it transpired that her parents also brought up Lady Lennox's own long-lost daughter, made Suzanne acceptable. What was made clear was this was not the desirable match for him, but Lady Lennox was being 'kind' enough in this situation to deny Suzanne's roots to help her fit into the upper-class.

Lotte Clinton, the eponymous 'Flower of the Flock' (serialised 1857-1858) was another interesting example of a working-class girl who married above her station. She was a humble cap maker and seamstress who ended up married to Mark Wilton, heir to a large estate and a fortune. She moved several rungs up the social ladder. It was not as dramatic as it seemed though. At the start of the story Lotte was neighbour, friend and social equal to the Wiltons. Mark's father had been cheated out of his inheritance and so lived in a poor area, however he regained it and moved away from Lotte's neighbourhood. Lotte was reluctant to agree to marry Mark because of her social inferiority, and Mark's father would not give his permission at first because 'she was not of this station, or by birth fitted to be the wife of his son.'[103] In the final instalment of the 'The Flower of the Flock' Mr Nathan Gomer persuaded Mr Wilton to allow the marriage. He made a long speech, and through this Egan made several, almost political points. He mentioned social mobility, pointing out that even wealthy gentlemen may have poor ancestors, saying:

> "Honour and shame from no condition rise," he exclaimed. "So says the poet; surely no man better than you should know it, Wilton; and, by the by, if you and I were to trace our ancestors back, we should no doubt find one a cattle stealer, and the other a delver of potatoes."

And he then described Lotte's good points and her suitability as a wife for Mark:

> Come Wilton, supposing her origin, - which I assume you are in no position to prove – is what you assert it to be, mean and low. What have you to assert further against her. She is pretty, amiable, self-reliant, proud-spirited, generous, and sympathetic to a fault; she is pure in mind, in soul and act; she has struggled through the stern meshes of adversity with a brave heart; she has never sacrificed her sense of self-respect under the most seductive temptation and she never drew back from an additional burden to her daily trials if she could in so doing rescue from misery a fellow being.

[103] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 8th May, 1858, p. 148.

He reminded Wilton that when he was separated from his fortune for a temporary period he had to work as a gold burnisher. His final exhortation to Wilton (and the reader) was to forget pride, because Lotte would make Mark happy:

> What, Wilton, though she has toiled- and nobly toiled with her needle – have you not slaved with your burnisher. Come Wilton! Pride is but a hollow phantom, a bad companion and a worse friend – it never purchased human happiness yet. Human worth is far more valuable than all the wealth of the Indies amassed in one heap. This girl has a large share of that worth, and would make your son a happy man, if not a rich one.[104]

There are several issues here. Egan admired hard work, and people prepared to undertake it when necessary. The evangelical movement also saw hard work as a passport to advancement.[105] Lotte worked hard throughout, she supported herself and the 'fallen' Lady Helen Grahame. She worked at home, avoiding any compromising situations with men. Egan spelt out his views regarding those born to wealth and those who are not at the end of the story:

> What is she among her human sisters, who, endowed alone with that fatal gift to the poor girl – fair looks, struggles with penury and starvation, toils from dawn far, far into the long night, with dim and weary eyelids, and aching fingers, endures the severest straits of destitution, and most scantily remunerated labour, yet faces her danger nobly – resists those fascinating temptations which are so terrible in their power to the penniless of her sex – wrestles bravely with her narrowed means, and rising superior to all those allurements, which are aided by the urgings of grim want, preserves her honour uncontaminated, her purity and her self-respect unsullied, and her independence unabased?
>
> Is she not a FLOWER OF THE FLOCK?[106]

The heroine's good qualities were able to overcome her lowly station in life. Egan was warning Wilton not to worry about what other people think when he said 'pride is but a hollow phantom' and to consider all Lotte's good points; her characteristics as a 'good' wife were very conventional.

Lotte's proposal from a man who was far superior to her in terms of wealth and social class may have been unusual, but she was also an unusual heroine. She spoke like a lady, for

[104] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 8th May 1858, p. 148.
[105] Bebbington, p. 127.
[106] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 8th May 1858, p. 149.

example: “Let us see Mr Vivian what tomorrow will bring forth. At present everything is in confusion; by tomorrow we shall know the worst; what can be done and then what will remain to do.”[107] This was similar to Evelina’s mother, described as being of humble birth, who spoke like this: “For the love of heaven, do not talk thus Richard! It shocks my ears and fills my bosom with the most unconquerable dread to hear you do so!”[108] Judgements were made in the nineteenth century about a person’s class from the speech he or she used; David Cannadine said manuals and handbooks to improve one’s speech proliferated in the period.[109] Ada Mortimer’s mother died in childbirth, and Ada was taken away to live in the country by a servant, Rachel. Rachel’s speech was portrayed as lower-class; Ada’s as upper-class. It appears that just being of noble birth enabled Ada to speak in this way, as if this runs in her blood.

Lotte was also aware of the difference in status between Wilton and herself, was reluctant to agree to his proposal at first, and had to be convinced by Mr Wilton in a long speech that repeated her qualities. Nathan Gomer also conferred on Lotte ‘a dower’ after her engagement. He gave her Harleydale Hall and Manor so that she ‘might still preserve her noble spirit unchanged, for she would not come to her husband empty handed.’[110] This example can be interpreted as providing a ‘check’ on working-class women’s ambitions, however. It could be telling them that they would need a wealthy benefactor to provide them with a dower before they could enter into such a marriage, and for most working-class women this was an unlikely event. However Rohan McWilliam proposed that daydreams of sudden wealth in Victorian melodramas:

> …may have been a constituent part of Victorian radicalism. They provided a context for understanding the structure of power and enriching the political imaginary.[111]

This is a plausible explanation for the persistence of these storylines – what Brooks called a ‘certain fictional system for making sense of experience.’[112] Interestingly the anti-heroine Margaret Grahame acted in the opposite way when she met a Duke. She was the spoilt daughter of an apparently rich, but actually bankrupt, merchant in ‘The Flower of the Flock’. She considered herself to be the Duke’s social equal, and a suitable match for him. She sat next to him at dinner:

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[107] ‘The Flower of the Flock’, *LJ*, 12th December 1857, p. 226.
[108] *Evelina* (1851), p. 6.
[109] Cannadine, p. 96.
[110] ‘The Flower of the Flock’, *LJ*, 8th May 1858, p. 149.
[111] Rohan McWilliam, ‘The Melodramatic Seamstress’, p. 112.
[112] Brooks, p. xiii.

> "He must be mine. He is fat and awkward," she thought, "but he is a Duke, and I am born to bear the rank of a duchess."[113]

The Duke had tried to attract her older sister Helen, who did not care for wealth or status.

If the heroine did not know the class of the hero, for example if he was in disguise, she had acceptable motives, and her marriage would be a great success. Cecelia Creswycke was determined to marry for love and so refused to marry her wealthy Marquis neighbour, the man chosen by her father. The Marquis disguised himself as a servant, carried out two dramatic rescues and won her heart.[114] The message was clear: a true heroine would not consider wealth and position when choosing a partner; she may eventually be rewarded with this, but it must not be her goal.

The 'happy endings' represented a desire to be wealthy, and certainly the desire to not have to work for a living. This was not a realistic outcome for many working-class girls. Many continued to work after marriage either in or outside of the home, but these stories indicate that some position of status in society and financial security provided by a husband were the desired future.[115] By the 1870s working-class women were redefining themselves as housewives, though it is difficult to determine how many managed this because according to Joanna Bourke the census data is flawed.[116] Bourke suggested that working-class women gained status and power through domesticity; they gave housework and childcare value and gained local pride and power through these activities. In this way they resisted male power by making the home their domain, and improved their standard of living and daily lives.[117] This was consistent with the upper and middle-class 'angel of the hearth' discourse of the period that clearly placed women at the centre of domestic life.[118] Ross McKibbin used material published by nineteenth-century women philanthropists to identify how cultural values of this sort moved from one class to another.[119] Joanna Bourke's key message is that

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[113] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 19th December 1857, chapter 6, p. 244.
[114] *In Spite of Herself* (1879).
[115] Joanna Bourke, 'Housewifery in Working Class England 1860-1914', *Past and Present*, 43 (1994), 167-97 (p. 167).
[116] Bourke, p. 167. Many enumerators and respondents did not consider or record homework, cleaning or washing for others and so on as working.
[117] Bourke, pp. 171-80.
[118] John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext98/sesli10.txt> [accessed 27th March 2012]; Kate Millett. 'The Debate over Women: Ruskin vs Mill', in *Suffer and be Still*, ed. by Martha Vicinus Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972, pp. 121-39; Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against it* (London: Pluto, 1974), pp. 1-7.
[119] McKibbin examined work written by Helen Bosanquet, Margaret Loane and Lady Bell. Bosanquet (1860-1925) did social work in London; Loane worked as a district nurse in urban and rural England in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries; Bell (1851-1930) was a writer and married to an iron and steel magnate based in the North-East of England. Mc Kibbin, pp. 169-88 .

working-class women were eager and keen to absorb the 'angel of the hearth' message and become housewives, not because of patriarchal control, but because it improved their own lives and those of their families.[120]

These stories promoted this domestic ideal and the notion that women should marry into a situation where they need not work. They were not promising working-class girls a marriage to an aristocrat - they suggested a step up the social ladder and an aspiration to become a 'good' wife. However financial wealth is always secondary to *moral wealth*, the heroine must achieve this success as a reward for the good moral choices they have made. These women were rewarded with marriage to a man they love and the adoration and respect of all who know them. Beneath all of these stories was the fundamental principle that romantic love was the most important thing in life.

Predictable endings

The reader was arguably involved in the process of making a judgement about a decision the character made, particularly when it was a poor one - she was given lots of clues that it would end badly for the person making the 'wrong' decision. A good example was when Amy Mortimer, heroine of Jones's *Trials of Love* (1848), decided to elope. She had many misgivings:

> How could she say that – which weighed heavily on her heart – the consciousness that secrecy in so solemn an affair as that of marriage, could only be productive of misery and unhappiness to both, and how could she be so selfish as to refuse now?[121]

There were constant clues to the outcome of her decision, and the reader was asked to both sympathise with Amy, and feel frustrated at her poor decision making. Her friend, Mrs Fleming, had warned Amy that nothing good could come of a secret marriage, and she acted as the voice of the reader. After saying goodbye to them at the church door she said:

> Poor girl! Poor girl! So young! So innocent! … May you never have reason to repent this day![122]

The author then said:

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[120] Bourke, pp. 184-87.
[121] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 129.
[122] *The Trials of Love* (1848), pp. 148-52.

> Alas, the prayer was prophetical: before the end of a single month Amy was deserted, left desolate, a stranger, and alone.[123]

The reader knew at this point that the marriage was doomed, and predictably the marriage was a fake, and Amy died alone in poverty after giving birth to her baby. Throughout these stories the reader was asked to judge the heroine's decisions, to almost act as a moral arbiter, and heroines who eloped were punished. In *The Curate's Daughters* (1853) the description of the hovel where Bess Leslie found her sister living after her elopement, and her sister's insistence that there could be no future for her in polite society, was a clear message to anyone tempted to elope for money.[124]

There was one example of an elopement that led to a happy marriage in a later short story. The heroine Cecelia Creswyke, daughter of a nobleman, married her servant, Spencer. He turned out to be the Marquis of Tremaine in disguise (*In Spite of Herself,* 1879) and their elopement and subsequent short time living in rooms in London were a device to prove that she loved him, because she was prepared to live in lodgings with a man she believed to be her social inferior trying to make a living from writing. Importantly this elopement did not turn out to be a secret one. Her father knew all along about it, and supported the Marquis in his plan, and so it had a happy outcome.

There was an interesting contrast between male and female elopements. In *During the Honeymoon*, Freda avoided an irreversibly terrible fate when her elopement was not successful. Her brother Claud, however, did marry the governess he had run away with on the same night. She was portrayed as a scheming social climber, several years older than him. At the end of the story the hero, Gerald Ennismore, discovered that the governess was already married and so Claud Lemington was released from his obligation to her. He returned to his life as if nothing had happened. For men, an episode of this kind could be forgotten if he showed contrition. The message for women and girls was that elopements will only led to disgrace and unhappiness. The sexual double standard during this period condemned all women who conducted any sexual relationships outside of parentally sanctioned legal marriage, while excusing this 'natural' behaviour in men. Elopements may appear to be an exciting and romantic idea, but these novels clearly warned the reader against going against your parents' wishes and flouting the rules of respectable sexual

[123] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 152.
[124] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).

behaviour.[125] The reader may have received a thrill of excitement reading about the girls who transgressed the rules of propriety, but they were also being told what the 'right' decisions would be by the way the heroines were rewarded and their happy endings. The dilemmas and decisions form the didactic message, as the reader learnt to correlate 'good' behaviour with reward and 'bad' behaviour with punishment.

'Bad' characters often repented to 'good' ones on their deathbeds. There were two examples of this in *The Trials of Love* (1848)*:* Mr Stanley, Ada's father, and Rose Sinclair, a fallen woman he was involved with. Bell Leslie called out for Bess when she was dying and wished to ask for her forgiveness (*The Curate's Daughters*, 1853); Hedley Hastings (*His Brother's Keeper*, 1889) asked his brother for forgiveness when he died.[126] These incidents served to reinforce religious messages: the Christian belief that after death God would judge everyone according to his or her behaviour on Earth, and the evangelical belief that illness and death provide the ultimate opportunity for self-sacrifice, for the self to be dissolved and the soul to be returned to Christ.[127] These scenes also confirmed that the course taken by the heroine or hero was the right one, and the character who had taken the wrong path recognises this. There was an implication that the sinner had learnt from the good example of the heroine, just as the reader was arguably being asked to do.

Janice Radway concluded that women romance readers in the twentieth century wanted repetition and predictability from their novels. They portrayed different women in different scenarios, with original existences, but essentially they had the same future: life as a wife and mother. She says 'women in romances, like mythical deities, are fated to live out a predetermined existence.'[128] Areas of life usually associated with women, love and relationships, are seen to triumph over masculine areas such as competition and public life. The romance story's 'happy' ending provided a triumph of the former over the latter. Women were therefore able to find happiness within patriarchy.[129]

Conclusions

A formula for these stories had developed. The characters and situations changed but the basic model remained the same. Women were faced with dilemmas and moral choices, and

[125] Lesley Hall, 'Hauling Down the Double Standard', pp. 36–56.
[126] *His Brother's Keeper* (1889). All the Horner Penny Stories for the People have a repentance and death-bed scene, see for example Fannie Eden, *The Winning of Beaulah*, (c.1889), p. 16.
[127] Davidoff and Hall, p. 87.
[128] Radway, p. 207.
[129] Radway, pp. 186-208.

the reader quickly identifies what the ‘right’ choices were to gain rewards. The use of the anti-heroines allowed the reader to learn how ‘wrong’ choices were punished. Anti-heroines schemed, eloped, seduced, and eventually either repented and/or died alone, in poverty.

Working-class women could lead independent lives in the nineteenth century; Ivy Pinchbeck argued this, and the maid-of-all-work and diarist Hannah Cullwick is proof of this. Some of these heroines were allowed, for a short time, to work and support themselves, but the overwhelming message was that they needed protection and should defer to their mothers or a male member of their family when making decisions. When they get into a difficult situation, men needed to rescue them. These themes echoed the traditional notions deeply imbedded in Victorian ideology of women as the weaker sex.

The predictability of these stories and their happy endings are key to understanding the didactic nature. Repetitive, regular reading brought home the key messages about right and wrong with a startling lack of subtlety. We can see these rooted in the patriarchy of the period, and influenced by middle- and working-class discourse, evangelicalism and social mores, but it was more complex than this. Women continued to buy these stories (the *LJ* and the *FH* owed their high circulations and success to these stories) so they reflected what women demanded to read. These stories provided pleasure, arguably in the excitement of the trials and the threats posed by the anti-villain (not least the sexual threat) and the anti-heroine. However they can also be seen as offering predictability in an uncertain world, which meant safety, if only in the imagination.

CHAPTER 5: CONTENT ANALYSIS I – THE IDEAL, VIRTUOUS WOMAN

When Eltha was lost on the streets of London, her friend Harry's concern was for her chastity more so than her physical safety. This was because she was beautiful and young. He engaged the services of a detective to help him find her, and the detective said:

> "It is my opinion, and I have had some experience in such matters, that the young lady has fallen into the hands of those who know how to make a market of poverty and beauty. I have no fear for her life."
> "But for her honour?" asked Hal
> The detective shrugged his shoulders. The hearer trembled with indignation. The second supposition was, if possible, more hateful than the first.[1]

The detective was referring to the sex trade when he talked about the 'market' for poverty and beauty and the fear that women would be tempted or tricked in prostitution if they were alone on the streets of a big city.[2] The theme of women's protection was discussed in the previous chapter, but this extract serves to show how vital a woman's 'honour' and virtue were - in Harry's view more valuable than her life. In 1820 George IV accused his wife, Caroline of Brunswick, of infidelity and attempted to divorce her. The public supported Caroline, and the trial against her collapsed.[3] The 'Queen Caroline affair' resulted in a public discussion of female virtue, and the outcome was, according to Hall and Davidoff, 'an assertion of belief in the unblemished nature of English womanhood, an insistence that femininity meant virtue and honour.'[4]

Virtue was defined in an 1847 dictionary as involving 'strength', 'bravery' and 'valour', and then:

> 3. Moral goodness; the practice of moral duties and the abstaining from vice, or a conformity of life and conversation to the moral law.
> 4. A particular moral excellence; as the virtue of temperance, of chastity, of charity.[5]

This chapter will consider how the 'moral law' is represented in popular love stories, and how 'moral goodness' is defined in them for their readers. McWilliam said that in Victorian

[1] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 17th April 1869, p. 243.
[2] Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 65.
[3] Davidoff and Hall, pp. 150-55.
[4] Davidoff and Hall, p. 155.
[5] *A Dictionary of the English Language* by Noah Webster Ltd (London: David Bogue, 1847), p. 1238.

melodrama: 'Virtue consists in sincerity; the good are defined by their clear and honest actions.'[6] This chapter will build a picture of the ideal woman, both physically and in terms of the behaviour, of the heroine who conformed to these moral guidelines, as presented in romance novels. It will give particular consideration to the importance of sexual behaviour because there is very little evidence available to the historian endeavouring to determine actual working-class moral attitudes towards gender and sexual relationships, or actual behaviour patterns. Hera Cook has suggested that the silence around sex, particularly women's silence, was the result of a 'restrictive economy' in which talk of sex was repressed.[7] This contrasts with Foucault's theory that the repressive hypothesis was an illusion, and that discourse around sex was common during the period.[8] Women contributed little to this discourse, and so few sources remain for the historian.[9] Commentaries and autobiographies, either published or unpublished, were mostly silent on this subject.[10] Mainstream fiction was also 'erotically discreet', avoiding descriptions of sexual acts or passion due to the ideological complexities of the period.[11] What people profess to do and actually do can be very different, and actual behaviour, particularly concerning sensitive moral matters, is difficult to determine.[12] Lesley Hall believes there is a 'fit' between a society's ideology about sex and people's behaviour.[13] The content of fiction can help determine the ideologies of a period and take the 'moral temperature' to give an understanding of what was acceptable to discuss or describe. Authors and publishers were bound by moral conventions that dictated what their stories could openly discuss. What is not said is also significant.

Morality and sexual behaviour concern both the control of women by men, by the judgements made by other women and women's self-control. Hera Cook believes women had to resist sexual feelings and attraction to men because pregnancy and childbirth had such a direct effect on their bodies. Sexual repression can be seen as not just imposed from

[6] McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress', p. 102.
[7] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution.', (2011), pp. 119-120.
[8] Carol J Dean, 'The Productive Hypothesis: Foucault, Gender and the History of Sexuality', *History and Theory*, 33, (1994), 271-96.
[9] Martha Vicinus, 'Sexuality and Power: A Review of Current Work in the History of Sexuality', *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982), 132-56 (pp. 135-36).
[10] Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 123; Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria. Sexuality, Class and Gender in Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 2-3.
[11] Dennis W Allen, *Sexuality in Victorian Fiction* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), pp. xiii & 4.
[12] Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens. The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 156.
[13] Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 3.

outside, but as welling up 'from within and below.'[14] It is an arena where women were given responsibility, but they were not necessarily given autonomy; they remained what I will call the 'passive protagonist.' I will argue that morality, in particular sexual morality was a central theme of Victorian popular romantic fiction, and though the sexual act (or even passionate desire) was not described, it was a driving force for the narratives: without it, there was no story.[15] There were clear messages for readers of these penny romances about how to look and behave, and I will argue this popular fiction provided a warning to young women. They were vulnerable and at risk, and they should heed the warnings found in these stories.

The heroine: the ideal woman

It is possible to build an aggregate picture of the 'ideal woman' when reading these stories. This picture does not tell us what nineteenth-century women were actually like, but can tell us what they were being told to be like.

Physical characteristics

> She was attired in a petticoat of white, which was just short enough to reveal to the gaze a foot that would have fitted Cinderella's famed glass slipper, and an ancle (sic) gracefully and beautifully turned. A dark velvet bodice made to fit close, shewed (sic) to great advantage her delicate waist and a neck and bosom formed in perfection's mould. The soft tinge which greatly suffused her cheeks, gave additional beauty to her complexion, which was dark, while her hair, which was black as jet, sported in natural tresses over her shoulders.[16]
>
> Thomas Peckett Prest, Ela the Outcast (1841 edition)

This description of the eponymous Ela demonstrates what women were expected to be like physically, and was typical of the descriptions found in penny romances. All heroines were physically attractive. The Leslie twins (*The Curate's Daughters*, 1853) were described as having transparent skin, a graceful step, deep blue eyes and long dark lashes and glossy hair. These were clearly the ideal physical characteristics of a woman, as the author described these characters as 'famed for their beauty.'[17] This ideal persisted – Angela Clive was described in 'A Daughter of Fortune' (*LJ*, 1875) as having a face that was 'the most perfect oval, with exquisitely regular features, and large, soft eyes.' Her hair 'would have

[14] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2011), p. 119.
[15] Allen makes the same point about quality fiction, Allen, pp. 3-5.
[16] *Ela the Outcast* (1841), p. 13.
[17] *The Curate's Daughters*, (1853), p. 11.

made an ugly face handsome, there was such a wealth of it.'[18] The descriptions demonstrated how culturally specific attractiveness is. Nineteenth-century beauty meant having slender arms, hands and ankles, soft skin and long, thick, glossy hair. Heroines were also described as graceful, with soft gentle voices. The characteristics of heroines remained constant, regardless of the gender of the author who described her.

These descriptions do not allow for any marking on the body caused by poverty or hard work. Physical labour and a childhood marked by deprivation or poor nutrition would most probably mean red or blistered skin and would affect the complexion.[19] Even if a working-class woman was born with the natural attributes described above it would be difficult for her to maintain them. Keeping hair and the skin clean presented a challenge to many with limited access to hot water and space to wash.[20] Young working-class girls would find this particularly difficult. Urban children had to spend a lot of time in the street, due to space restrictions in the home. Anna Davin described the endless sweeping, dusting, scrubbing and washing needed to keep working-class homes clean, and how girls were expected to contribute to this effort.[21] Working-class girls' schooling prepared them for lives as house-keepers and servants, with practical lessons, and their schooling was interrupted by the need to help at home with childcare, household chores or paid work. Up until the 1870s, London children entered full-time employment as young as six or seven (though between ten and twelve was more usual), and even after the 1870 Education Act, which effectively made education compulsory, girls were needed at home for housework, childcare or to assist with paid work and contribute to the household budget.[22] After leaving school, young, unmarried working-class women needed to perform paid work to contribute to their families' incomes, and others had to work after marriage.[23] All these forms of employment would have had varying effects on the body.

Leonore Davidoff discussed the symbolic and material aspects of dirt and disorder. Cleanliness became associated with class strata; the ability to employ servants to handle household dirt distinguished the wealthy and was a mark of status.[24] Davidoff says 'The

[18] Clementine Montague, 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ*, 16th June 1875, p. 409-12.
[19] It was this feature that attracted Arthur Munby to Hannah Cullwick. 'Introduction', *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick.*
[20] Davin, p. 51.
[21] Davin, p. 177.
[22] Davin, pp. 85-112 & 133-198. See the photograph on Davin, p. 174 depicting children working at home.
[23] Pat Hudson 'Women and Industrialisation', in *Women's History, Britain 1850-1945. An Introduction*. ed. by June Purvis (Bristol: UCL Press, 1995), pp. 23-49; and Berg 'What difference did women's work make?' pp. 22-44.
[24] Leonore Davidoff, *World's Between. Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 4-5.

servant (and servant class as a whole) absorbed dirt and lowliness into their own bodies'; they ensured the middle class wife and daughter could maintain the life of genteel leisure. [25] Cleanliness was associated with purity and dirt with a lack of it, and so servants can be seen as providing the means for their mistresses to remain pure. There is also a relationship here with the positions of power, and with distinct hierarchical boundaries; the 'lady' and the 'gentleman' became as such because they did not have to engage in physical, manual work.[26]

The relationship between social distinctions and dirt were relevant to the physical effect dirty work had on the body. Arthur Munby's description of a young scullery-maid he watched through a window in 1861 illustrates how young working-class women's bodies could be marked by work:

> She stood at a sink, behind a wooden dresser packed with choppers and stained with blood and grease, upon which were piles of coppers and saucepans which she had to scour, piles of dirty dishes that she had to wash; her frock and cap, her face and arms, were more or less wet, soiled, perspiring, and her apron was a piece of sacking, wet and filthy, tied round her with a piece of cord.[27]

Munby's description helps the reader glimpse the working conditions of this one girl and to imagine the reddening, drying and staining effects that her work would have had on her skin as it constantly came into contact with the water and dirty implements.[28] Hands took on a particular significance. Davidoff says:

> It is not accidental that hands, their whiteness, smoothness, smallness, their encasing in gloves, or conversely largeness, filthiness, roughness, redness, bareness, should become a preoccupation of the period….White dainty hands indicated gentility as well as femininity. They were symbolic of inner-breeding and also lifestyle.[29]

However for working- and lower-middle-class women without servants, it was not possible to avoid dirty work.[30] Cleanliness was closely connected to the respectability of a household,

[25] Davidoff, p. 5.
[26] Davidoff, p. 77.
[27] Barret-Ducrocq, p. 57.
[28] Reay, *Watching Hannah,* pp. 127-35.
[29] Davidoff, pp. 77 & 123.
[30] Gorham says middle-class girls were more likely to have bodies untouched by physical labour, but some could not afford servants and had to perform household tasks. Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 20-27.

and this required constant work.[31] There was a symbolic relationship between dirt and vice, cleanliness and purity.[32] It was unlikely working-class girls would have been able to attain the soft, pale, unmarked skin the heroines of these stories had. Readers of romance stories were provided with a clear picture of what they should aspire to, but they would have found it very difficult to achieve.

There is a complicated relationship being presented here between gender, class and the body. There was some tension and ambiguity around social mobility during the Victorian period; the middle-class promoted the idea of advancement through effort, and yet the belief persisted that ultimately rank was determined by birth.[33] The majority of heroines were upper or middle-class, but due to circumstances beyond their control, they may have had to work for a short time, or lived with those from a lower social group. There was a strong implication in the stories that women who were the direct descendants of a lady or gentleman would inherit the physical characteristics that would mark them out from those from a lower order, even if they lived with, and like, a member of the lower orders. As a child, Ada Mortimer (Hannah Maria Jones, *Trials of Love*, 1848) was described by Mr DeLisle, the gentleman who employed her adoptive parents, as obviously the daughter of lady because she had such slender arms and hands, ivory skin, pretty ankles and a gentle voice.[34] Ada had spent her first few years with negligent foster-parents, and the next few with a poor servant who adopted her, and so we would expect this poverty to have had a detrimental effect on her appearance. However this was not the case, and it implied that 'good' blood shows. Much later, the surgeon who tended her after she was injured undertaking a charitable mission in a hostel for the very poor, said her face was not typical of someone he would expect to find in that location, even though she had been forced to work as a seamstress for a number of years.[35] Chapter 3 discussed how Hannah Maria Jones lived in poverty despite her claim to be waiting for an inheritance. She had also received an education that enabled her to write good quality stories, implying that she was middle-class. She perhaps felt she could be recognised as a 'lady' by others of a high class?

Other gentlefolk had no difficulty in recognising those descended from their class, even if the latter have lived with people of a lower class. Ela, the heroine described at the start of this chapter, had been tricked into a sham marriage, had an illegitimate child and was forced to live with gipsies for more than six years. Despite a rough and nomadic life and evidence of

[31] Davidoff, pp. 4-5.
[32] Davidoff, pp. 25-26.
[33] Cannadine, pp. 59-107.
[34] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 289.
[35] *The Trials of Love* (1848), pp. 864-65.

some physical deterioration, she did not lose her aristocratic features, and was instantly recognised as a member of the aristocracy by another lady:

> She appeared to be about thirty years of age; her features were regular and handsome. Her complexion was a bright olive, on which the cankerworm of care had set its destructive mark. The contour of her forehead and eyebrows was fine in the extreme. Her hair was black as the plumes of the raven, and flowed the long tresses over her shoulders. Her figure was tall and powerful; and although somewhat attenuated, yet bore the remains of grace and elegance. Altogether she seemed to have moved in a far better sphere of life than her present experience bespoke.[36]

It later transpired that her farmer father was, in fact, an Italian nobleman who had been tricked out of his inheritance. Her six year-old daughter, interestingly, was also described as having features that were 'particularly noble and expressive' with 'fine black eyes,' which, 'although suffused with tears, darted forth a lustre which could not be looked upon without admiration.'[37] She had spent her entire life with a band of gipsies who were portrayed as depraved and violent, yet had inherited this noble appearance.

Despite the necessity of a heroine's physical beauty, she was not to be concerned with, or fixated on, her appearance. Eliza Lynn Linton, an opponent of women's rights, wrote an article for the *Saturday Review* (described by Mason as 'the great organ of traditional moralism'[38]) in 1868 in which she castigated 'modern' girls for being fixated on their appearance:

> The girl of the period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face as the first articles of her personal religion; whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury; and whose dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses. Her main endeavour in this is to outvie her neighbours in the extravagance of fashion.[39]

Again, here was a comment that beauty must be natural, and not the result of money and time spent achieving it. Eliza Lynn Linton linked any obsession with looks clearly to a loss of inner beauty:

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[36] *Ela the Outcast*, (1841), p. 4.
[37] *Ela the Outcast*, (1841), pp. 2-3.
[38] Mason, p. 217.
[39] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Girl of the Period'. *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 14th March 1868, p. 340.

> With purity of taste she has lost also that far more precious purity and delicacy of perception which sometimes means more than appears on the surface. …she cannot be made to see that modesty of appearance and virtue ought to be inseparable, and that no good girl can afford to appear bad, under penalty of receiving the contempt awarded to the bad.[40]

Linton was making the relationship between modesty, appearance and virtue completely clear. She said that if girls could return to the modesty of the past they would be more likely to please men. It became clear in these novels that beauty without vanity was vital. Bell Leslie was physically identical to her twin sister Bess, but she was selfish and vain, and so Bess was described as being more sincere with her smiles, more natural looking and so more beautiful.[41] Beaulah Beaumont's maid told her she would be more attractive if she wore her hair in a more fashionable style, but Beaulah, the heroine of penny novelette *The Mistress of Castleton Towers* (Fannie Eden, 1889) said she wished it to remain plain.[42] Beaulah's beauty, goodness and modesty were continually described and essential to her character as a heroine. These stories were published 36 years apart but the message remained the same. The characteristics that are being promoted here were to do with *inner goodness*, showing itself externally. A truly beautiful woman was a good one too.

Speech was another physical characteristic worth noting here. We cannot actually hear the voices or accents of the heroines in these romances but there are some clues that enable us to build a picture of the way they spoke. 'Gentility' was not an easily definable quality, but was an essence that denoted social status. Speech was a physical manifestation of this.[43] A common plotline was that heroines were orphaned or separated from their families when young, and so were raised in workhouses or by working-class foster parents, yet they always spoke quietly and without an accent or dialect, unlike their working-class foster families. The surgeon who met Ada Mortimer commented on her voice, describing every note as 'music'.[44] This was a way that noble blood could manifest itself. Ela's daughter, for example, had lived only with gypsies, yet she used the vocabulary of a lady: "The men may not be able to find the way. I can conduct them to the spot without any trouble."[45] This was important because she was the daughter of a nobleman (though did not know this or meet him until she was a teenager) and she was to become one of the heroines of this story, and would meet and marry one of the heroes.

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[40] 'The Girl of the Period', (1868), p. 340.
[41] *The Curate's Daughters*, (1853).
[42] Fannie Eden. *The Mistress of Castleton Towers* (London and Dublin: W B Horner and Sons, c. 1889).
[43] Gorham, p. 8.
[44] *The Trials of Love* (1848), pp. 864-65.
[45] *Ela the Outcast*, (1841), p. 4.

Character

Kindness and generosity

All heroines displayed kindness and they were generous, particularly towards those who were less fortunate than themselves. This description was unchanging in all examples of the heroines of romance stories throughout the period. Ada Mortimer gave all her money and her only cloak to her former landlady's destitute, starving daughter when they coincidentally met in France, despite the fact that this woman had treated her harshly and unfairly. Ada shared her tiny inheritance with her mother's servants after her mother's death because she felt they deserved it, despite the fact this left her with little support for herself. She was so good in fact that Dr Stratford said she was "too good to live in a bad world."[46]

Heroines also became involved in larger, more formal philanthropic works. Bess Leslie's goodness and selflessness were demonstrated by her efforts working with the poor after her husband's death (Hannah Maria Jones, *The Curate's Daughters*, 1853).[47] Beaulah Beaumont repeatedly helped the less well off, including the Drummond family when they arrived in Castleton, the estate she owned (Fannie Eden, *The Mistress of Castleton Towers*, 1889). In a later story by the same author (*Ruby Silverton's Gold*, 1889) the eponymous heroine became involved in a project to improve the living and working conditions of the urban poor in the East-end of London.[48]

These women were modelled on the female philanthropists that could be found in slum districts throughout the nineteenth century.[49] In the early century these were Anglican and Nonconformist church missionaries and lay workers, performing their Christian duty.[50] Women representing a variety of organisations swelled the numbers of volunteers in the 1870s and 1880s as the process became more formalised. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was founded in 1869 to train the poor in self-sufficiency and offer friendship to working-class women. This organisation provided volunteers to help those perceived to be in need in poor districts, and possibly had a formative effect on the provision of modern social work.[51] Jose Harris estimated that by the 1880s there were half a million 'parish visitors' and

[46] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 744 & chapters 3 & 13.
[47] *The Curate's Daughters*, (1853), pp. 863-65.
[48] Fannie Eden, *Ruby Silverton's Gold* (London and Dublin: W B Horner, 1889); *The Mistress of Castleton Towers* (1889); *The Winning of Beaulah* (c.1889).
[49] Ross. *Slum Travellers,* p. 3.
[50] Anne Summers, 'Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 33-63.
[51] Anne Summers, p. 53; Ross, *Slum Travellers,* p. 3.

80,000 'bible women' visiting and performing voluntary work in working-class areas.[52] Late nineteenth-century philanthropists could be criticised for meddling or exercising a degree of regulatory control with no real knowledge or experience of slum life, or even for exercising an almost sexually motivated fascination for the 'other', but their motivations were also charitable.[53] Anne Summers has argued that these women sacrificed leisure time for this work, influenced policies concerning welfare provision for the poor, and made a contribution towards the emancipation of women of their class.[54] The heroines in romance stories were motivated by nothing more complicated than kindness and generosity. Ruby Silverton and Beaulah Beaumont were not represented as heroines seeking emancipation through their charitable work, they were represented as advocating Christian behaviour by offering help and friendship to the women they met.

Ruby Silverton had inherited a fortune and decided to spend this on the housing project for the poor in the East-end of London (*Ruby Silverton's Gold*, 1889). Her project was not unusual for this period. Most working-class housing had consisted of streets and courts that had grown up in an unregulated, chaotic way. These encouraged communal living and outdoor socialising that was not consistent with the developing notion of domesticity that encouraged the inward-looking privacy of the nuclear family. From the mid-nineteenth century philanthropists worked to change inner-city dwellings (although their contribution before 1914 was minimal) and from the 1870s onwards local authorities and central government also worked to regulate this aspect of working-class lives.[55] This philanthropy and the legislation on these issues was part of a new optimism that believed in discrimination in favour of the deserving poor.[56] Housing became not simply a physical space but one where the working classes could distinguish themselves from their neighbours; the domestic was another place where they could express their own respectability and therefore their position on the social scale.

Ruby Silverton's project consisted of spacious, light-filled homes and work premises, and the description of her involvement included a passage where she sent flowers to the young women working in one of her workshops in advance of her visit to them. Ruby could almost have read Octavia Hill's 'A Few Words to Volunteer Visitors among the Poor' (1877) which instructed readers to:

[52] Jose Harris, p. 158.
[53] Ross, *Slum Travellers*, pp. 1-3, 23-24; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 1-2, e-book [accessed 28th April 2013].
[54] Anne Summers, pp. 33 & 60.
[55] Daunton, pp. 7-37 & 179-93.
[56] Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, p. 637.

> …gladden their homes by bringing them flowers, or, better still, by teaching them to grow plants; you might meet them face-to-face as friends… you might teach them and refine them and make them cleaner by merely going among them.[57]

The message that Ruby's work for the poor would be rewarded was hammered home in an unsubtle way. At the start of the short story a group of ladies were gossiping about Ruby with her aunt, expressing how peculiar they think her work with the poor was. Her aunt warned her that she ought not to spend too much time on this work for the poor, and that she should look for a husband. Her charitable work resulted however in her being reunited her with a childhood sweetheart, the architect of her East-end project, and it was her philanthropy that convinced him of her goodness. He proposed to her and they marry, and the story finishes with them travelling around the district they have transformed with his architecture, and her money.[58] Ruby's kindness towards the poor had gained her the reward of a happy, companionable marriage.

Nursing ability

It was very common for heroines in popular fiction to be skilled amateur nurses who expressed their kindness and generosity by selflessly responding to the needs of the sick while endangering themselves in the process. Bess Leslie (*The Curate's Daughters*) nursed her father, her aunt Jane, her mother (she knelt holding her mother's hand for five days!), Mr Hastings and finally her sister.[59] Some of these people had treated her very badly, for example her aunt and Mr Hastings, but she forgave them and offered help when they needed it. Amy Mortimer was even prepared to endanger her reputation, as valuable to her as her health, when she nursed Mr Lawrenson. She cooked delicacies to persuade him to eat, and read to him, but was torn between feeling the need to help him, and protecting her reputation, as the curate's wife warned there will be gossip if she spent time alone with him.[60] A later example was when Ruby Silverton remained behind when most people left after a fever spread in her village (*Ruby Silverton's Gold*, 1889) in a similar way to Gaskell's fictional character, Ruth. She risked her life to nurse a child (even though the child's mother had been unkind to her) when everyone else in the household left because they were scared they would catch the fever. She nursed another dying child, soothing her when she tells her she is going to heaven to be with Jesus. She had so much moral authority (from her status

[57] Anne Summers, p. 55.
[58] *Ruby Silverton's Gold* (1889).
[59] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[60] *The Trials of Love* (1848).

as a wealthy woman and her manner) that everyone present believed her and was comforted.

Nursing appeared to be a natural skill that all these selfless, kind, hardworking heroines had, and it gave them the opportunity to act heroically in a feminine way, risking their lives selflessly but in a domestic setting. Nursing skills were presented as feminine, and this was due to their association with motherhood. Ellen Ross discussed how working-class mothers demonstrated these skills continually, suffering deprivation and exhaustion to nurse their sick children back to health.[61] Mid-century reforms transformed nursing into an occupation requiring training and skill, and by the late nineteenth century district nursing was one of the key ways middle-class women volunteers were involved in helping the poor in slum areas. It became one of the few professional careers open to them and had become an almost exclusively female occupation, both professionally and at home.[62] These novels designated nursing as a female arena, and that the caring trait it required was an aspect of true femininity.

Loyalty and honesty

Heroines in these novels regularly showed loyalty to their families, and subjugated their own ambitions for the good of family members. Elizabeth Roberts's study of late nineteenth-century working-class women's lives found that daughters had learnt this type behaviour from their mothers, who did this daily, and expected the same from their children.[63] Ada Mortimer, the heroine of *The Trials of Love* (1848), agreed to go to America with her father to help him avoid arrest for bigamy, despite his former abandonment of her and his chequered past.[64] Bess Leslie was constantly loyal to her husband, defending him when others accused him of unreasonable behaviour, despite his jealous rages, and, in a later example, Dolly, the heroine of *His Brother's Keeper* (1889), did not believe the hero Darrell committed fraud, and waited at home for him for many years before he returned home with proof of his innocence.[65]

Historian Michael Anderson concluded that mid-nineteenth-century working-class families only helped each other in times of need for reciprocal advantage, motivated only by the expectation that they would get something in return. Elizabeth Roberts felt this was not the

[61] Ross, 'She Fought for Me Like a Tigress', *Love and Toil*, chapter 4.
[62] Gorham, p. 29; Ross, *Slum Travellers*, p. 3.
[63] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 34.
[64] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapter 25.
[65] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapter 24; *His Brother's Keeper* (c. 1889).

case with her late nineteenth-century oral history study; she concluded that family bonds brought with them a duty of care. In most families she found women acting altruistically, unselfishly and lovingly towards extended family members.[66] Neighbours also helped and supported each other in times of crisis, for example with childcare, during illness or after deaths.[67] This difference may be because her respondents would not admit more selfish motivations to her, but is more likely that motivations were complex and varied. In these stories heroines' motivations were entirely selfless, and suggest that women should be motivated by an inbuilt and automatic loyalty to family members.

Honesty was another vital quality of heroines in romantic novels. Ada Mortimer had to lie to her landlady and pretend she and her cousin were brother and sister so that they could stay at the same lodging house. This was because cousins could become a couple and marry. Ada was very distressed about the lie, and when her landlady discovered the truth she left immediately because she was so ashamed.[68] In the *The Curate's Daughters* (1853) Bell Leslie's anti-heroine status was confirmed when she lied to her mother about wanting to stay with her, when in fact she was desperate to get back to her London society and her aunt. Her sister Bess knew Bell's true sentiments and was shocked by these untruths. Her sister had consistently behaved badly in the past, but it was dishonesty that upset her the most. Lies to parents were particularly disapproved of, and this was consistent with the messages discussed in chapter 4 about the need for protection and the need to listen to your elders.

Bravery and weakness

When necessary these heroines committed acts of physical bravery. Ada Mortimer saved the Principal and a lady from a fire at her school, despite being prostrate when someone shouted at her a few pages before! [69] Ruby Silverton rescued another lady from attack by a mad dog, and then approached the dog with kindness and calms it down.[70] But these were isolated events, and men carried out the majority of rescues. Louis James felt the heroines in Edward Lloyd's penny fiction rarely fainted and displayed stamina and courage. He also thought heroines in penny fiction were given the opportunity to demonstrate their physical strength, as this characteristic was needed by working-class women for survival, but I have found many incidents of women who were physically weakened by emotional or mental

[66] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 171-72 & 177-79.
[67] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 183-87.
[68] *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[69] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapter 13.
[70] *Ruby Silverton's Gold* (1889).

shock in penny publications throughout the period of my study.[71] Mrs Wallingford fell 'insensible' and the doctor was called when Ela shouted that her husband was a villain and it was he she sought revenge upon; Ela herself fainted when a drunken reveller accosted her at the party where she met Edward Wallingford.[72] Despite Ruby Silverton's bravery facing the dog and single-handedly nursing a village through a dangerous fever, she fainted at the shock of seeing Max, the man she loved, when he came to help her (*Ruby Silverton's Gold*, 1889). There were numerous other examples.

The sensibility that caused this fainting served as another indicator of the class of the heroine. As a child, Ada Mortimer fell into a hysterical faint when Mr DeLisle's sister, Matilda, spoke harshly to her. DeLisle considered that only high-born women would respond in this way, and Ada's outburst increased his suspicion that she was the offspring of gentry.[73] Just as women who maintained certain physical attributes despite having to live with working-class people, they also inherited the sensibility women of the upper class. This was a culturally-specific expectation; we would think it very unusual today for a woman to faint at the shock of the man she loves turning up unexpectedly or after a few harsh words from an aunt. Anthropologists Susan Weller, Trenton Ruebush and Robert Klein described illness only recognised within a culture and not between cultures, as 'culture-bound'. Anthropologists explored these conditions because they were 'presumed to reflect issues of importance within the culture in which they occur.'[74] Like the 'wink' that Geertz discusses as an event that can only have meaning for us if we understand the culture in which the person winking lives (or lived), the physical symptoms these women showed when they heard stressful news can only be understood in the culture in which they lived.[75] These novels, and the 'quality' novels they emulated, helped to make this 'culture-bound' illness acceptable, and perpetuated this physical response to emotional shock. Again, there was an inconsistency with the physical bravery some of these heroines displayed. This characteristic was consistent with the belief that women needed the protection of a man, and that they were physically inferior and less able to deal with shock or trauma than men. This message was consistent throughout the period.

Episodes of feminine weakness presented another opportunity for men to 'save' the heroine. In *Ela the Outcast* Edward Wallingford 'wrenched the senseless damsel from [the drunken

[71] James, 'The Trouble with Betsy', p. 357.
[72] *Ela the Outcast* (1841).
[73] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 305.
[74] Susan C Weeler, Trenton K Ruebush II and Robert E Klein, 'An Epidemiological Description of a Folk Illness: A Study of Empacho in Guatemala', in *Anthropological Approaches to The Study of Ethno medicine,* ed. by Mark Nichter (Switzerland: Gordon Breach Science Publishers, 1992), pp. 19-20.
[75] Geertz, pp. 3-32.

reveller's] grasp, and with a violent blow of his clenched fist, felled him to the earth.' '[S]o great was his rapture in enfolding the insensible damsel to his breast, that he became quite unconscious that any other person observed his conduct, and in a delirium of transport, he pressed his lips to hers.'[76] After this episode Edward was determined to marry Ela, and the encounter was central to the plot of the rest of the novel. Ela's insensibility provided the opportunity for her rescue, and for these two to meet and fall in love.

Later in the novel Ela showed great fortitude, living with gypsies, forcing her way into the Wallingford home and wrestling with Wallingford's men to avoid arrest. The examples of physical strength and stamina were clearly out-numbered, however, by the examples of heroines who fainted at surprises or emotional shocks. Louis James has possibly over-simplified this aspect of these novels; on some level the readers must have expected their heroines to faint when facing an ordeal and to have wanted them to be rescued by a 'hero'. This aspect of the novels was possibly meeting a need for the fantasy escape, where men took care of women and treated them like precious objects.

The ideal heroine: the impossible?

The behaviour of these heroines was, in many ways, consistent with the dominant ideology concerning femininity, but it was hard to reconcile with the representations of working-class girls in their autobiographies and in the reports of the philanthropists who visited them.[77] Working-class girls had to work from a young age, had family responsibilities and chores and were forced to be robust, physically and mentally.[78]

However there were aspects of these heroines that they could emulate. It may have been impossible to be clean in the way the stories said, but they could (and did) endeavour to keep their skin, clothes and hair clean, consistent with the notion of respectability and not being considered 'rough'; they could be kind, honest and loyal, and they certainly learnt to help each other out.[79] These publications provided them with an image of womanhood that could similarly reflect their ideal, and arguably played a central role in the development of young women's subjectivities.

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[76] *Ela the Outcast* (1841), p. 16.
[77] Gorham, chapters 1 and 2.
[78] See for example 'The Life of a Costergirl' in *London Labour and The London Poor*, Mayhew, pp. 61-65; Lucy Luck in Burnett, *Useful Toil*, pp. 67-76; Annie Besant's description of 'White Slavery in London' in *Slum Travellers*, Ed Ross, pp. 48-51; Sally Alexander, 'Womens' Work in Nineteenth-century London: A Study of the Years 1820-1860s' in *Becoming a Woman*, pp. 8-9, 24-33; and for later in the century Jenny Morris 'The Characteristics of Sweating', pp. 95-124.
[79] Davin, pp. 51, 69-74, 135, 138-40 & 168-99; Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 64.

Women as 'passive protagonists'

As the century progressed, women were given the responsibility for the moral tone of the working-class home and they were expected to take care of budgets and ensure they had well-fed, clean, respectable families.[80] However women were not considered to be agents of change, despite these important roles. The titles of many of the earlier penny-a-part romance novels indicated that they tell the story of a female heroine; most include the heroine's name; for example *Agnes the Unknown, or, The Beggar's Secret, A Romance* (1849), *Blanche Heriot, or the Chertsey Curfew, A Romance* (1843) and *Ethelinde; or, the Fatal Vow, A Romance* (1848). Others indicated that a female was at the centre of the story; examples included *The Hebrew Maiden; or the Lost Diamond* (1841), *The Robber's Wife. A Domestic Romance* (1852) and *The Wife's Secret. A Romance* (1850). The serialised novels in the penny magazines were similar, for example 'A Daughter of Fortune' (serialised in the *LJ* June-September 1875). These titles made it clear that a heroine was at the centre of the narrative, and identified them as tales of romance and love stories. Penny novelettes, published in the late 1870s and 1880s also had titles that made it clear they were romances, for example *Why Did She Marry Him?* (1879) and *After the Honeymoon* (1880).

The heroine's experiences, the trials she faced and the adventures she had were described with the heroine at the centre of the narrative, as the key protagonist. The novel-length stories, which were read in weekly parts, were usually very linear, starting from the point where the heroine became 'unprotected' and finishing with her marriage or occasionally her death. Shorter stories did not always have the scope for this sort of story line, but in all the romance stories the reader was being asked to sympathise with a central female character. At times the reader may have known more than the heroine, for example if the heroine was in danger. These scenes did not include the heroine, but they were always *about* her, and the reader was constantly asked to be concerned about her safety and reputation.

However these heroines were *passive protagonists* - they *responded to* the happenings, and were expected to make the appropriate decisions to maintain their virtue, but they rarely actively made the decisions that drove the story along. A romance story that exemplified this was *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842). Three of the main male characters were in love with Phoebe, including Sir Herbert, who was a 'libertine' responsible for various plots to kidnap

[80] Masters, p. 178; Davidoff, 1995, pp. 74-76; Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), p. 23; Davin.

her; he therefore dictated the action. Another was George, the 'miller's man', the hero who had fallen in love with Phoebe and repeatedly saved her. There were several scenes where the villain and his henchmen plotted against Phoebe, and the reader was alerted to the dangers she faced. The hero and her adopted father reacted to protect her, for example when George read a letter that had been sent to Phoebe to lure her away from the safety of her home to meet someone on the road:

> This be the work of some villain to procure a clandestine interview with Phoebe. By Heaven! I will meet the villain myself, and he shall see, be he who he may, that the fair miller's maid is not without a protector![81]

George foiled the first plot, but at the same time a fake note given to Phoebe had meant she was lured to the hollow, where Sir Herbert was waiting. Her scream meant that George had to 'bound youthfully over all boulders and crags' to rescue her.[82] George later saved Phoebe from a second attempt at kidnapping, when one of the henchmen had dressed as a woman and pretended to be her aunt, and then she was saved from another kidnap attempt by Giles, one of the miller's employees (who was also in love with Phoebe!). Phoebe had fainted when the villains had attempted to drag her into a carriage.

Despite the centrality of Phoebe, as the heroine, and her definite position as the main protagonist in the novel, like other heroines of this genre of fiction, the action in this novel happened *to* Phoebe, was all *about* Phoebe, but she did not actively *do* anything that could affect the outcomes of the plots against her. Her adopted father made the decision that she should marry George; all parties saw this decision as belonging to him. She was not involved in the discussions about how to keep her safe, she responded (usually by fainting) to attempts to kidnap her, and the only thing she did proactively was water her flowers! There was a bizarre episode where Phoebe could not sleep, and saw a man sneaking around outside the mill. She quickly dashed up the external staircase to the rooms where George and Giles were sleeping. Here she found Giles holding a knife over the sleeping George, and was so shocked she fainted. Freegrove, the intruder Phoebe had spotted, fell through the window at this point and woke George. Phoebe was present during this episode, but did not do anything to save George, and in fact needed rescuing again. Phoebe was the model of a passive protagonist, one who was at the centre of the story and yet could only respond to the events. She did not determine what direction they will take.

[81] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), p. 139.
[82] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), p. 143.

Heroines existed only in relation to men. Feminist scholar Janice Raymond defined 'hetero-relations' as 'the wide range of affective, social, political and economic relations that are ordained between men and women by men'. She used it with the phrase 'hetero-reality', meaning 'the world view that woman exists always in relation to men.'[83] Phoebe exemplified this. She did no paid work; she did not own anything, could not vote and had no external, independent existence. She lived with the miller and his wife and took care of herself (to a limited extent) and her flowers. She was waiting for her life to happen to her, which was what unfolds in this novel. Phoebe herself existed only in relation to the men in the novel.

Some heroines did take an active role, committing acts of physical bravery to save themselves or others. Ada Mortimer, for example returned to a burning school twice to rescue the headmistress and a lady she had befriended there, both times carrying them to safety.[84] But shortly after the school fire Ada had to be rescued by Rueben Mortimer from a bunch of revellers on a ship, even though they did not present the same physical hazard to her as the fire. Women were saved from bolting horses, drowning, fire, being lost in a forest and, most commonly, from other men trying to abduct or take advantage of them.[85] 'The Trip By Rail; or the third Class Passenger', a short story published in the *LJ* in 1864, centred entirely around the rescue of a heroine whose clothes had been caught under the wheels of a train that had crashed. Captain Ponsonby, her rescuer, is presented as enjoying the rescue because he had missed situations of danger since returning from active duty. The heroine barely featured in the tale, is not even named, and yet she is the 'Third Class passenger' in the title.[86]

These heroines did not pursue men; they did not articulate how they felt about the heroes. They did not demonstrate any physical attraction. Spinsters, as will be discussed in chapter 6, are the only women who professed to be attracted to a man, but they were always portrayed in a negative way, and the attraction as unnatural. The discourse around women's sexual feelings and ability to feel passion changed through the century. In the early nineteenth century it was accepted that women could feel passionate sexual desire but later the dominant ideology changed and held that it was not right for women to feel sexual attraction or desire.[87] Attitudes to women's sexuality will be discussed more fully in the next section, however the 'silence' found in popular romantic fiction around female sexual desire

[83] Janice Raymond, *A Passion for Friends* (London: The Women's Press, 1986), pp. 3-7.
[84] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapter 13.
[85] For example: *In Spite of Herself*, (1879) ; *The Winning of Beaulah*, (c.1889); *During the Honeymoon* , (1880); 'The Flower of the Flock*', LJ,* 8th May 1858, chapter 4; *Ela the Outcast* (1841), chapter 1.
[86] 'The Trip by Rail', *LJ*, 1st October 1864, p. 213.
[87] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), pp. 18 & 123-25.

and sexuality was relevant to this notion of a passive protagonist. Relationships between the genders were at the centre of these stories, and as such they drove the narrative, yet it was an arena where heroines allowed things to happen *to* them rather than instigating the action. There was also a link with the notion that women needed protection. These stories often contained attempted abductions and the threat of rape – and this made them titillating and exciting, but they can also be seen as warning women about men's sexual desires, and the need to protect themselves from this, or of the dangers of their own sexual desire. It is possible to assert that these novels told women that they should not have sexual feelings about a man, and that the 'right' way to conduct a potentially sexual relationship is to respond to the initiative of the male partner. The message was that, in response to male desire, their key role was to protect their virtue.

Women must remain chaste and guard their reputation at all costs

Harry Hartley defended his friend Eltha Whynne's reputation vigorously when a man suggested something impure happened between them:

> The mother who bore me, the woman whom I trust soon to call my wife, the infant slumbering on its nurse's breast, are not less free from the suspicion of chastity than she is![88]

As his mention of his mother (obviously not a virgin) suggests, Harry is using the word 'chastity' to mean not just virginity but 'appropriate' sexual behaviour. A woman's chastity and reputation were portrayed in popular romantic fiction as tangible objects that were invaluable, once lost they could not be regained. This section will consider how, and if, attitudes towards women's sexuality were reflected in popular romantic fiction. Jeffrey Weeks said that, like other forms of behaviour, morality and sexual relationships are culturally constructed - the 'appropriate' or 'right' way to behave is determined and regulated by the society of the time, and in my view popular romantic fiction was one of the ways this happened in the nineteenth century; it acted as an informal, populist, secular means of social regulation.[89]

There were contradictory representations of working-class women in middle and upper-class discourse in the nineteenth century. According to Barret-Ducrocq they were seen either as virtuous housekeepers struggling to balance resources, or as hard, brutal depraved

[88] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 24th April 1869, p. 258.
[89] Jeffrey Weeks, *Making Sexual History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 132.

creatures with no respect for religious morality or the law.[90] Much of the discourse was centred on the promiscuity and sexual depravity of the lower orders, and later in the century, as philanthropists explored the effects of environment, slum living conditions were seen as the major cause of this behaviour.[91] Lesley Hall thinks that historians should resist the view that Victorians were all sexually repressed hypocrites with a monolithic, inflexible notion of morality, however she has described how important the female reputation was; and its close connection with respectability.[92]

There was a marked change over the course of the nineteenth century in views concerning pre- and extra-marital sex. Hera Cook says women in England in the early nineteenth century had far more sexual autonomy than in other cultures, as they chose their own partners and pre-marital sex was acceptable if the couple planned to marry.[93] She found evidence that early nineteenth-century women were able to express passionate physical desires.[94] Pre-marital sex following a promise of marriage was not uncommon amongst working-class people at the start of the century.[95] In some areas and for some sectors of the population, there was little shame attached to unmarried pregnancy in working-class families; these women used their sexuality to persuade men to have (or continue) relationships with them, and families encouraged practices like 'bundling' where couples could become intimate if they kept their clothes on. Single-parenthood was seen as preferable to a bad marriage.[96]

By mid-century respectable women were expected to control their sexual attractions, and Cook suggested this could be one of the reasons for the falling illegitimacy rates amongst working-class women from the mid-1840s.[97] A well-known, mid-nineteenth-century gynaecologist and writer on sexuality, William Acton wrote '… that the majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.'[98] Historian Boyd Hilton saw this as part of the repressive influence of evangelicalism, which placed an emphasis on self-control, and developed the idea that a woman should be able to control her

[90] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 29-33.
[91] Barret-Ducrocq, p. 16; Daunton, pp. 269-73; Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, p. 637.
[92] Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, pp. 16 & 10.
[93] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), p. 18.
[94] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2011), p. 123.
[95] Gillis, pp. 130 & 180-85; Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), pp. 23-24; Tanya Evans, *'Unfortunate Objects'. Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 3 & 6.
[96] Gillis, pp. 130, 180, 182-83 & 185; Barret-Ducrocq, p. 86.
[97] It fell from 67.1 per 1,000 live births in 1846-50 to 46.3 in 1886-1890. Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', pp. 124-25.
[98] Margaret Jackson, *The Real Facts of Life. Feminism and The Politics of Sexuality 1850-1940* (London, Taylor Francis, 1994), p. 68.

passionate feelings, and it was dangerous to her health and society if she could not. Hilton says these feelings were internalised by women and passed to their children.[99] Cook says:

> Respectability was increasingly central to working-class women's identity. Openly expressed enthusiasm for sexual pleasure, especially if it resulted in several affairs or was expressed by single women, became deviant and stigmatised behaviour…this does not mean that it didn't take place but that the incident was diminished because it was shameful and had to be hidden.[100]

The influence of the evangelical movement and the notion of respectability were intimately bound up with attitudes towards sexual relationships and the control of these outside of marriage. The churches had varying and inconsistent policies on sexuality, but the Bible was commandeered by evangelicals to promote what Mason called 'aspirational anti-sensualism'.[101] While acknowledging that it is hard to assess the influence evangelicalism actually had on sexual behaviour, Mason says evangelicalism was as anti-sensual as possible, with severe codes relating to all aspects of sexuality.[102]

Industrialisation and the resulting migration of young women added to the fears that 'unattached' women would be drawn into 'illicit activities' in towns and cities.[103] Sexual indulgence was viewed as a great threat to society, and human morality as necessary for the advancement of the species.[104] John Gillis felt:

> A century of Christian Evangelicalism, reinforced by medical campaigns against venereal disease, contributed greatly to fears about all forms of extra-marital sexuality. Respectability and chastity were firmly linked in the minds of those who aspired to higher social status.[105]

Some sectors of the working-class population embraced the more puritanical attitudes. Master artisans in cities, for example, anxious to maintain a separation between themselves and those of lower social status, upheld 'rigidly puritanical standards of sexual respectability' for both their sons and daughters from the 1820s and 1830s.[106] Self-help and education were linked in their minds to morality and respectability.[107]

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[99] Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, p. 179.
[100] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2011), p. 126.
[101] Mason, pp. 15-17, 49 & 80.
[102] Mason, pp. 63-67.
[103] Ittmann, p. 152.
[104] Hilton, *Mad, Bad and Dangerous*, pp. 174-187.
[105] Gillis, p. 238.
[106] Gillis, p. 164; Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), p. 66.
[107] Mason, pp. 126-27.

The dominant classes also exerted their pressure on working-class sexual behaviour. Physical contact with philanthropists, police officers and through domestic service arguably had an influence.[108] Some legislation was used, for example the 1834 Poor Law, which included the 'bastardy clauses' which meant it was no longer possible for unmarried women to prosecute the father of a child; prior to the 1834 Act he could be forced to marry her or pay her an allowance, and evangelicals and other moralists had campaigned that this provision encouraged pre-marital sex and 'husband-hunting.'[109] The new law made women responsible for the illegitimate children, and all of the problems associated with supporting a child when little social assistance was available. Barret-Ducrocq found in the Foundling Hospital archives (pre-1870) that working-class families preferred to keep the news of an illegitimate pregnancy quiet to avoid gossip, but also found a surprising lack of shame felt by both the girl and her family. She says families placed 'no trace of blame' on the pregnant girls.[110] She felt that if the relationship that resulted in pregnancy was cross-class, the breaking of social boundaries was viewed as more shocking than the act of pre-marital sex.[111] Women feared the economic problems related to pregnancy more than any social stigma attached to their predicament.

By the end of the century this need for control and self-restraint had transmuted into the strongly held view, as discussed above, that women did not have passionate sexual feelings, and pre-marital pregnancy, the ultimate proof that sexual relations had taken place, had become shameful.[112] Hera Cook believed this change in attitude to be 'an intelligent response to the growing risk which unmarried pregnancy created for women' and 'it is consistent with the broad shift toward a more prudish and respectable female working-class culture.'[113] It is difficult to determine to what extent working-class women's attitudes and sexual behaviour actually changed, but there is certainly evidence that there was an increase in legal marriage.[114] In 1882 the English Girls' Friendly Society had introduced the Marriage card for members, to be given to them on their marriage and displayed in their homes. Decorated with lilies to represent purity, they acted as a guarantee of virginity,

[108] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), p. 66.
[109] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 155-56; Poovey, p. 10.
[110] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 162-63, 166-69 & 171.
[111] Barret-Ducrocq, p. 69.
[112] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 78; Gillis, pp. 236-38.
[113] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), p. 67.
[114] R A Woods and P R A Hinde, 'Nuptiality and Age at Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England' *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985), 119-44 (p. 141).

something described by the society's founder, Mrs Townsend, as having a price above rubies.[115]

The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869 gave powers to the authorities in specified military districts to examine and treat prostitutes suspected of carrying venereal diseases. The campaign to repeal these stimulated discussion about sex, and the injustices of the 'double standard', which accepted the necessity of male sexual contact outside of marriage but condemned this in women. This resulted in contributing to the promotion of purity and served to 'reinforce the existing negative Christian association between sexuality and sin.'[116] This discourse encouraged a puritanical attitude towards sexuality. The social purity movement aimed to redress the sexual imbalance by controlling male sexual behaviour.[117] As a result of these changes, sex became a topic for discussion; there was contestation and debate, but less silence around it.[118]

Eric Trudgill compared the content of upper- and middle-class literature with the discourse around sexual behaviour, and found that from the 1790s 'the force of prudery', originating from the evangelical movement and a reaction to the French Revolution, repressed literature that tried to discuss and express sex and sexuality. He felt that in the 1850s and 1860s some authors of quality fiction managed to wrestle some control back from the moralists, but that prudery counter-attacked, enjoying the majority support. A minority of authors continued, however, to discuss sexual matters at the end of the century.[119]

Sexual relationships were at the centre of these popular romantic novels, specifically the notion of women's virtue. Dennis Allen proposed that the 'fall' was at the core of all Victorian fiction, either the threat of it or the punishment for it.[120] He suggested that the silence around the sexual act itself did not mean it was not present, and that this was a response to the contemporary perception that sexuality presented a threat to the social order and to the self.[121] Trudgill suggested that popular fiction between 1830 and 1870 was even more moral than quality fiction as it fought to gain a respectable reputation. A few 'responsible' quality

[115] Vivienne Richmond, 'Stitching the Self: Eliza Kenniff's Drawers and the Materialization of Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century London', in *Women and Things 1750-1950*, ed. by Goggin and Tobin (Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 43-54 (p. 50).
[116] Hera Cook, 'The Long Sexual Revolution', (2004), pp. 94-95.
[117] Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p. 30.
[118] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol I, The Will to Knowledge*, trans Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 2008); *The Foucault Reader; An Introduction to Foucault's Thought,* Ed.Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 301-30; Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p. 29.
[119] Trudgill, pp. 155-57.
[120] Allen, p. 4.
[121] Allen, pp. xiii & 5.

fiction writers could afford to take risks (here he cites Elizabeth Gaskell) but authors of popular fiction had to take care not to attract criticism that they were 'titillating' readers.[122] When in the 1880s authors like George Moore challenged the censorship placed on novelists by the restrictions of the circulating libraries militant puritans fought back, and one of the reasons they gave was the need to protect the newly literate masses benefitting from the 1870 Education Act.[123]

Popular literature fought against its prurient reputation. Chastity was seen in all popular romantic fiction as more valuable than any physical commodity. In all the sampled stories published between 1839 and 1889 heroines faced trials and moral tests, and had to make the appropriate decisions to guard their chastity and reputation in order to get their reward (which was marriage); but there was also a strong implication that the coincidences and good luck that befell them were a result of divine intervention as a reward for their virtue. Lotte Clinton was a key example. She was living in poverty and struggling to survive when Malcolm Grahame offered her a house in the country and the use of a carriage. She refused and replied "And convert me from a humble, virtuous needlewoman into a shameless and abandoned outcast!"[124] Her chastity and reputation were maintained. Later she encountered Mark Wilton in a park, and they fell in love with each other. Lotte, however, was concerned about their class difference and felt they could not have a relationship because she was his social inferior. By strong coincidence Mark was the brother of her friend Flora, who told Mark how hard Lotte has worked to remain virtuous. Mark, Flora and a friend, Gomer, convinced Mr Wilton, of Lotte's goodness, and Wilton took it upon himself to persuade Lotte to marry his son:

> [T]he details of your past history have been made known to me, and I blush when I think how nobly you, an unassisted, helpless girl, have sustained your integrity, your virtuous truthfulness, your self-respect, against all temptations and assaults, against which I, more fortified to withstand them, have fallen back.[125]

Mr Wilton was the paragon of respectability in this novel. He represented authority and tradition and his acceptance of Lotte represented her acceptance by the established order. He also recognised that she has been unprotected, had faced trials and had responded to these appropriately. Wilton listed the elements of Lotte's personality that he admired:

[122] Trudgill, pp. 219-31.
[123] Trudgill, pp. 234-38.
[124] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ,* 6th March 1858, p. 4.
[125] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ,* 8th May 1858, p. 149.

integrity, truthfulness and virtue. She gained the ultimate reward: marriage to Mark Wilton, the man she had fallen in love with.

The notion that a girl must maintain her reputation was also seen in *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), when Bess nursed Mr Hastings in Dover. Local gossip threatened her reputation as she had spent so much time at his bedside. This gossip even reached her neighbours in London.[126] Her mother advised her to marry him, and she took this advice, despite not being in love with him. A similar concern with reputation was seen in a later romance story, *During the Honeymoon* (1880). Here the heroine, Freda, had become involved with her tutor. She realised her error of judgement and was concerned that she had sent him letters that could be used to destroy her reputation. The hero of the story, Gerald Ennismore, retrieved them for her, thus maintaining her good name.[127]

As the century progressed and migration to cities there were fears that this would result in ruptured family ties and working-class girls would become more vulnerable to sexual predators, or even take advantage of their new freedom and indulge in pre-marital sex. However local connections in growing cities and close ties to home-towns could still effectively control a girl's behaviour.[128] Attitudes changed regarding pre-marital sex, it became increasingly unacceptable. Standards of respectability exerted their influence, as did the importance of maintaining a good reputation.[129] Despite challenges to the sexual double standard, and some authors of quality literature testing boundaries by questioning the shame of the 'fallen woman', popular love stories maintained a stark moral stance: all girls must remain chaste until married. These stories continually endorse this message, and girls were arguably reading them at a stage in their lives when they would be making decisions about their sexual behaviour.[130] The respectability of a family was the mother's responsibility, particularly regarding the reputation of her daughters, and the mothers of teenage daughters also read these romances, and would have reinforced this message to their daughters.[131]

The fallen woman

Heroines who failed to make the right decisions on this moral obstacle course, and failed to guard their chastity if they were unmarried, were punished. They were forced to live on the

[126] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapters 19 and 20.
[127] *During the Honeymoon*. (1880).
[128] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 37.
[129] Davin; Gillis, p. 240.
[130] See page 78.
[131] Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 25.

margins, separated from their families, usually in poverty and they sometimes died prematurely. *The Curate's Daughters* (1853) was essentially a moral tale of contrasts, with one sister (Bess) making the right decisions, while the other (Bell) made all the wrong ones. Bell eloped with a Marquis, but was abandoned by him. After that she was continually seen around town with young men un-chaperoned, and earned a bad reputation. At the end of the story Bess (who was happily married to a wealthy man) found Bell living in a very poor area of town, living in a dirty, dark room, with a female companion who had 'a bloated, ill-looking face, enveloped in a profusion of dingy frillings.'[132] Bell's environment was her punishment for her fall. Barret-Ducocq said the physical characteristics of slum areas, their smell, darkness, confusion and over-population, was equated in the middle-class mind with sin, and therefore a great threat to the moral and political order.[133] This was certainly the case with any slum dwellers found in penny romantic literature, and living there was a punishment.

When Bess visited Bell in the slum, Bell's manner was rude, she was obviously drunk and her companion gave her more brandy to calm her down. Bess was horrified at the conditions and her sister's intemperance. Bell died shortly afterwards, the victim of an attack, and Bess happened, by coincidence, to see the stretcher taking her to hospital pass by and so was with her when she died. Bell asked her for her pity as she 'closes her eyes in death.'[134] It was a dreadfully sad end for the girl whose parents and upbringing were idyllic, and her end contrasted strongly with Bess, who, after the death of her first husband, married the man she loved.

There was some variation in the way the 'fallen' woman was treated in these romance stories. The earlier ones did sometimes allow a fallen woman to be forgiven and returned to 'polite' society. Ela eventually escaped the band of gypsies and returned to the gentry. Andrew King saw this story as raiding 'the commonplaces of melodrama', and McWilliam described the ambiguous views on fallen women seen in the melodrama genre.[135] These showed both compassion and revulsion for the fallen woman, with no clear view as to whether society or the individual was to blame.[136] This was especially true in stories involving exploited or under-paid working girls. Later stories, however, lacked ambiguity. In

[132] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), p. 848.
[133] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 7-8 & 33-37.
[134] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapters 26-27. Other examples are *Ela the Outcast* who is forced to live with gypsies, (1848); Helen Grahame has to leave the family home and live in poverty, 'The Flower of the Flock*', LJ,* 1857-8.
[135] King, 'Literature of the Kitchen', pp. 45-46.
[136] McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress', pp. 104-05 & 113.

the sample I have read, by the 1870s women were made entirely responsible for their own sexual behaviour, and therefore their fate.

Conclusions

The depictions of heroines in these novels had definite similarities. They were all physically attractive, kind, generous, loyal, honest and pure in mind and deed. Working-class girls would have had difficulties maintaining the soft, pale skin the heroines were admired for, but these heroines were descended from aristocracy and their 'good' blood showed. Their speech was another manifestation of their class, whatever their up-bringing, and it marked them out as ladies. As passive protagonists women were not believed to have passionate sexual feelings, they did not actively pursue the men they loved; they were at the centre of the love story but did not drive it. Virtue was a tangible, valuable attribute, to be maintained at all costs. Margaret Dalziel saw a contradiction here: women were seen as both passive, lacking the ability to stand up to these villainous men and as victims of their machinations, and yet actively responsible for their own reputation and future.[137]

The period 1839 to 1889 was a time of tumultuous change; some women had to migrate for economic reasons and lost the protection of their families. Legal changes in welfare provision meant that women certainly became more financially vulnerable if they were abandoned after conceiving a child. Barret-Ducrocq presented a picture of women left alone to support babies, constantly anxious, exhausted, determined to keep their children but unable to financially provide for them.[138] During this period young women were vulnerable, and these romantic stories warned them of the dangers they faced. The message was clear: girls must protect themselves or the results would be disastrous.

Attitudes to extra-marital sex changed throughout the period but the message in popular romantic fiction remained static. It is not possible to determine whether working-class sexual practice actually changed, or whether pre-marital sex became less common, but it is possible to see the message women were receiving through their reading material, and this may have affected their attitudes and behaviour. Elizabeth Roberts certainly found that the women she interviewed for an oral history project who reflected attitudes at the end of the century had the strongly-held view that pre-marital pregnancy was shameful.[139]

[137] Dalziel, pp. 110-11.
[138] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 56, 152-53 & 161-63.
[139] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 78.

Working-class women also needed to understand the dominant group's ideologies, or the moral climate, to gain help from agencies like the Foundling Hospital. In the cases of pre-marital pregnancy they needed to be able to prove that they acted in good faith and believed that they were to be married, and they also needed to be able to demonstrate that they were repentant and acknowledge that they had made a mistake, even if they did not believe it.[140] They would have been unable to get the help they needed from these middle and upper-class led agencies without this show of repentance. The novelists were projecting onto the working-class their own view that a loss of virtue was a moral taboo, but in reality readers needed to know that they had to protect their virtue to avoid being left with a child they could not afford to support. Mary Poovey says mass-culture is a method of subordinating difference; it can also be a way of warning the readers that they will be punished if they are different, if they acted in a way contrary to the dominant ideology.[141]

[140] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 150-52.
[141] Poovey, p. 3.

CHAPTER 6: CONTENT ANALYSIS II - MARRIAGE: THE ONLY FUTURE FOR A GOOD WOMAN

Introduction

> Then these beautiful romances, they delighted me until I began to think how happy all the heroines were, compared to me. They and their lovers get into dreadful trouble, but they do marry at last. How am I to marry who have not a single male acquaintance?[1]

These were the thoughts of Agnes Brooke, the heroine of 'The Belles of Wimbledon', a short story published in the *LJ* in 1864. She had been sent to Wimbledon to keep her away from the company of young men by her guardian as he hoped to marry her himself. Agnes had identified the common message in these romance stories: that their heroines could expect to meet a hero and fall in love, they may face various trials and difficulties, but in the end they would marry. As Margaret Dalziel said, the story continued until the heroine was married or dead.[2]

Most working-class girls did indeed marry.[3] The overall marriage rate in England increased during the late eighteenth century, declined in the 1830s and 40s, but increased again in the 1850s, with little change then until the First World War.[4] In 1871 nearly 90% of English women between the ages of forty-five and forty-nine were or had been married.[5] Jose Harris said that marriage was much more central to the 'matrix of family life' at the end of the century than it had been at the start.[6] Elizabeth Roberts similarly found that working-class girls who grew up in the same period in Northern England also found that they assumed that they would get married.[7] This assumption can be seen to have its roots in the Christian tenet that the family was the primary form of social organisation; the earthly family was an extension of the Heavenly family.[8]

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[1] L.G, 'The Belles of Wimbledon', *LJ*, 17th Sept 1864, p. 180.
[2] Dalziel, p. 34.
[3] Tilly and Scott make this statement, although they do not say what evidence they have used to reach this conclusion, p. 123.
[4] Wood and Hinde, p. 41, and Figure 14, p. 138.
[5] Mary Lyndon Shanley, Feminism, *Marriage and the Law in Victorian England 1850-1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 9.
[6] Jose Harris, p. 62.
[7] This was one of the findings of an oral history project. E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 81; Gillis said that after 1850 marriage became almost mandatory, p. 233.
[8] Davidoff and Hall, p. 109.

It is important to recognise that a life-choice like marriage is a complex one; this chapter does not seek to rob women of all agency, or say that women who did not read romances did not marry. Andrew King argues that 'the resolution of novels with marriage should not be over-simplified' because in them women have adventures and lead exciting lives and the endings are skimmed over quickly, to bring the stories to a 'rapid resolution.'[9] However in my view these romance stories offered no alternative future to their readers, and suggested that women could not, or should not, imagine any other future. Ivy Pinchbeck and Michael Anderson have both suggested that it was possible in a few areas for women to achieve economic independence, but none of the heroines or stories I have read advocated this as a long-term life choice. Mary Lyndon Shanley said the 'pressures on women to marry were enormous in nineteenth-century England' and I argue that romantic literature acted as another cultural pressure on women to legally marry by instilling the fantasy of the 'happily ever after' marriage, and as such became part of the web Geertz says mankind weaves to enable people to negotiate their way through life in the society in which they live.[10] This chapter will show how fictional heroines may have had to face various challenges before getting married, but becoming a bride was the only 'happy ending'.

The following analysis will demonstrate how this central message was conveyed. I consider how the world was presented as a dangerous place and women needed the protection of the 'right' kind of hero to be safe in it. Heroines gained protection and a position in society through good behaviour and a prudent marriage to a suitable hero. Very few working-class women made a conscious decision to remain unmarried, and this chapter will also consider how the spinster was represented as the anti-heroine: this future was a failure and an 'unhappy ending.'[11]

Variations in courtship and age of marriage

An individual's class, where she lived, the employment opportunities available to her and whether she had surviving parents or not would all contributed to the age at which she married, her choice of partner and in some cases, whether she remained unmarried. These conditions directly impacted on women's courtship and marriage choices.[12] Woods and Hinde suggested that economic conditions and changes in the urban-industrial workforces

[9] King, *The London Journal*, p. 239.
[10] Shanley, p. 9; Geertz, p. 17.
[11] The first women to do this were middle-class. Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women, Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 17.
[12] Tilly and Scott, pp. 93-96; Pat Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992) and Maxine Berg, pp. 22-44 for the variation in economic opportunities for women.

were likely to have had the most significant influences on nuptuality.'[13] It is not possible here to discuss all the regional variations, but a few examples will serve to make the point. In Sheffield in 1861 85% of women had been married by the age of 30 compared with 65% in Atcham (Shropshire).[14] When men's earnings peaked early, so did the rate of marriage. Sheffield maintained a buoyant steel trade with employment opportunities and high wages for men, meaning they could afford to keep a wife earlier.[15] In rural areas like Atcham, where traditional farming methods persisted, live-in farm servants were still an important part of the workforce, which limited women's exposure to potential suitors, and also gave some women the choice to remain unmarried.[16] Male live-in farm servants were less able to marry than day labourers, and farmers' sons married later, once they had accrued or inherited enough capital to farm for themselves.[17]

In the 1820s and 1830s in the South and East, lack of employment opportunities meant young girls were the first to migrate to expanding cities and go into domestic service.[18] In other areas of the country women migrated for alternative forms of employment. Karl Ittmann said that young single women 'flocked' to work in the mills and made up half of the lodging population of mid-nineteenth-century Bradford.[19] High rates of mortality meant that as many as half of the young people would have lost at least one parent by the time they were 21, and according to Gillis 'orphans were common among migrant Londoners.'[20] Michael Anderson found that the majority of women preferred to migrate to live with or near kin, and he believes the death of parents and the subsequent dissolution of the family home was the main reason this proportion were living in lodgings and not with family.[21] This trend of female migration continued. Jose Harris found at the end of the century that 'a disproportionately high percentage of short journey migrants were women.'[22]

The high demand for labour in a few urban areas meant that young women who wanted to migrate and live alone, unmarried, in these manufacturing towns and support themselves, could do so, free from the economic and moral constraints of family life.[23] Michael Anderson

[13] Woods and Hinde, p. 141.
[14] Woods and Hinde, Table 2, p. 125.
[15] Woods and Hinde, p. 125.
[16] Woods and Hinde, p. 125.
[17] Live-in farm servants were more common in the North and West. Woods and Hinde, p. 129; Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns in Victorian Britain: An Analysis Based on Registration District Data for England and Wales, 1861.' *Journal of Family History*, 1, (1976), 55-78 (pp. 62-5).
[18] Gillis, p. 113.
[19] Ittmann, pp. 148-49.
[20] Gillis, p. 169.
[21] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 53.
[22] Jose Harris, p. 43.
[23] Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, pp. 53-56; Tilly and Scott, p. 116.

found that in the Lancashire textile industry 10% of women aged 15-19, and 25% of women aged 20-24 lived independently in lodgings in 1851. They constitute a sizeable minority, and demonstrate that this mode of life was possible. Some women delayed marriage to accumulate savings or remain economically independent longer.[24] These findings are consistent with Ivy Pinchbeck's theory, first published in 1930, that industrialisation gave some women the opportunity to be independent.[25]

Those who left home were often forced to establish some personal independence and alternative social relationships.[26] This changed child/parent relationships, the way these girls could behave and the way they met their partners. Servants and other working girls became more likely to meet their future husband through work, rather than family connections.[27] The majority of women who applied to have their illegitimate babies adopted by The Foundling Hospital had been involved with someone they met through their work; or, sometimes in the streets. Later in the period, from the 1870s onward, better transport meant they met on outings to places like Wimbledon Common, Greenwich or Battersea Park.[28] A few women gained the economic power to have autonomy over their choice of partner and the decision not to marry until they wished to.[29] Gillis said 'There was nothing passive in the way London women used their sexuality, savings and labour power in this situation.'[30]

It is important to note however that there were few occupations that provided a sufficient, regular income for women to support themselves independently through work, especially as the notion of the 'family wage' developed through the century.[31] Unmarried women who did not have access to work that paid a living wage in the place where they lived, or a family in a position to support them, had limited choices. Lyndon-Shanley said for both middle and working-class women, marriage was often an economic necessity.[32] According to John Gillis, women did have some choice: they could either migrate or get married.[33] If they did not make one of these choices they faced a life of poverty, seeking charitable help or earning money through illegal activity like stealing or prostitution.

[24] Woods and Hinde, p. 126.
[25] Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and The Industrial Revolution* 1750-1850 (London: Cassell, 1969), p. 314.
[26] Gillis, p. 173.
[27] Tilly and Scott, p. 122.
[28] Barret-Ducrocq, pp. 74-84 & 104.
[29] Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 101; Tilly and Scott, pp. 78 & 96-97.
[30] Gillis, p. 182.
[31] Osterud, pp. 45-70; Gillis, p. 166; Benson, pp. 58-59.
[32] Shanley, p. 10.
[33] Gillis, p. 169.

The degree of contact a woman had with the opposite sex and the amount of autonomy or choice she had regarding who she courted varied. The population sex ratio of an area or district affected the likelihood and age of marriage, as it affected the supply of partners.[34] In areas that Anderson's study designated as 'less agricultural' and where the sex ratio was extremely unfavourable to women, for example, they married 18 months later on average and were twice as likely to remain spinsters than the national average.[35] In other areas, like Durham, competition between suitors could become intense, as young male immigrant workers in newly industrialised and mining areas outnumbered the number of women available for them to marry.[36] Competition amongst men increased the power, and therefore the choices, of unmarried women.[37]

There was clearly a relationship between economic conditions, courtship and marriage choices and the possibility that women could become 'unprotected'. These women concerned many commentators, as they were perceived as free from the behavioural controls of family members. Single, working girls were seen as being at risk of seduction and abandonment.[38] Popular romance stories continually warned girls against remaining 'unprotected' for long, and urged them to listen to the guidance of older relatives. The heroines who ignored this advice were made very unhappy by their decisions. The heroines in popular romantic fiction were not working class, and the stories did not directly explore the conditions discussed here, but they contained the strong message that heroines should wait until they meet a partner in the appropriate circumstances, through family or close friend relationships, and not through work, in the street or any other public place.

Domestic service was important to consider separately; it was one of the main forms of employment for working-class girls throughout this period and many readers of penny fiction were from this group.[39] Migration to work as domestic servants was common, and in 1862 *The Edinburgh Review* said:

[34] Woods and Hinde, p. 126.
[35] Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns', pp. 61-62.
[36] Gillis, pp. 121-23.
[37] Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns', p. 62.
[38] Ittmann, pp. 151-52; Tilly and Scott, pp. 114-15 & 121-22.
[39] Angela John, 'Introduction', Appendix B, p. 37; King, *The London Journal*, p. 30; Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, pp. 1-2.

> When we obtain the details of the Census Returns, we shall find how far above a million the number of domestic servants in England and Wales has now risen. When Prince Albert delivered his interesting Address at the Servants' Institution, in 1849, it was declared that 'the largest of all the classes of Her Majesty's subjects in England is the class of domestic servants;' and by the Census of 1841, they were announced as being a little under 1,200,000. Of these nearly two-thirds come out of the rural labourer's cottage.[40]

The article then gave the reason for this migration:

> When the labourer's daughter then becomes a sensible burden, from her fine growing appetite and her wear and tear of clothes, something must be found for her to do, some means to support herself. The boys can get work in the field or the stockyard, and few of them therefore think of domestic service; but there is scarcely any other resource for the girl.[41]

Service can be seen as both a barrier to marriage and an inducement to do so. Many girls were reluctant to stay in domestic service, as the hours were long and the work hard and girls escaped from service as soon as they could.[42] Marriage was one way to do this; by the end of the century working-class women who were born and lived in cities married earlier to avoid going into service, as this was an unpopular form of work.[43] Domestic service was also a way of gaining independence from family (and relieving family of the burden of support). Women engaged in domestic service were found to be twice as likely to be unmarried in their twenties and thirties than those engaged in other sorts of work; Michael Anderson suggested that this could have been due both to the lack of opportunity or permission to meet a partner, and the possible effect of living with middle-class families, who also married later in life.[44]

Romantic fiction was one of the channels of communication servant girls had with the outside world, and these stories offered marriage as a way of escape, both mentally and physically, from their lives. The recommendation in these romance stories was that women should meet a partner through family connection, but this model of courtship would have been impossible for many of them. Domestic servants were isolated within the homes they

[40] 'Address of Prince Albert at the Meeting of the Servants' Provident Society. Modern Domestic Service', *Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal*, 115:234, April (1862), 411-12.
[41] 'Address of Prince Albert', p. 412.
[42] 'Address of Prince Albert', p. 413.
[43] Ross, *Love and Toil*, pp. 59-60; Gillis, pp. 113 & 167-70.
[44] Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns', pp. 72-73; Woods and Hinde, p. 123.

worked in, often a long way from their family homes, were seen as under the protection of their employers and many of these made it clear 'followers' (boyfriends) were forbidden.[45]

What is clear is that opportunities to marry varied throughout the country and the period, but the messages in popular romantic fiction concerning courtship and marriage remained the same. In early penny-a-part novels the heroines met suitable partners through family, or their suitor was a relative.[46] In the fiction found in periodicals in the 1860s and 1870s there is some variation and some reflection of modernity and new forms of transport – for example in the 'The Trip By Rail' (*LJ*, 1864) the heroines meets her hero on a train, although like the majority of heroes, he turned out to be known by her father. This was also true of penny novelettes in the later period. In *Love's Thorny Paths* (1880) Margaret was enthralled by a man she met a man at a ball, but he was unsuitable and unreliable, and she eventually saw the error of her choice, and married the close family friend she has known all her life.[47] The fiction working class women read did not explore the complicated and difficult issues of how and where a working girl could meet an appropriate partner – it simply told them to remain protected, and take the advice of their family members. The courtships heroines in fiction experienced were idealised, from love at first sight to the ultimate aim of marriage to a hero.

Courtship and marriage in popular fiction:

The wish (and push) to marry

> Tis said there are "looks and tones that dart an instant sunshine through the heart." We believe there is truth in the saying, else how can we account for that love at first sight that took possession of the hearts of Agnes Brooke and the handsome young rifleman.[48]

Most heroines and heroes in popular romantic fiction fell in love as soon as they met each other. Agnes Brooke's experience is typical. Thomas Peckett Prest also promoted the concept of love at first sight in his serialised novel, *Evelina the Pauper's Child*. The eponymous heroine fell instantly in love with Westbourne Sidley, and Prest said:

[45] Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 136.
[46] For example Phoebe's suitor George works for her adopted father, *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842); Ada Mortimer marries her cousin, *The Trials of Love* (1848); Evelina's suitor is the son of a family friend, *Evelina* (1851); Bess Leslie's hero is the son of a family friend from Arundel, *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[47] *Love's Thorny Path*, Bow Bells Novelette, Vol 5, No 101, (London: John Dicks, 1880).
[48] L.G, 'The Belles of Wimbledon', *LJ*, 17th Sept 1864, p. 181.

> Many persons smile at the idea of love at first sight, but when the beauty, intrinsically and personal, so lucidly present themselves to the observation [sic], is it all to be wondered that the attractions should at once be enlisted in favour of the being who has engendered the feeling?[49]

The core of popular romantic fiction is courtship, love and marriage. These are inextricably linked. Pierce Egan represented love as an irresistible, natural force that profoundly affected the lovers. In 'The Flower of the Flock' he described how the hero, Hal Vivien, was transformed from a boy into a man after falling in love with Flora Wilton and rescuing her from a fire*:*

> Up to this moment he had been, in his knowledge of the world, a mere boy. He was, at a moment, transformed into a man. He had "something to love," and that something was not a relative – the affection was not of the same nature as that entertained for kith or kin. He had taken up a responsibility, and at once there was something to live for, work for, seek for and to win.[50]

Love and responsibility changed everything for both parties. It was represented as having a force and power that neither party could ignore. In a later series in the *LJ*, ''Woman's Love' (1869), Frank Fenton, previously tempted to a life of crime, changes path and is redeemed by his love for Eltha:

> Nature had gifted him with a loyal heart. If in the warm impulse of youth, no friend to guide and counsel him, his passions had taken reason prisoner, and led him for a time astray, a true and virtuous love now promised to redeem him.[51]

He decides to help the man he was previously planning to cheat. Love is given this special power. The action in 'Christmas Day in the Country' (*LJ*, 1864) takes place in heavy snow, but it is described as a 'perpetual summer' in the hero's heart because of his love for the heroine.[52]

Love during courtship in these novels was expressed through compliment and not physical sex. The message in popular fiction was not ambiguous: physical relationships should not take place outside of marriage, and heroes and heroines would not consider it appropriate to show sexual passion during courtship. A hero, as a 'good' suitor, would respect the woman

[49] *Evelina* (1851), p. 121.
[50] 'The Flower of the Flock*', LJ,* 19th December 1857, p. 241.
[51] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 1st May 1869, p. 260.
[52] 'Christmas Day in the Country', *LJ*, 31st December 1864, pp. 429.

he courted, and the social rules that prohibit intimate relationships. There was a message here about choosing a suitable man as a husband: he should find the heroine attractive, but not put her under any pressure to have a physical relationship until they were married.

Sex outside marriage was the ultimate literary sin that threatened the sanctity of the Victorian marriage.[53] As seen in the previous chapter, George Moore's *Esther Waters* caused a sensation at the end of the nineteenth-century because a passage allows the reader to identify the moment the physical act of sex takes place.[54] Elaine Showalter said that women were taught to keep any discussion of sexual matters to themselves, or share only with intimate friends. These women became used to seeing themselves as 'violets in the shade.'[55] Reading these novels would not constitute any kind of sex education for women.

Male passion was described more freely. Men were expected to control their baser urges, but it was also thought that it was unhealthy for a man to go without sex.[56] Men were allowed to feel physical, sexual attraction, but the way they dealt with it determined whether they were a hero, and a 'suitable' potential husband, or a villain that all heroines should avoid. Late nineteenth-century sexologists argued that aspects of sexuality were natural, but essentially sexual behaviour was a political issue, one that reflected the society's ideologies.[57] Heroes constantly expressed their admiration for their heroines' beauty, but true heroes appeared devoid of sexually motivated behaviour.[58] Mr Hastings had fallen in love with Bess Leslie when he saw her in London some years previous to the episode where he saved her from drowning. His emotions were so strong that when he found out she was engaged, he moved to Dover to try to forget her. He expressed a powerful attraction to her sensibility and her innocence.[59] Villains, however, were driven by sexual passion. Lord Vernon Sidley was a prime example. As soon as he saw Evelina he was struck by her uncommon beauty and, despite being a married man '[h]e secretly made a vow that he was determined to have her.'[60] What followed was a series of foiled attempts to abduct her. Sidley had to leave his home and hide after a dual, then was arrested for his part in the

[53] George Watt, *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 180-81.
[54] Carol Ohmann, 'George Moore's Esther Waters', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* 25, (1970), 174-187.
[55]Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own. From Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 1982), pp. 73-76.
[56] Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change,* p. 3.
[57] Jackson, p. 3.
[58] This was noted also by Dalziel, p. 111.
[59] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[60] *Evelina* (1851), chapter 12, p. 63.

abduction attempts, and lost his money and title. He finally confessed and died. Sidley was clearly punished for not being able to control the lustful feelings he had for Evelina.

There was clearly something thrilling for the reader encountering this uncontrollable lust for a beautiful heroine, and the 'sexually-driven' villain appeared regularly. The lack of restraint acted as a signifier; the regular romance reader knew, through repetitive messages and common plotlines in previous reading, that the villain would be punished for it. It is interesting that this characteristic of a hero pre-dates the social purity movement that started in the late 1860s and urged men to be as chaste as women.[61] This movement promoted male abstinence, and these novels were reinforcing the message that 'good' men should not express or act on sexual desire.[62] Reading these novels would lead innocent women to expect a gentle, courtly love, rather than any physical passion. Nineteenth-century women were being told that they should not have any sexual urges, and suitable partners would not act on any that they might have.

The result of true love was a legitimate proposal of marriage, and the setting up of a new household. There was a clear connection between a new household and masculinity. Heading the household, providing for its members and fathering children were seen in the nineteenth-century as essential qualifications for manhood.[63] A proposal, and the resulting marriage, played an important role in both the practical organisation of the couples' lives, and their perceptions of themselves as adults. For women, a proposal brought with it, in these novels, the promise that they would be protected and taken care of. Amy Mortimer felt she had to support herself after her mother's death, and a position as a governess had been found for her. She was not happy about the prospect of this. When Lewis Lawrenson proposed to her he said:

> I have the power to obviate all, to remove every difficulty, if you will deign to accept it, and, in doing so, confer on me the greatest boon that was ever conferred on mortal man, in giving me the title of your husband, the right henceforward to protect you from every care, to shelter you from every evil, and confirm my own felicity while devoting my own future life to the study of yours.[64]

[61] Lesley Hall, 'Hauling down the Double Standard', pp. 36-56.
[62] Jeffreys, pp. 6-27.
[63] John Tosh, 'What should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain.' *History Workshop Journal*, 38, (1994), 179-201 (p. 185).
[64] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 126.

Amy's response was to tremble, and for her heart to 'beat tumultuously'.[65] This quotation links to Lyndon-Shanley's point that for most women marriage was an economic necessity. Few women could earn enough to support themselves, and remaining unmarried would have meant a very difficult life, with pauperism a real prospect, especially in 1848 when this was written. We know that Hannah Maria Jones, the author of this novel, was suffering from poverty herself at this time.

The marriage proposal was represented as the most important event in a girl's life, one that provides the promise of a happy future. This was articulated in 'The Flower of the Flock' when Mark Wilton proposed to Lotte Clinton:

> And he whispered softly in her ear-
> "Will you refuse to be mine now, dearest, dearest Lotte?"
> "Oh, Mark," she murmured "My heart is so full, I cannot speak to you!"
> "What! Not one little word, Lotte?" he urged.

Lotte had to be convinced that both families would approve of their match. Once she was, she accepted:

> …and so she said, clearly and earnestly, that to wed Mark would be the happiest event which could happen to her in her whole life.[66]

This quotation was typical of the proposals in these stories. The hero always pushed the heroine towards accepting, she was always concerned about it being an acceptable match for both families, and considered the equality of their union, both financially and in terms of social status. Once she had accepted, both parties reached a peak of happiness they had not reached before.

The push for legal marriage: Being a bride

Studies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have found that many working-class couples preferred to live outside legal marriage in a permanent state of co-habitation based on the consent and agreement of both parties.[67] These couples were regarded by their peers

[65] *The Trials of Love* (1848), p. 126.
[66] 'The Flower of the Flock*', LJ,* 8th May 1858, p. 149.
[67] These relationships were called 'living tally', 'living over the brush' and 'besom weddings', for example. Gillis, pp. 192-201.

as having relationships based on affection and as particularly well-matched.[68] Henry Mayhew found that English-born costermongers were hostile in the 1840s to the idea of paying for a wedding, and only married in church when it was free. They were reluctant to put their money in the 'parson's pocket'. He said 'There is no honour attached to the marriage state and no shame to concubinage' and described how costermonger girls would leave their parents' home to 'keep company with so and so.'[69] Limited data makes it difficult to assess how common living together outside legal marriage was, though one estimate suggested that as many as a fifth of the population in the nineteenth-century may have lived as one of a couple without a legal marriage.[70]

These customs did persist in some areas of the country into the 1880s, but a public movement for reform began in the 1830s resulting in the increase in marriage mentioned at the start of this chapter. Legislation was introduced in 1830s that was designed to make legal marriage more attractive, and indeed more necessary. There was only one specific reference to women under the New Poor Law 1834, and this was to ensure unmarried mothers did not gain the same rights to financial support from the fathers of their children as married ones. To have offered the same support would have been, in the words of the Act 'to extend the rights of matrimony to the unqualified and undeserving.'[71] The children of unmarried women were to be considered a burden to the mother and if she could not support her child, her parents.[72] Unmarried mothers were entitled to relief from poverty, but unlike married, deserted mothers who were entitled to outdoor relief, they were to be sent to the workhouse.[73] The Marriage Act 1836 made it possible for civil marriage, and took away the necessity for religious rites, making marriage cheaper and more accessible. Civil weddings flourished in England and Wales throughout the century. This legislation helped turn the second half of the century into the 'era of mandatory marriage.'[74] Edward Whittaker commented on the increase in civil marriage in an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1885. He says that of 122,496 weddings performed in 1841, 93.4% took place in church. By 1882 this percentage decreased to 71.5% while the total number of marriages increased to 204,405.[75]

[68] Gillis, p. 206.
[69] Gillis, pp. 204, 165 & 178.
[70] Tilly and Scott, pp. 96-97; Gillis, p. 219.
[71] Pat Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop*, 6 (1978), 29-51 (p. 32).
[72] Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law', p. 32.
[73] Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law', pp. 30-32; Gillis, p. 239.
[74] Gillis, p. 231.
[75] Edward Whittaker, 'How the People Get Married', *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1885, p. 394.

The compulsion to marry became increasingly evident through the 1840s and 1850s. A condemnation of cohabitation without legal marriage from upper and middle-class commentators accompanied the legislation. Gillis said that 'Victorian standards of respectability worked against common-law arrangements.'[76] London City Missionaries, for example, labelled the shoemakers, tailors and petty trades people they found living with another person outside legal marriage as 'avowed infidels.'[77] A village matron towards the end of the century told Flora Thompson: 'Better a bad husband than no husband at all.'[78] By the 1890s Charles Booth's London survey found that even amongst the poorest, in London very few young couples lived together without a legal marriage.[79]

There were no representations of couples (knowingly) living together without a legal marriage in any of the romance stories I have read. Amy Mortimer was horrified when Lawrenson said marriage was an unnecessary invention of man, and that people in love do not really need to get married. She was so shocked that he retracted these views straight away, and she had to try very hard to forget the pain and resentment it caused.[80] There were a few examples of girls who were tricked into living with men they thought they had married, and this always resulted in misery and unhappiness for them.[81] Amy's poor decision to marry without family consent resulted in an illegal marriage, and led to her downfall. She died alone, abandoned by Lawrenson, after giving birth to her illegitimate daughter. Amy's daughter, Ada, became the heroine of the novel. She represented a young lady who made the 'right' decisions, and this resulted in her marriage to a man of wealth and status.

These examples serve to highlight the role these stories played in stressing the importance of *legal* marriage. This message was clear throughout the period I have studied, in early penny-a-part literature, in fiction in penny periodicals and in penny novelettes. In the late 1880s Charles Booth commented on the fashion amongst working-class people to hang their 'marriage lines' (certificates) above their mantelpieces. This served to publicly declare their respectability.[82] Gillis said that by the end of the century 'It became unthinkable for a woman to become a mother without first becoming a wife' and he said 'It was women who felt the

[76] Gillis, p. 240.
[77] Gillis, p. 192.
[78] Gillis, p. 233.
[79] Gillis, pp. 135, 201, 231 & 239.
[80] *The Trials of Love* (1848), pp. 146-52.
[81] This appears to happen in *Ela the Outcast* although at the end, Prest tries to legitimise Ela's daughter by saying the hero was double-crossed by the 'pretend' minister, who was really a minister! *Ela the Outcast* (1841).
[82] Gillis, p. 235.

strongest compulsion to marry.'[83] This was consistent with Robert's findings when she gathered late nineteenth-century and early twentieth -century oral histories.[84]

These romances contributed to a cultural shift towards marriage by presenting it as the 'natural' happy ending, usually rewarding the couple financially as well as emotionally. As long as the couple loved each other, and behaved appropriately, the marriage between the heroine and hero was the inevitable outcome of the story. At the end of 'The Flower of the Flock' three couples who have faced a series of challenges overcome them and:

> In due course the three weddings were celebrated; and there exists no evidence to prove other than that the six individuals united by the nearest and dearest tie were, by that ceremony, made the very happiest beings in the world, and that they continued to be so for the term of their natural lives.[85]

In a poem by Stewart Lockyer, published in the *LJ* in 1858 called 'The Bride', she was elevated to an almost supernatural being, something beautiful and mystical, a sublime being:

[83] Gillis, pp. 236-37.
[84] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 81.
[85] 'The Flower of the Flock*', LJ,* 8th May 1858, p. 149.

On the golden cushions lying, where the woven silks are vying
With her cheeks and tresses bright,
Graceful as a lily tender, couched in waves with sweet splendour
All alight
Is the fair and gentle bride,
Rosebud lipped and violet-eyed.

Fresh – oh! Fresh as spring's first blossom, naked, new born at earth's bosom,
She doth seem,
Strangely sweet as rich plants blooming, mystic, magic groves perfuming
In a dream,
When the drowsy brain doth ravel
Haunting tales of wondrous travel

Should you look at her for hours you should think of nought but flowers –
Nothing else;
You might fancy every parting breath would set sweet life upstarting,
Buds and bells,
Only earthly doth she seem –
In that she is like to them.[86]

This was the fantasy, the young girls' daydream: that she would be elevated to this level and that she would become a bride.[87]

It would be easy to dismiss romantic stories as irrelevant and unimportant, but courtship and marriage were important stages in the lives of nineteenth-century women, and historians 'violate their own canons' and 'the very nature of the historical subject' if they examine only statistics and facts about marriage.[88] A substantial number of working-class women were reading these penny romances, with total readership estimated as possibly a third of those of reading age. All marriages in romantic literature appear to represent the transition from girlhood/boyhood to adulthood, and almost inevitably to parenthood.[89] By the middle of the century, for middle-class writers and commentators, a legal marriage and a place in the family home had become an essential civilising influence for men, somewhere to escape the

[86] Stewart Lockyer, 'The Bride', *LJ*, 8th May 1858, p. 149.
[87] Alexander, pp. xi-xiv.
[88] Gillis, p. 6.
[89] Couples marrying in the 1860s had more than 6 children on average, but this declined throughout the century to 2.5 by 1915. Benson, p. 99; Ellen Ross said that poor working-class districts of London had especially high numbers of children, Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 13.

'in-human' outside world of money, finance and business.[90] Marriages permanently changed the lives of the participants and families, neighbours and friends. Marriages made households, and subsequently families, the economic and social unit that made up nineteenth-century society. Girls had been socialised with the notion that they would become wives and mothers, boys with the notion that they would be husbands and fathers.[91] These romantic stories contributed to girls' socialisation with the consistent message that a prudent marriage with a 'hero' is the 'happy ending'. Younger women reading these novels, like the servant girls Flora Thompson described, would learn to want this; it entered into their imaginations as their 'ideal' future, or served to reinforce this expectation.

Weddings have a dramatic quality, even if they are hasty and the ceremony is short and does not involve much celebration. Working-class weddings usually involved little ceremony as this description in *The Chamber's Journal* in 1881 demonstrates:

> [a]mong the working-classes one hears of weddings that are almost pathetic in their avoidance of anything like display. We mean when the man steals only an hour from his daily labour, returns to it without betrayal of what has just happened, while his newly-made 'missis' begins settling the 'home', probably of only two rooms, in which they are to begin their new life…Others, perhaps a little higher on the social scale, give themselves the one-day holiday.[92]

Even these sorts of quick, unceremonious weddings constituted a social ritual, bound by cultural practice and forming a legal contract. The nineteenth century was a period of extreme social change, and it is at times like this that rituals become more significant. They can relieve peoples' fears and offer some sense of continuity and order. It is both a public and private act that Gillis describes as 'personal but also political.'[93] It is a personal decision that affected every aspect of the lives of the parties involved, but it was also a decision influenced by many external factors, for example legal changes, the attitudes of the dominant organised religion and current discourse. This was true of the decision-making process made before a marriage happens, the way the participants decided to celebrate it and their' expectations of their future roles within it. These stories indicate that women were being told to expect legal marriage to be the end result of their courtship, and to expect to be

[90] Walter E Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870,* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 341-52.
[91] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 24, 30, 34 &103; Tosh, p. 185; Gillis, pp. 6, 109-134 & 238-39; Michael Anderson, 'Marriage Patterns', p. 48.
[92] 'A Few Words Upon Marriage Customs*', Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 8th January 1881, p. 19.
[93] Gillis, pp. 7-8.

protected physically, socially and economically by a loyal and caring hero after the marriage had taken place.

Representations of married women in popular romances

There were very few descriptions of marriages in these stories; the wedding was usually the 'happy ending' of the story. The stories rarely continued beyond that moment. Margaret Dalziel examined penny novels published in the 1840s and 1850s and estimated 9 out of 10 of them end with a wedding, as this is the ultimate reward for good behaviour.[94] Marriage was represented as offering a bright and happy future.

Working-class women's actual experiences of marriage varied, and there is no doubt that some of these were happy. However, for many women marriage and motherhood meant adopting a subordinate position to a husband, financial pressure to balance tight budgets and a great deal of hard work. Working-class women did paid and un-paid work both before and after marriage, even if they aspired to give up the paid work.[95] Some were clearly unhappily married; their husbands found gratification outside the home, for example in pubs, and women forged their strongest relationships with female relatives, particularly daughters.[96] Gillis said 'Companionship was not something working class men and women expected to find in marriage.'[97] Grace Foakes, born in 1901 in Wapping and brought up in an East London working-class family, witnessed the experiences of women who had married at the end of the nineteenth century. She said 'It was the women… who had the hardest time. For what with child-bearing, poor housing, unemployment and the constant struggle to make ends meet, their lot wasn't an enviable one. Yet surprisingly enough it was the aim of every girl to get married.'[98]

There were few depictions of married couples living their daily lives in popular fiction. Parents of heroines were usually widowed or barely featured in the story. The unhappy

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[94] Dalziel, p. 115.
[95] See Pat Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 118; Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 24; For autobiographical examples see *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant.* Cullwick lists her day's chores as a maid-of-all work, and she evidently worked very hard; Lucy Luck said she 'worked as hard .. as ever [she] had done' after her marriage, Burnett, *Useful Toil*, p. 75.
[96] The bond between mothers and daughter came from the sharing of domestic chores, the latter acting as their mother's apprentices in the home. E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22-25 and Davin, pp. 97-112; Alice Foley, 'A Bolton Childhood', in *Destiny Obscure. Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and the family from the 1820s to the 1920s*, ed. by John Burnett, (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 104; Gillis, pp. 249-42; Michael Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 77; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 25.
[97] Gillis, p. 252.
[98] Andrew August, *Poor Women's Lives. Gender, Work and Poverty in Late Victorian London* (London: Associated University Press, 1999), p. 141.

marriages were the ones that started badly, either because the couple did not seek the permission of their parents or protectors, or because they married for the wrong reasons. Bess Leslie married Mr Hastings despite not being in love with him after he became ill following his dramatic rescue of her from a sinking boat. She felt duty-bound to nurse him, he recovered, and Bess's reputation had suffered as a result of the time alone they spent, and so the only option she had was to marry him. Their marriage was destroyed by his jealousy because he realised that she did not love him. Bess remained true and faithful to him despite his very unreasonable behaviour. His death meant that she could (happily) marry a man she did love at the end of the novel.[99] This interesting example contained several messages: firstly that a woman must marry the 'right' man, one that she loved, and if she did not love him she would be unhappy, even if he is a 'good' man. Secondly that if she found herself in a bad marriage she must remain faithful to her husband and suffer the emotional consequences quietly.

There was a clear message that marriage was sacrosanct, and it was totally inexcusable for any woman to be anything other than totally committed to her husband, and, of course, sexually monogamous. When General Ormond offered to relieve the eponymous Evelina Marsden's father of his debt if his wife will 'sacrifice her honour' with him, both husband and wife were horrified (*Evelina*, 1851). Mr Marsden thought it a 'fiendish proposal' and said "I spurn your offer with feelings of disgust and horror." He said it is better to starve and go into the workhouse. Mrs Marsden hid 'her blushing face on her husband's bosom, and her whole frame convulsed with the power of astonishment and indignation.'[100] It was this decision that resulted in Mr Marsden's wrongful conviction for a robbery and his transportation. Mrs Marsden died of the shock, and the story of Evelina's trials began. There was a certain sense of titillation and sensationalism about this episode, but central to it was the notion that a wife must only have sexual relations with her husband, and in this example the other man had asked the husband for permission to have a physical relationship with his wife, as if she is the property of that husband.

'Sidney Chester's Wife' (*LJ,* 1878) is the only example I have come across of a wife who was tempted to break her marriage vows. This short story was a bizarre moral tale of a married woman who had fallen in love with another man, and was agonising over her temptation to leave her husband to be with the other man, and the torment she suffered was described as a battle between the good and evil within her soul. She prayed to resist temptation. When the object of her affection was killed in an accident outside her home she was relieved and

[99] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), pp. 17-24.
[100] *Evelina* (1851), chapters 1 and 2.

repentant, and was determined to be 'what heaven had intended her to be – a sorrowing but innocent woman.'[101] The message in the story was clear: a woman would suffer terribly if she broke her marriage vows, and there would be punishment and heartbreak. In this case the man she had fallen in love with died, and she was tormented by her guilt.

This story, and others, failed to discuss, or even hint at, the public debates around marriage and divorce that had started with Caroline Norton's highly publicised separation from her husband in 1836. Caroline, an upper-class lady, was unhappily married to her husband George, and sought conversation and company outside of the family home. Her husband George sued the Prime Minister Lord Melbourne for 'criminal conversation' with Caroline, an action that was unsuccessful but received a great deal of publicity. The case highlighted how a man not only owned his wife's property but also her sexual services, and could sue another man for taking them from him. Caroline was separated from her children with no legal right of access to them. She set out to change the law regarding child custody, lobbying members of parliament and writing highly publicised letters. The result was the Infant Custody Act of 1839, which allowed the Court of Chancery to grant custody of children under seven to their mothers and access to children under sixteen.[102] Further battles between the couple in the 1850s brought attention to the matter of the ownership of a wife's property. She privately circulated *English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century* in 1854, where she argued that as her husband had failed to act as her protector the law should now do so. She did not dispute that men were superior to women, or that happily married women should be subordinate to their husbands, but she railed against the injustice that meant that separated, married women were 'non-existent in law' and she could not sign a lease or make a will.[103]

Barbara Leigh Smith was campaigning at the same time for married women to have equality under the law, publishing in 1854 *A Brief Summary in Plain English of the Most Important Laws of England Concerning Women*. This pamphlet, which sold in large numbers for a few pence, explained the unequal legal position of married women. The Law Amendment Society took up the case, embarking on a campaign to change the law regarding married women.[104] Caroline Norton felt that parliament was reluctant to change the law regarding married women's legal position, in particular their right to ask for a divorce, because 'men fear to curb the license of their own sexual pleasures.'[105] The sexual double standard and women's property rights became inter-linked with the debates around divorce, and these

[101] 'Sidney Chester's Wife', *LJ*, 8th June 1878, p. 356.
[102] Shanley, pp. 22-25.
[103] Shanley, pp. 26-27.
[104] Shanley, pp. 31-32 & 34.
[105] Shanley, p. 28.

debates led to the Divorce Act of 1857. This Act made it possible for women to sue for divorce, but for limited reasons (bigamy or adultery combined with incest or gross physical cruelty) and only if they could afford the expensive courts in London. It did not tackle the basic inequalities of married men and women.[106]

The parliamentary debates around the 1857 Divorce Act demonstrated how tolerant politicians were of husbands who had sexual encounters outside of marriage, and their fear that if the law gave equality it would result in 'unrestrained sexuality on the part of the poor and women.'[107] This concern over uncontrolled lower-class sexual behaviour meant divorce was effectively available only to the rich.[108] At the same time the morally conservative were concerned about the 'horse-breaker' figure – glamorous ladies of pleasure who were kept by upper-class men to have fun with. Skittles (Catherine Walters) was the most famous of these, and her public friendship with Mr Gladstone was of grave concern to moral commentators.[109] Marriage was clearly being questioned in the 1860s, with some seeing the necessity for prostitution and others, like the social purity movement, demanding tighter control over married men's sexual behaviour.[110] The debate continued around married women's property, but through the 1860s and 1870s the majority saw women only as the dependents of men and subordinate to them. Feminists argued that women had no choice but to marry, and then they lost their legal independence.[111] The 1870 Married Women's Property Act was defeated and the view prevailed, despite intense lobbying on the part of feminists, that a wife should be subordinate to and reliant on her husband.[112] This view was seen continually in romantic literature.

There were two married couples in 'Woman's Love; Like and Unlike' (*LJ,* 1869). Harry Hartley, the hero, and his wife Rachel spent very little time together in the story. He was wrongfully arrested on their wedding day and transported to Sydney. She eventually followed him there, but soon after her arrival his cousin was kidnapped and he went to his rescue. They were separated again until the end of the story, when he freed his cousin and proved his innocence.[113] The storyline concerning this couple did not even place them in the same country, let alone discuss their marriage, its happiness or its inequalities. Harry's cousin,

[106] Shanley, pp. 29 & 44.
[107] Shanley, p. 41.
[108] Shanley, pp. 41-42.
[109] Trudgill, pp. 179-82.
[110] Trudgill, p. 187; Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p. 30.
[111] Shanley, pp. 49-61.
[112] Shanley, pp. 77-78. The situation for married women did not improve until the 1882 married Women's Property Act was passed. Shanley, p. 79; Lesley Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, p. 31.
[113] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 8th May 1869, chapter 12, 19th June 1869, chapter 23 & 2nd October 1869, chapter 53.

Frank Fenton, married the inn-keeper's daughter Eltha. They spent the first three months of their marriage apart as he looked for a suitable home for them in New Zealand. The couple lived together for a short while, during which time Frank had to protect her from Maoris who were determined to kidnap the English lady. Eventually Frank was kidnapped and they were apart until the end of the story.[114] In the short time they spent together in the story their marriage is portrayed in terms of Eltha's concerns about her lack of education and determination not to embarrass Frank; and his need to protect her from the threat posed by foreign men.

Central to the public discourse around marriage divorce in the 1860s was the notion of companionship in marriage, and its provision of mutual support.[115] It was argued that women could not be true companions to their husbands unless they were their equals, and this argument contributed towards debates in the 1860s and 1870s around universal suffrage.[116] This story did not discuss Eltha's inferior position in terms of the law, but it did discuss the imbalance in terms of class. It was used to demonstrate the problems of inter-class marriages, but also it was the heroine's responsibility to meet her husband's requirements and standards. Eltha had to learn to be the right sort of wife for her gentleman husband, but she was not an equal partner in this relationship.

Neither of the couples in 'Woman's Love' settled to a quiet, uneventful married life; they continued to have the same concerns and adventures as courting couples, with obstacles placed in the way that prevented them from living their lives together. There was no doubt however about their commitment to each other; they constantly declared their love for each other and the institution of marriage remained sacrosanct. None of the public debates around equality in marriage, property ownership or divorce were reflected in these stories. Feminist Patricia Bright McLaren argued in 1880 that men resisted women's property reform because 'it was a question of power. They could not bear that the wife should have power' and it appears these publications did not challenge or dispute this power. [117]

The spinster as anti-heroine

The unflattering descriptions of unmarried women in these stories are significant. Unmarried women were treated with contempt by nineteenth-century male commentators. The 1851

[114] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 29th May 1869 , chapters 17-18 & 2nd October 1869, chapters 50-54.
[115] Shanley, p. 43 & 66.
[116] Shanley, p. 47.
[117] Shanley, p. 63.

census shows that there were 405,000 more women in the population than men, and *The Westminster Review* used the term 'surplus women' to describe the numerical difference between the male and female population, a phrase that clearly marginalizes these women and robs them of a place in society.[118] Despite an increase in marriage from the 1840s, in the late Victorian period one in three women were single and one in four would never marry.[119] Unmarried middle- and upper-class women were perceived to be a 'problem'.[120] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a twentieth-century American feminist theorist, said women who did not marry - 'old maids' - were despised for having no value because they had not secured a 'buyer' for their 'sex attraction' and so they were considered failures, figures of fun and ridicule. Unmarried men were not viewed in the same way because they were not valued for their looks.[121] Despite the consistent demand for domestic servants and the preference for these to be unmarried, working-class women who worked as domestic servants were being exposed to the same derogatory attitude as unmarried women in the penny romances they read.[122] The representations of unmarried women found in romance stories were consistently negative.

The term 'spinster' was used as an insult in *Cousin Cecil; or The Wheel of Fortune. A Domestic Romance* (1852).[123] During a gathering for the reading of Colonel Danver's will, Sir William Watson was outraged to discover his old friend had left his children small tokens, and the bulk of his estate had been left to his female cousin Cecil. During an argument Sir William shouted '"Spinster!"' at Cecil as an insult.[124] This was one of the few stories with a female villain, and her unmarried status was used almost as an explanation for her subsequent uncharitable and desperate behaviour. Thomas Peckett Prest described an unmarried woman, Lucretia Norman as:

> [A] lady of about 47 years of age with a stiff and formal figure, a not very attractive countenance, and peevish, prudish and eccentric in her manners as maiden ladies invariably are.[125]

Lucretia's passion for Westbourne Sidley (the young hero of the story) was described as 'unnatural at her mature time of life, and so she is wretched, hopeless and uneasy.'[126] She

[118] Jackson, p. 15.
[119] Jeffreys, p. 86.
[120] Jeffreys, pp. 86-88; Jackson, p. 15.
[121] Jackson, p. 12.
[122] Jackson, p. 15.
[123] James Malcolm Rymer, *Cousin Cecil; or The Wheel of Fortune. A Domestic Romance* (London: Edward Lloyd, 1852).
[124] *Cousin Cecil*, p. 16.
[125] *Evelina* (1851), pp. 112-13.

was represented as deluded in thinking that Sidley could find her attractive, and 'like most maiden ladies her memory is impaired as regarded her own age.'[127] When he met her, Sidley found her comical, particularly the way she looked at him, betraying her attraction, and was not surprised she was unmarried.[128] The unmarried Ellen Rossiter (*Fated to Marry*, 1879) was described as a 'toad-eating, tuft-hunting old maid.'[129] The husband-hunting spinster in these stories consistently attracted a universal scorn and her efforts to attract men were seen as humorous.[130]

The unpleasant characteristics unmarried women had were represented as a direct result of their single status. Other unmarried women were described as weak and pathetic. In the introductory paragraph to 'Woman's Love, or Like and Unlike' (*LJ*, 1869), J F Smith described the quietness of the city of London on Christmas Eve:

> We cannot better paint the desertion of the human hive, both of its drones and working bees, than by simply stating that Ludgate Hill, Cheapside and Lombard Street – even to London Bridge – were passable! The most nervous spinster, instead of clinging to a lamp-post till she has worked herself into a fit of desperation, and then, with a vague reliance on Providence, plunging madly into the maze of cabs, carts and carriages, might have crossed these usually dangerous thoroughfares leisurely, daintily picking her way from kerbstone to kerbstone in perfect safety.[131]

This passage clearly highlighted the unmarried woman's marginality in the modern world. Her timidity and lack of confidence meant that she could not even cope with crossing the road.

In 'The Love Letter' (a short story published in the *LJ,* 1855) the marginality of the spinster was extended to the way an unmarried woman should look and present herself.[132] On the heroine Lucy's thirtieth birthday her father felt she should celebrate it as an old maid. He destroyed the note she had written to her milliner and re-wrote it. He said:

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[126] *Evelina* (1851), p. 113.
[127] *Evelina* (1851), p. 113.
[128] Westbourne quarrels with his father, who is keen for the match for financial reasons, and, rather than agree to marry her, he breaks with his father. *Evelina* (1851), p. 119.
[129] Agnes May Fielding, 'Fated to Marry', *LJ: Monthly Supplement*, 1, 3rd February 1879.
[130] Dalziel, p. 112.
[131] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 3rd April 1869, p. 79.
[132] 'The Love Letter', *LJ*, 16th June 1855, pp. 245-7.

> I told her not to send you any more feathers and flowers and other such fantastic things, as they are improper at your time of life.[133]

Not allowing a woman to participate in the world of 'feathers and flowers' denied her access to the feminine world, and Lucy was very sad about this, looking at her future with a heavy heart. Her unhappiness was at the centre of the story - the prospect of ending up a spinster was a horrific thought for this heroine. But the story had the traditional nineteenth-century 'happy' ending: a wedding between Lucy and the local pastor, who had always been in love with her.

Marriage and home-making were seen by working- and middle-class commentators as the natural choice for women throughout the century, yet there is some evidence that some working-class women did not readily accepted this fate.[134] Hannah Cullwick rejected all thoughts of marriage until late in life. Cullwick says of marriage:

> Somehow weddings always make me sad & I care very little to see the fine dresses or carriages tho' they do look gay. I suppose it's because of that & knowing how empty it all is mostly, seeing how unhappy they often turn out after.[135]

Cullwick agreed to marry Arthur Munby eventually, but they did not live a conventional married life. She lived apart from him and worked in other households, and Munby's family knew nothing of the wedding until after his death. While unusual, Cullwick proved that there were women who did not accept the notion that marriage was the only choice a woman could make. Kathleen Woodward expressed a similar distaste for marriage in her semi-autobiographical *Jipping Street* set at the end of the nineteenth-century and start of the twentieth. She listened to her fellow machine workers in the factory where she worked discussing marriage, sex and childrearing, and was full of revulsion:

> I observed painfully that while their conversation was full of complaint and revolt, it seemed strangely to leave their conduct unaffected, and they produced children, and diseases, and "women's complaints" with monotonous regularity, and continued to slave in the factory, save for visits to the hospital on the ancient site where they saw conditions worse even than their own…. And the women married, and remarried, and multiplied their seed.[136]

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[133] 'The Love Letter', *LJ*, 16th June 1855, pp. 245-7.
[134] Houghton, chapter 13.
[135] *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick,* p. 233.
[136] *Jipping Street*, p. 97.

> Imperceptibly the novel experience of taking my place, a woman among women, began to lose its bloom. I found myself forever dwelling on the sufferings of the women about me. I was oppressed, suffocated by them.[137]

She retreated to her Spartan little room enjoying her solitude, reading poetry and history. The story ended with her reflections on her mother's advice that 'Life kicks you downstairs and it then kicks you upstairs' and she moved away from Jipping Street, and remained unmarried.[138] This was at the end of the period I am discussing, but it is not difficult to imagine other women had felt the same way as Woodward.

These examples could be interpreted as evidence of some resistance to the central message of these romantic stories, and demonstrates that the issue was more complex than simply stating that the message these books contained was readily accepted by all women. Some nineteenth-century feminists remained unmarried by choice as a way of protesting against the subjugation of women within marriage.[139] Some women rejected marriage because of their life experiences and what they had witnessed. They perhaps saw a disparity between what the novels promised them, and what they could see in their own parents' marriages and in their neighbourhoods. This was certainly the case with Woodward. However despite these examples popular love stories continued to tell women that marriage was their 'happy ending'.

Conclusions

Working-class women's experiences of marriage varied, but there was a strong contradiction between the images of courtship and married life found in these romances, and what they were likely to experience in reality. These stories can be seen as peddling a myth, as promoting something that rarely existed, offering the female imagination a daydream of a future that was unlikely to be realised.

Andrew King suggested that we should not over-simplify the fact that romance stories end in marriage. The marriage as the ending is a complex aspect of these novels; romances are, as Radway says, a conflicted form, because they can be seen as a way of escaping the world women inhabited, but they also reinforced patriarchal structures that demanded that women conform to specific roles as daughter, wives and mothers. Feminists and lobbying

[137] *Jipping Street*, p. 99.
[138] *Jipping Street*, p. 151.
[139] Jeffreys, pp. 89-93.

groups were campaigning throughout the period against the inequalities in marriage, both the double standard that ignored husbands' sexual relationships outside marriage and denied women the right to sue for divorce and the law regarding property that robbed a married woman of her legal identity. However romance stories did not challenge the attractiveness of marriage. They conformed to the ideology of the period, that a chaste courtship and a legal marriage was the desired outcome of a relationship between a man and a woman.

Janice Radway's notion that reading provided an escape is a convincing motivation to read romances, and Tanya Modleski's proposal that women continue to read romances because they are concerned with women's problems, and they offer the opportunity for the heroine to hold power over the hero using her body and physical attraction, also makes sense. We cannot assume that nineteenth-century working-class women simply believed the myth being peddled in these stories that the 'happy ending' of marriage to a wealthy titled hero existed. However the familiar settings and locations made them believable, especially if the heroine was forced to work for a period, and marriage as the only happy ending message is repeated so often it becomes the believable, inevitable future for the reader. Young girls in this period were being socialised and taught that marriage and motherhood was their destiny by their parents, in school and in their communities, and this reading material contributed to this socialisation.

Reading is an activity that contributes to the building of subjectivity.[140] There was an increase in legal marriage from the 1840s, and these romance novels, as one of the first forms of mass media available for working-class women, played a role in transmitting the promotion of this. Repeated exposure to the same ending, in my view, reinforced for these reader the unconscious acceptance of the patriarchal structures that advocated the roles of virtuous, well-behaved, deferential daughters and then wives. Marriage was promoted as sacrosanct. Choosing to remain unmarried was unthinkable.

[140] Cherland, p. 188.

CHAPTER 7: CONTENT ANALYSIS III – WOMEN, WORK AND THE DOMESTIC SETTING


THE
LONDON JOURNAL:
And Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art.
No. 676.—Vol. XXVI.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 6, 1858. [Price One Penny.
[LOTTE CLINTON.]

Fig 7.1 Lotte Clinton working, *The London Journal*, 676: 26, 6th February (1858), p.1.
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Introduction

The illustration above showed Lotte Clinton, the heroine of Pierce Egan Junior's 'The Flower of the Flock' (the *LJ*, 1857-8), head down, hard at work, happily sewing in her small room. This instalment described the room as 'so clean, so tidy, so prettily arranged.'[1] Lotte was pictured as the ideal Victorian working-class single woman, working hard in the domestic setting, keeping herself and her room clean and neat. Unmarried heroines in popular romantic fiction sometimes needed to work to support themselves. Some authors obviously

[1] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 6th February 1858, p. 353.

admired hard work and promoted being self-supporting (before marriage); Egan made Lotte Clinton the eponymous 'Flower of the Flock' because she was industrious and honest, working to support herself. She had spent three years as an apprentice to a milliner and learnt cap-making, and had become an accomplished needlewoman:

> Lotte was rapid with her needle, and was full of self-sacrifice that she might be self-dependent. She possessed great powers of endurance, and to preserve her independence, she taxed her powers to the utmost. No one but herself knew what privations she had undergone…[h]er old habit of rising still adhered to her, she laid her pretty, happy face on her soft pillow at least an hour before midnight.[2]

Egan said one advantage of Lotte working at home was that 'she was spared exposure to insult on her nightly return to her humble lodgings', echoing again the message that single, unaccompanied women were in danger of being accosted on the streets of London.[3]

The work ethic became well established amongst the working-class population during the nineteenth century.[4] Some women took great pride not just in the work they did, but also in their capacity for hard work and ability to earn money.[5] This was reflected in 'The Flower of the Flock' and in other serials however the heroines in these stories carried out a limited number of occupations in particular settings, and in popular romantic fiction there doesn't appear to be any shame attached to *not w*orking or being supported by a relative or benefactor either.[6] Phoebe, heroine of *Phoebe the Miller's Maid*, arrived at the mill in a storm and the miller unofficially adopted her as his child. She then spent her time tending her flowers, looking after her dog and her lamb, and no longer had to do any paid work.[7]

This chapter will demonstrate how authors of popular romantic fiction depicted women as working in a limited number of occupations, only when necessary, usually in the domestic setting and rarely after marriage. The depiction of the working woman found in romance stories and the work she did changed little throughout the period studied. This chapter will consider why these representations are at variance with the findings of historical studies of working-class women's work.

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[2] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 6th February 1858, p. 353.
[3] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 6th February 1858, p. 353.
[4] Harris, pp. 123-24; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 5.
[5] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 52.
[6] Amy and Ada Mortimer both express their desire to work and support themselves in *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[7] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapter 24.

Working-class women & work in the nineteenth century: a brief introduction

It has been established that both unmarried and married working-class women undertook paid work; for example Sally Alexander discussed the variety of work performed by working-class women in London in the first half of the century, Andrew August's study of three predominantly working-class districts in late nineteenth-century London found that most single women (unmarried, separated or divorced) did paid work, regardless of age, Elizabeth Roberts found the same was true in Northern England.[8]

Women's work during the nineteenth century has been described as 'buried', 'hidden' and invisible.'[9] It is difficult to enumerate. There was a great variation in the type of work women did over the period, its location and its nature. Women's activity rates were seasonal and moved pro-cyclically, rising in booms and falling in slumps.[10] Experience varied enormously, for example a single working-class woman living with her parents might have been needed to care for other family members, either in or outside of the home; she may or may not have received money in return for her labour. She may have worked for her family, full or part-time as part of a manufacturing process, and again, may or may not have received payment for this.[11] If no family demands were made on her she may have worked in or outside the home for an employer. The decisions about the ways women responded to family need often rested with their fathers or husbands. Women adapted their daily routines according to the care needs of their dependents and the financial needs of the family.[12]

The variation in women's work also depended on the region where she lived; there was a great difference between rural and urban employment opportunities.[13] Opportunities also changed throughout the century; new jobs were created for women during early industrialisation, for example in textile factories or sewing mass produced clothing; other jobs were lost, for example hand spinners, and others were continuous and expanding, for example domestic service.[14] Opportunities also varied throughout a woman's lifetime. Diana Gittins demonstrated this with the life stories she described in her 1986 study of women's

[8] Alexander; August, pp. 105 & 117; Elizabeth Roberts. *Women's Work, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3.
[9] Jane Humphries, 'Women and Paid Work', in *Women's History, Britain 1850-1945. An Introduction*, ed. by June Purvis (Bristol: UCL Press,1995), pp. 85-105 (p. 85); Alexander, pp. 7-8, 15; John, p. 2.
[10] Humphries, p. 95; August, p. 75; Pat Hudson, 'Women and Industrialisation', p. 29.
[11] Diana Gittins, Marital Status, Work and Kinship, 1850-1930', in *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940*, ed. by Jane Lewis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) pp. 248-67 (p. 250).
[12] Gittins gives example life-stories as evidence of this, Gittins, p. 264.
[13] Berg, pp. 22-44.
[14] E Roberts, *Women's Work*, pp. 11-12 & 20-22.

lives between 1850 and 1930.[15] Local studies have found there was also variation within regions; Sally Alexander found, for example, that London offered 'no single, stable employment for women' in the period she studied, between 1820 and the 1860s.[16] Patterns and changes in women's work, even if they could be mapped, were not linear or quantifiable. Katrina Honeyman urged us to see changes qualitatively, as part of women's heterogeneity of experience. Attitudes to women and their work also changed; cultural change should be viewed as subtle, nuanced, and attitudes to women, and their work, were complex.[17]

Historians have, however, devised overall trends in women's work. Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson said that women and children played a key role in early industrialisation, and this resulted in an increase in women (and children's) aggregate employment.[18] Jane Humphries used data adjusted to reflect the difficulties using census data to conclude that women were more economically active in the period 1851-71, but they became less active by the end of the century.[19] This decline was possibly a result of more married working-class women embracing the domestic ideology already discussed.[20]

Historical studies have also shown how work became increasingly gendered throughout the century. The Earl of Shaftesbury, who introduced both the Ten Hours Bill and Mines and Collieries Acts to limit women's work in factories and mines, articulated his idea of appropriate work for women in 1859:

> The instant that the work becomes minute, individual and personal; the instant that it leaves the open field and touches the home; the instant that it requires tact, sentiment and delicacy; from that instant it passes into the hands of women.[21]

Men and women had always divided their work along gender lines, but technological change brought with it a clearer, more rigid division of labour. Nancy Grey Osterud's study of the Leicester hosiery industry in the nineteenth century, for example, demonstrated how labour was divided along gender lines, and jobs deemed as skilled were given to men.[22] Jane Rendall said the line between men's work and women's work was more sharply drawn, men

[15] Gittins, pp. 248-67.
[16] Alexander, p. 9.
[17] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, pp. 1-16.
[18] M Berg and P Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 45:1, (1992), 24-50 (pp. 27, 37-38).
[19] Humphries, p. 96.
[20] Bourke, pp. 167-197; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 52 & 137; Jose Harris, p. 125.
[21] John, p. 15.
[22] Osterud, pp. 45-70.

doing work seen as more skilled and women that seen as semi- or un-skilled for lower wages.[23] The renegotiation of the gender division of labour was an important element of the process of industrialisation itself; capitalists both incorporated and continued the gender division of labour, exploiting the perceived low skill and therefore low status of women's work for capital gain.[24] Women were also excluded from the traditional trades by being excluded from apprenticeships.[25] A tiny minority of women did 'male' jobs: the census of 1841 shows only 0.3% of carpenters and joiners were women, for example, and female plumbers, painters and glaziers fell from 0.8% of those in the trade in 1841 to 0.2% in 1891.[26] The majority of women did jobs seen as 'female'; they became, glovers, dressmakers, ribbon-makers, straw-plaiters and domestic servants.

Women's social positions were changed as a result of the perception that their work was low status and had little economic value.[27] Edward Higgs said 'the position of women in the nineteenth century was defined not simply by gender but by gender-defined work ... changes in the technology or venue of such labour altered the social position of women as much as changes in the ideology of femininity and the family.'[28] It is possible to argue that job segregation along gender lines meant that although women were a constant and vital element of the labour force, they were undervalued as workers.[29] Catherine Hall said the result of the belief that women's work was inferior and secondary resulted in the acceptance of women themselves as economically and ideologically secondary.[30]

Working-class women in the last quarter of the century were, however, proud of the paid work they did and the contribution it made to the family budget.[31] Despite this pride it increasingly became their aspiration not to work; it was seen as a sign of prosperity, liberation and 'emancipation'.[32] Joanna Bourke felt that working-class women embraced the housewife ideology because it relieved them of the double-burden (of paid work and housework) and it offered them some control and agency (unlike much of their paid work). Women took great pride in doing their job as a housewife well, as they gave this work value

[23] Jane Rendall, *Women in Industrialising Society: England 1750-1880* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 5.
[24] John, p. 5.
[25] Snell, pp. 270-319.
[26] Linda Clark and Christine Wall, 'Skilled versus Qualified labour: the exclusion of women from the construction industry, in *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or Starting It?)*, ed. by Mary Davis (Pontypool: Merlin, 2011), pp. 96-116 (p. 99). The unreliability of census data must be borne in mind when considering these figures.
[27] Alexander, pp. 16-17.
[28] Higgs, 'Women's Occupations', p. 210.
[29] Davis, p. 21.
[30] Catherine Hall, p. 60.
[31] E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 5, 52 & 135-36.
[32] Harris, p. 27: E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 5, 52 & 135-36; Bourke, pp. 137-38.

themselves through the local social networks. Housework also improved the living standards, health and well-being of the whole family. Bourke stressed that women were not the passive receptors of a middle-class ideology – they viewed their roles as housewives as an opportunity for power and status. The decline in the numbers of women working was also possibly due to an increase in average wages earned by men.[33] Some work was created by industrialisation, some eliminated, and the changes in industry, legislation and ideology impacted on the work available.[34]

Unmarried women and work in popular romantic fiction

Needlework

Ada Mortimer's experience was typical of a heroine in popular romantic fiction. Her father abandoned her in London when she aged 17.[35] She had been attending a boarding school in France, arranged by a benefactor, where a 'kind' teacher taught her needlework so that she would be able to earn a living when she left school. Ada's official school curriculum consisted of dancing and singing lessons, and this teacher stepped outside of this to give Ada a skill for the future. After her father abandoned her, leaving her with no financial support, her skills enabled her to find work as a dressmaker for Mrs Yarnold making fine ball gowns for upper-class clients. She then took a job 'overhauling' the wardrobe of a rich lady. Ada only worked until she married a man who had inherited a fortune.[36] Like other heroines in romantic popular fiction, she is represented as a temporary worker when she does not have financial support from a male relative, and she stops working once she is married.

Ada's was involved in the most common form of employment for heroines in popular fiction: needlework. Ela, Lotte Clinton, Amy Mortimer, Jane Travers and Annie Lee all supported themselves by working as seamstresses.[37] Clothing manufacture was recorded as employing 17% of the women in employment in both 1851 and 1881.[38] There were a variety of ways a woman could earn a living through needlework. Dressmaking, tailoring, bonnet and cap making, glove making and 'slop-work', i.e. low priced, mass produced clothing made for retail, were a few examples. Needlewomen could work for up-market establishments, or

[33] See Benson, Table 7, p. 55. This shows how 'Normal' incomes increased by 43% between 1850 and 1880.
[34] Humphries, pp. 95-98.
[35] *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[36] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapters 21 to 26.
[37] *Ela the Outcast* (1841); 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 1857-8; *The Trials of Love* (1848); 'True to her Word' *LJ*, 27th November 1880, pp. 340-41; J P H, 'The Slave of the Needle', *LJ*, 16th February – 16th March , 1850. Note The heroine of this story is called Amy in the first instalment, then Annie in following instalments.
[38] John, Appendix A, p. 37.

for a 'slop master'. They could be sited either at home or in workshops. At the beginning of the century master tailors started to employ women, as the demand for clothes expanded. A sexual division of labour ensured these women were always subordinate to the male workers. Sally Alexander explained how slop-work grew between 1830 and 1850, and how women and children made up the principle workforce.[39] This also increased home-working, and as a result there was an enormous increase in the employment of women in the clothing production trade.[40]

Needle-work was seen as a 'feminine' occupation because it was perceived as inculcating the virtues of modesty, obedience, patience and self-discipline as well as neatness, cleanliness and order.[41] These were attributes seen as 'appropriately' feminine throughout life generally, and as an activity sewing was considered having a positive moral influence.[42] It was carried out sitting quietly, and meant even leisure time could be productive. It was considered so important that in 1862, when the government introduced payment by results in grant-aided schools, the money would be withheld if the girls were not taught plain needlework.[43] Women who could not sew were seen as deficient daughters, wives and mothers, and so it was crucial to their identity.[44] Vivienne Richmond says 'needlework and femininity were inextricably linked in nineteenth-century England' and Catherine Gallagher said the needle-worker, unlike a factory worker, 'seemed as much a woman as a worker.'[45] Women who did other sorts of paid work were seen as neglecting their families and transgressing boundaries, but the seamstress was a woman who could sew, which was perceived as the 'ultimate feminine act.'[46]

Lotte Clinton, as seen in the illustration above, managed to support herself by her needlework, and when she found the distressed Helen Grahame about to commit suicide, Lotte persuaded her to live with her. Lotte then worked to support both of them, and later Helen's illegitimate child was added to the household. Some lower middle-class or upper-working-class women were able to earn enough as needle-workers to earn a reasonable

[39] Alexander, pp. 23-24.
[40] Morris, pp. 103-05.
[41] Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 102 & 104; Richmond, 'Stitching the Self', p. 45.
[42] Richmond, 'Stitching the Self', p. 46; Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 104.
[43] Richmond, 'Stitching the Self', p. 45; Richmond, *Clothing the Poor*, p. 100.
[44] Richmond, 'Stitching the Self', p. 119.
[45] Richmond, 'Stitching the Self', p. 45; Beth Harris, 'Introduction', to *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Beth Harris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 5.
[46] Beth Harris, p. 6.

living, like Lotte and Ada.[47] Egan described how Helen Grahame did not appreciate how hard Lotte had to work to support them both, and he had described an earlier problem Lotte had when she was tricked into doing work for a middle-man who did not pay her, showing he was aware of the problems needle-workers could face. There were concerns over the vulnerability of needle-workers to these middle-men.[48]

Not all needle-workers could, however, earn enough to live comfortably. The system known as 'sweating' developed in the early part of the nineteenth century: the clothes manufacturing process was broken down into small parts, and women completed the tasks seen as unskilled, such as button-holing or hemming for low wages, while men performed the more complicated 'male' tasks such as cutting out or pressing. Jenny Morris drew up a table of the jobs performed in the late nineteenth-century ready-made tailoring trade. Men were cutters, basters, machinists, pressers and packers. They earned between 17/8 and 26/3 a week. Women were mainly sewers, either by hand or machine, earning between 6/3 and 8/2 a week.[49] Not all needle-work trades were sweated, but sweated industries flourished in areas where male wage rates were low, for example rural East Anglia and East London, because wives needed to supplement their husband's wages.[50] Sweating became associated with the needle-worker at home.[51] The over-supply of labour and very low pay meant that single women found it very difficult to earn above a subsistence wage. These conditions continued to the end of the century and beyond.[52]

There are representations of seamstress heroines in a penny periodical who are unable to support themselves through their work. A three-part serial called 'The Slave of the Needle' was published in the *LJ* in 1850 and gives this description of a working seamstress:

[47] Beth Harris, p. 4; Sheila Blackburn '"To be poor and honest…is the hardest struggle of all": Sweated Needlework and the Campaigns for Protective Legislation 1840-1914', in *Famine and Fashion: Needlewomen in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Beth Harris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 243-58 (p. 243).
[48] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 9th January 1858, chapter 12 & 6th February 1858, chapter 16.
[49] Morris, Table 3.2, p. 99.
[50] Sheila Blackburn, '"The inspector can check a workroom is unsanitary by means of his own eyes and nose": rethinking the sweatshop in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', in *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or Starting It?)*, ed. by Mary Davis (Pontypool: Merlin, 2011) pp. 76-95 (pp. 81-82); Beth Harris, p. 4.
[51] Blackburn, 'To be poor..', p. 243.
[52] Blackburn, 'To be poor..', p. 243; Morris, p. 105.

> [b]efore the broken but paper-mended window of the almost empty room in which Annie Lee and her mother resided the latter sat stitching… [s]he plied the bright and sparkling symbol of her slavery in unrepining [sic] silence; and all that was heard in that chilling room was the click of her needle and thimble. Click, click. click they went, like a watch keeping time and wearing itself out; and as the faint shadow of her fast-moving scraggy hand fell on the wall opposite, it looked like a soul, darkened by wrong, trembling on the brink of eternity.[53]

Annie Lee and her mother earned 9d for making two shirts, described as having 'showy linen fronts and an elaborate display of wristbands, 'with their countless stitches, so neat and delicate that the eye could scarcely detect them.'[54] They earned 6/9 a week between them by making eighteen shirts. They paid 2s a week for the rent. The author explained how they lived on bread and tea, and could barely make ends meet. Annie had to pawn the fabric she had been working on to buy what she thought was needed when her mother fell ill. Her mother died, and she fell prey to the overseer who provided the fabric for her work, Watkins:

> …was a man of exceedingly coarse tastes, repulsive morals, and habits of the vilest profligacy. He uniformly selected his victims from among the slaves of the needle, over whom he exercised despotic sway, and was frequently truly diabolical in the refined villainy with which he treated them.[55]

Watkins persuaded Annie to drink some wine and began to persuade her to go and live with him. A neighbour rescued Annie, but the recollection of her temptation and her rejection of Watkins meant she lost her position working for that firm. She struggled on to make a living, doing all the work she could:

> But, all would not do; work as much as possible, she could not earn the means of subsistence, and starved – wanted bread in the spring of her beauty… and one night, when the stars shone and the moon showered down its silver light, she took a mute farewell of them all, and without a pang or regret she went to meet her Maker.[56]

The phrase 'without a pang or regret' indicated how cruel the world had been to this girl, and others like her. The poet Thomas Hood had published a poem in *Punch* in Christmas 1843, *The Song of the Shirt*. This drew a powerful picture of the slavery of needlewomen. The poem described the truly appalling conditions in which these women lived:

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[53] 'Slave of the Needle', *LJ*, 23rd February 1850, p. 395.
[54] 'Slave of the Needle', *LJ*, 23rd February 1850, p. 395.
[55] 'Slave of the Needle', *LJ*, 2nd March 1850, p. 411.
[56] 'Slave of the Needle', *LJ*, 16th March 1850, p. 28.

Work — work — work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread — and rags.
That shattered roof — this naked floor —
A table — a broken chair —
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there![57]

There are obviously distinct similarities between the poem and the short story published in the *LJ* seven years later. Hood's poem received a lot of publicity and was reprinted in *The Times,* and featured prominently as part of the discourse around sweated labour.[58] 'The Slave of the Needle' continued, and possibly contributed to, this discourse. The story was critical of the clothes production industry and the middle-men who profited from young women's distress, however it could also be interpreted as a warning to girls: they need the protection of a family or substitute. The story told them they could not support or protect themselves, even as needle-workers, a 'suitable' occupation for young women.

There was a strong warning that women needed to protect themselves and avoid situations where they risked their virtue. A key concern voiced about the low wages paid to seamstresses was that they might be tempted into prostitution, or living with a man in return for financial support. This discourse concerned the low wages paid, not the suitability of needle-work as paid work. An article in *Fraser's Magazine* in January 1850 outlined how wages for slop-work had fallen, and seasonality meant there were periods when girls earned nothing. The article provided the testimony of girls who did slop work who could not remain chaste:

> It is, of course, impossible for us to live upon it, and the consequence is I am obligated to go a bad way.. I was virtuous when I first went to work, and I remained so until this last twelvemonth. I struggled very hard to keep myself chaste, but I found that I couldn't get food and clothing for myself and mother, so I took to live with a young man.

Another girl said:

[57] Thomas Hood, *The Song of the Shirt* (1843) <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hood/shirt.html> [accessed 15th January 2013].
[58] Duncan Bythell, *The Sweated Trades: Outwork in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Batsford, 1978), chapter 1.

> I've heard of others who have gone from slop-work to the streets altogether for a living, and I shall be obligated to do the same thing myself unless something better turns up for me.[59]

Fraser's Magazine had called for a commission into the treatment of young milliners and dressmakers in 1835, and the issue had created a storm of discourse in the press and parliament.[60] Author Thomas Peckett Prest reflected this situation in *Ela the Outcast*, which was first published in 1839. After being abandoned by Edward Wallingford after their (fake) marriage, Ela tried to work as a needlewoman, but she could not make enough money. Some days she could not eat, and eventually decided to commit suicide. Following a coincidental meeting Wallingford came back into her life and organised lodgings for her. He visited less and less often, but his close friend, Rackett, visited more frequently. Ela eventually realised that Rackett had made an arrangement with Wallingford to take Ela off his hands, and she was forced to become his mistress. She dressed in finery, but knew she was in a 'state of degradation'. When Rackett lost all his money and Ela gave birth to Wallingford's baby daughter, she had no choice except to join the gypsies.[61]

Another concern was the girls' vulnerability to accusation and exploitation. Ada helped finish a wedding dress and took this and other dresses, with two servants, to the client's house for a fitting (*Trials of Love*, 1848). She was anxious and scared about being on the streets of London without a male escort, and there was a drama involving lost handkerchiefs. This resulted in Ada being accused of stealing. She became very distressed, and fainted after leaving the house. A coincidental meeting with her previous benefactor provided the £10 cost of the handkerchiefs to save her from arrest. This episode suggested how vulnerable these girls were to accusations of theft, and how great the financial value of the items they were making was in comparison to their wages, although £10 for handkerchiefs seems unrealistic for this period.[62]

These issues are an example of popular romantic literature exploring current public concerns, and suggest an intention to become involved in the debate, and that there existed some sympathy for working-class girls trying to support themselves. There are several possible interpretations of these stories, and it is not possible to determine how readers understood them. It may appear contradictory to recommend needlework as a suitable

[59] J T, 'Labour and The Poor', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, January 1850, p. 5.
[60] Neff, Wanda. *Victorian Working Women. An Historical and Literary Study of Women in British Industries and Professions 1832-1850* (London: Frank Cass and Co, 1966), pp. 135-36.
[61] *Ela the Outcast* (1841), chapters 11-13.
[62] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapter 21; An advertisement for 'French cambric hankies' dated 1890 shows them to cost 10s 6d for a dozen, for example. John Johnson Collection, available on-line via Senate House Library [accessed May 2013].

occupation, and then highlight the drawbacks and potential hazards, but I think it is possible to see a meaning in them. In the case of Ela, she had been exposed to these difficult conditions because she married Wallingford without her father's permission. She had therefore broken the rules of 'good' behaviour for heroines, and so must be 'punished'. Ela was forced to live on the margins of society, as the outcast of the title. As Andrew King said, serial fiction 'had to arise from social dissonance and then resolve it.'[63] Rohan McWilliam suggested that G W M Reynolds, a Chartist and author of melodramatic penny dreadfuls, relished the transformation of social questions into 'objects of fascination' in his story 'The Seamstress; Or, the White Slave of England' (published in *Reynold's Miscellany* in 1850). The escapist elements 'intruded' into the narrative; they were constructed around a real situation of distress, allowing utopian or radical understandings of the social order to take place.[64] Reynolds used his medium to excite the reader and show compassion, demonstrating how the economy was based on the exploitation of the weak. In popular romantic fiction, however, the over-riding rule is that good girls will be rewarded, bad girls will be punished, even when this means the author presents an inaccurate picture. Lotte Clinton ('Flower of the Flock', the *LJ* 1857-8) was able to make a good, honest living as a needlewoman. This story appeared later than the two previous examples, which possibly reflects changing working conditions for seamstresses and the end of the discourse around their fate, but she was also presented by Egan as a paragon of femininity and goodness and she sought the protection of the Wilton family. She was 'rewarded' for her goodness with both the ability to support herself and, eventually, a marriage to a wealthy man. The evidence seen suggests that, in reality, it was difficult for needle-women to survive above subsistence level, but the message in popular fiction was that women who worked in an appropriate setting (the domestic) at work that does not challenge the norms of femininity (needle-work) would be able to survive and triumph.

Domestic service

Phoebe, the eponymous Miller's Maid (1842), was the only example I have come across of a heroine who worked in domestic service. Her experiences were brief and unpleasant. After her mother's death Phoebe was placed in a workhouse until Mr Bung, the workhouse supervisor, put her 'out to service'. Her first job was as a maid-of-all-work for Mrs Marables, who was cruel and greedy and beat Phoebe, feeding her only on bread and water. Phoebe

[63] King, 'Literature of the Kitchen', p. 45.
[64] Rohan McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress', p. 100.

had to work very long hours cleaning and cooking for Mrs Marables' lodgers.[65] Hannah Cullwick born in 1833 recorded in her diary the many jobs she did and described long and arduous days as a maid of all work.[66] One manual for maids-of-all work said 'The mistress's commands are the measure of the maid-of-all-work's duties.'[67] Harriet Martineau reported in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1859 that 'on the female side of lunatic asylums, the largest class, but one, of the insane are maids of all work (the other being governesses).'[68] She estimated that there were 400,000 maids-of-all-work in 1859, making up nearly half the total number of all employed as servants. She put the high rates of insanity down to the long hours, hard work and low wages of the general servant.[69]

Phoebe eventually ran away from Mrs Marables, and found herself another job for the Spangles. Mrs Spangles was lazy, and Mr Spangles was described as walking around the city all day reading company prospectuses.[70] The employers of general servants were mostly tradesmen, artisans and shopkeepers; Higgs's analysis demonstrated that between a quarter and a third of servants were employed by retailers, and in rural areas farmers made up 37% of heads of households employing servants.[71] Phoebe's third and final employer, Mrs Barnacle, was a farmer's wife who discovered Phoebe hiding in her barn after she had run away from Mrs Spangles. Here she was expected to cook, clean, care for children and feed animals, and was again the only servant in the house.[72] Servants were emblems of social status for middle-class and aspirational working class families, but were also necessary for families to operate. Higgs found that servant-employing households from all social groups tended to be concentrated in life-cycle stage 0 or stage 3 – either households with no married couple or those with children at home too young to be in employment.[73] He felt servant employment was a reaction to crises such as the death of a wife/mother or the birth of a child.[74] Most servants were at the point in their lives between childhood and marriage, like Phoebe.[75] Sixty-five per cent of domestic servants in England and Wales in 1899 were under 25 years old.[76] Older married women were more likely to work as day servants, washing and cleaning for other women who were working.[77] Phoebe did not mind

[65] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapters 11 to 14.
[66] *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick*.
[67] August, p. 86.
[68] Harriet Martineau, 'Female Industry', *The Edinburgh Review*, 109, April (1859), 293-336, (p. 307).
[69] Martineau, pp. 307-08.
[70] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapter 17.
[71] Rendall, p. 5; Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 135.
[72] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842), chapter 23.
[73] Higgs, 'Women's Occupations', p. 201; Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 134.
[74] Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 134.
[75] Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 135.
[76] Reay, *Watching Hannah*, p. 53.
[77] Alexander, pp. 42-43.

the hard work at Mrs Barnacle's house, but did mind the regular beatings, and so she ran away again, and that was when she arrives at the mill.

The portrayal of Phoebe's experience was very negative and indicated that the author, James Rymer, felt servants worked very hard and were vulnerable to mistreatment. The story would not inspire a reader to become a maid-of-all-work - it possibly reflected Rymer's intentional message to girls to avoid this fate if they could. Domestic service was, however, the most common form of employment for women between 1851 and 1881: 40% of women in employment were employed as domestic servants according to the 1851 census, and this increased to 45% by 1881.[78] The majority of domestic servants worked as a maid-of-all work, and as the sole domestic employee. Edward Higgs found, for example, 68% of servants recorded in the 1871 census in Rochdale worked as the only servant in the household.[79] Andrew August's study of selected districts of London in the late nineteenth century found 67% of all servants were employed in households where they were the only servant. A further 19% worked with only one other servant, so 86% were employed in a household with two servants or less.[80] Many readers would have related to Phoebe's experiences, connecting with the heroine and the trials she faced.

Domestic service encompassed a wide range of employers and tasks: cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking and serving food and caring for children. It could be full time or part time, paid or unpaid. Higgs's analysis of a mid-nineteenth-century Rochdale census revealed that a number of daughters and unmarried relatives were described as 'servants performing domestic duties' by the heads of households. These may or may not have been paid for their labour.[81] Domestic service, like other sorts of home-working, had, in Marxist terms, both 'use-value' and 'exchange value'. Relatives (always female) could perform this work for other relatives (often unmarried men or women with young families) either in exchange for money or not.[82]

The majority of servants who did appear in popular romantic fiction were minor characters. They were loyal and supportive, working for the heroines or their families, and they often played key roles in plot development. They were also used to show the good qualities of the heroines. Amy Mortimer shared her tiny inheritance after her mother's death (when she is aged 15) with her mother's loyal servants. Two of these, Rachel and Richard, offered to help

[78] John, Appendix A, p. 37.
[79] Higgs, 'Domestic Service', p. 136.
[80] August, p. 86.
[81] Higgs',Domestic Service', pp. 130-33.
[82] Gittins, p. 250.

her in any way they can. Amy went to live with guardians, a surgeon and his wife, and planned to paint and sell watercolours to support herself. She wanted to live with Rachel, who reminded her of her mother and her childhood home, but her guardians had secured her a position they saw as more suitable as under-governess.

Amy eloped from her guardians' home and one of the surgeon's servants, Peggy, played an important role in this by telling Mr Lawrenson that the son at the Hall where she was to be employed was well known in the area for seducing female servants. Lawrenson could not bear anyone else to have Amy, so he resolved to propose to her.[83] After leaving the surgeon's house Amy stayed with Rachel until she heard from Lawrenson. The loyal servant supported her ex-mistress without question for a short time. Much later Amy found herself alone, pregnant and abandoned in London. The only kindness she was shown is from Becky, the maid-of-all-work in the lodgings where she was staying. She gave birth to her daughter Ada and died. Becky married another servant, Joe, and they took Ada to the countryside to bring her up as their own daughter, until their employer, Mr DeLisle, sent her to school in France. Becky and Joe reappeared near the end of the story, drunk and causing a scene in the street in London. They explained how Mr DeLisle sacked them after they challenged him over the way he had abandoned Ada in France, and they were still out of work. The condition in which they lived and the people who lived near them (described as women without hats or bonnets, matted hair, men in rags, naked children running in the street) shocked Ada, and she was also horrified that Becky and Joe appeared relaxed and at home there. The class difference between them was represented as innate, as Becky constantly talked about how she brought Ada up and the many happy hours they spent together when she was a child. At the end of the story Ada married and settled money on Becky and Joe so they could leave their dire lodgings.

There were several examples here of domestic servants who help the heroine and perform acts that help the plot to progress, but they were not central and they were not given a romantic life at all.[84] Becky's marriage to Joe was only mentioned in passing, to make her respectable when she adopted Ada. There was no romance between them described. These characters often served only to point out the virtues of their heroine mistresses. The messages for readers who were domestic servants were clear. They must be loyal to their

[83] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapter 4.
[84] Jenny is Maria Herbert's nursemaid who offers her guidance and a home when she wants to run away. *Ela the Outcast* (1841), chapter 29; Helen Graham's nurse discovers she is pregnant and takes greater care of her than her mother, 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 13th January 1858, chapter 18; Rachel is with Bess throughout and committed to helping her at all times, *The Curate's Daughters* (1853); *The Tangle of Deep Tarn*, faithful servants dash out to save Grace Alhoun.

mistresses and support them when possible – but more importantly they must know their place in the hierarchy. Their mistresses were born 'better' than them, and other gentlefolk could see this, and it was their role to serve them.

Heroines who worked as servants would be problematic for an author in this period for several reasons. Firstly, the physical characteristics of heroines demanded that they had pale, unmarked skin and fair complexions and the work involved in domestic service would have made this impossible.[85] Secondly domestic servants were discouraged from having 'followers' by their employers, i.e. having boyfriends. The general belief that maids should stay away from male company was contradictory to a love story. There was also the key issue of class. Heroines in romantic fiction tended to marry men from a higher social group than their own and their heroes are always gentlemen. These stories present it as inappropriate for a gentleman to marry a maid, or for her to be represented as falling in love with one and encouraging a relationship between them. Hannah Cullwick's marriage to Arthur Munby was unusual, and kept secret by them for most of their marriage.[86] Heroines only worked for a temporary period, when in times of trial or hardship, and were recognisably 'ladies' who were down on their luck. Working as a servant for someone else was too great a fall in status, and not one that could be recovered from after marriage.

It is ironic that servants were one of the key audiences of these stories, yet they did not find themselves represented as heroines.[87] There were several possible reasons for this. Romance novels offered an escape from the drudgery and boredom of domestic service, and the resulting fantasies and daydreams gave them a mental release. The readers would imagine themselves away from the real-life role they performed. Janice Radway's study of romance reading women in late twentieth-century America equated reader escape with resistance to their roles in the household. Readers' fantasies allowed them to take mental time away from the demands made on them, and put them back in control.[88] She described romance reading as 'combative and compensatory,' meaning it allowed them to refuse their directed role in society (in the case of her study, as wives) and allowed them to focus on themselves, and 'carve out a solitary space' where they were no longer required to respond to the needs of others.[89] This interpretation of the pleasure of romance reading would

[85] Reay, *Watching Hannah*, pp. 127-35.
[86] Liz Stanley, 'Introduction', in *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick, Victorian Maidservant*, ed. by Liz Stanley (London: Virago, 1984), pp. 3-27.
[87] Flora Thompson and Mrs Layton both describe how servants were reading penny romantic fiction; James, 'The Trouble with Betsy', p. 358; Thompson, *Lark Rise*, p. 109; Mrs Layton, 'Memories of Seventy years', pp. 26-27.
[88] Radway, pp. 86-118.
[89] Radway, p. 211.

explain why domestic servants would not want to find 'themselves' and the repetitive, dullness of their jobs reproduced in their reading. Louis James thought that servants did identify with the heroines in popular romantic fiction, and probably did imagine themselves as acting out a resistance to their lot in life.[90] He thinks it is possible they imagined themselves murdering their mistress and yet still wanting to prepare her a good dinner![91]

Factory work

Phoebe was the only heroine who worked in a factory, and she only did this for one day, was beaten and ran away (*Phoebe the Miller's Maid*, 1842). This happened after she had become homeless after running away from her employer, Mrs Spangles. She was described as feeling despair, and had no money and was hungry.[92] There is no detail given about the factory, but what is clear is that it was not a recommended job for a young lady even though women factory workers outnumbered male workers in the early part of the century because they were cheaper to employ and so aided the profit and growth potentials of early industrial ventures.[93] Women were most closely associated with factory work in the textile trades, and those associated with it such as hosiery, frame-work knitting and lace-making. The textile trades employed 22% of women recorded as working in 1851. Women also made earthenware products, were involved in printing, made matches, boxes, paintbrushes, pins, screws and chains.[94] Women had always been involved in the production of clothing and textiles, and they made up the majority of workers in the factories of some industries. In the Bradford worsted industry, for example, women made up 5 out of 6 of all factory workers by 1841. There were 12,000 female factory workers in Bradford alone by 1845.[95] Lord Ashley, in a 1844 speech in Parliament on factory reform, said there were 242,296 female factory workers in Great Britain in 1839.[96] By 1851 there were 635,000 employed in the textile manufacturing industry alone.[97]

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[90] James, 'The Trouble with Betsy', pp. 356-57.
[91] James, 'The Trouble with Betsy', p. 359.
[92] *Phoebe the Miller's Maid* (1842).
[93] Mary Davis, 'Introduction', in *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or Starting it?)*, ed. by Mary Davis (Pontypool: Merlin, 2011), pp. 15-16.
[94] Berg 22-44; Neff, pp. 20-114; Hudson , 'Women and Industrialisation'.
[95] Neff, p. 20-24; Sian Moore, 'Gender and Class Consciousness in Industrialisation: The Bradford Worsted Industry 1820-1845', in *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or Starting it?)*, ed. by Mary Davis (Pontypool: Merlin, 2011), pp. 30-49 (p. 38).
[96] Neff, p. 26.
[97] John, Appendix A, p. 37.

There was obviously a significant difference between the number of women working in industry and their representation in the popular romantic fiction intended for their entertainment. This was also true of upper- and middle-class fiction. Patricia E Johnson described female factory workers as 'Hidden hands', saying that although working-class women fuelled the industrial revolution, 'their labour, and sometimes their very existence, seems hidden in the industrial novels as well as later Victorian social-problem fiction.'[98] There are several possible reasons for this. The prevailing discourse only encouraged work that was seen to coincide with women's natural sphere, the domestic setting.[99] Women who worked in factories transgressed these boundaries, and so became associated with the unnatural.[100] In the late 1830s R J Richardson, a leader of the Chartist movement, made a speech about women calico printers he had met. The Chartist movement was concerned with the protection of the male worker, even if this maintained family and gender roles that were detrimental to the female worker, and many female Chartists supported universal suffrage because they believed it would enable women to return to the home.[101] Richardson summarised a common view held at this time:

> "This is the work of men," said I to the lasses "and you ought not to perform it; your places are in your homes; your labours are your domestic duties; your interests in the welfare of your families, and not in slaving thus for the accumulation of the wealth of others, whose slaves you seem willing to be; for shame of you! Go seek husbands, those of you who have them not, and make them toil for you; and those of you who do have husbands and families, go home and minister to their domestic comforts. Such were my opinions, and such are my opinions.[102]

This view reflected what has become known as the separate spheres ideology, one that sited men in the public sphere and women in the domestic.[103] Anna Clark described how Chartists had used the language of protection in the 1830s and 1840s, and turned 'middle-class domestic ideology against itself' in order to minimise the threat cheaper women workers posed to men's jobs.[104] Legislators and working-class male institutions applied the notion that women needed protection to determine the types and amount of paid work available to women. This manifested itself in a legislation in the early nineteenth century

[98] Patricia E Johnson, *Hidden Hands. Working-class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), p. 1.
[99] Alexander, p. 6.
[100] Moore, pp. 43-44; Hudson, 'Women and Industrialisation', p. 37.
[101] Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches. Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London: River's Oram Press, 1995); John, pp. 1-44 & 24-25; Moore, p. 47; Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem. Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 111.
[102] Taylor, p. 111.
[103] Catherine Hall, pp. 54-66.
[104] Clark, p. 237.

designed to limit women's work, for example the Mines Act of 1842, which prohibited women working underground, and the Factory Act of 1844, which limited their hours to 12 a day.[105]

Wally Seccombe said promoting the domestic ideology was a highly effective tool for early trade unionists.[106] This marginalized women's work in order to protect men's jobs and their wages; the notion of the male breadwinner was promoted, campaigners demanded higher wages for men so that they could support their families, thus suppressing women's access to employment and their levels of pay, despite the fact that the income of the working-class household tended to be collectively earned.[107] Male working-class identity began to depend on being a breadwinner and being able to support a family, just as female identity became linked to domesticity.[108] The notion of the male breadwinner was strongly reinforced in popular romantic fiction. Evelina Marsden's father was almost driven to insanity by his inability to financially provide for them (*Evelina*, 1851). He had been cheated out of his inheritance (though typically regains it by the end of the story) and could not stand to see them hungry:

> The grim phantom of want seemed to stand at the head of their rude pallet, and while it waved its fleshless arms over them, their cheeks became hollow and wasted, their eyes sunk in their sockets, like those of a corpse, and they seemed to be suffering the most insupportable and undescribable [sic] agony. "Food! Food! Give us food!" he thought he heard them cry.[109]

He raised a knife to kill them to put them out of their misery but suddenly came to his senses and left the room. He followed two men who have obviously (to him) committed a robbery, and dug up the bundle they buried. He knew this was wrong, but felt driven by the need to provide for his wife and child.[110] There were numerous examples of heroes who left the country to make a fortune; they also inherited large fortunes, often unexpectedly.[111] Other heroes struggled to get work; Rueben Mortimer sought work as a tutor or painter (until he inherited his uncle's fortune).[112] Harry Hartley, the hero of 'Woman's Love' (*LJ*, 1869) was a professional; he worked as a banker, though he expected to inherit his uncle's share of the

[105] Clark, pp. 236-44; Rendall, pp. 60-61.
[106] Wally Seccombe, 'Patriarchy Stabilized: the construction of the male breadwinner wage norm in nineteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, 11 (1986), 53-76 (pp. 54-56).
[107] Harris cites Booth, who found (at the end of the century) that a third of the families surveyed in East London were dependent on the wages earned by both parents, Jose Harris, pp. 71-72.
[108] Sonya O Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 138-41.
[109] *Evelina* (1851), p. 9.
[110] *Evelina* (1851), chapter 3.
[111] Mark Wilton makes money in America, 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 1857-8; Ronald Leicester makes money in Canada in *The Curate's Daughters* (1853); Darrell Hastings makes money in America, *His Brother's Keeper* (c.1889); Rueben Mortimer, *The Trials of Love* (1848).
[112] *The Trials of Love* (1848), chapters 15-21.

bank when he was 28.[113] Upper-class heroes did not work. In *Cousin Cecil* Minna and Lionel Danvers had been orphaned by the death of their father, and the will (later shown to be forged) had disinherited them. Lionel said he would get a job to support his sister. A family friend, Sir William Watson, responded:

> What do you mean by talking of the world and the marts and all that nonsense? I tell you, you won't do any good in the world. You are a gentleman, my boy – one of the old stock. Zounds! The world would pick your pocket before your face.[114]

Lionel spent the rest of the story trying to uncover the truth about his father's death and the forged will. What was unchanging was that these heroes expected to be, and did become, wealthy. Their heroines did not need to work after they are married. This fiction failed to acknowledge that in actuality working-class men rarely earned enough to support their families on one salary.[115] This was particularly true of men who worked in the 'sweated' trades, ones with long hours and low pay.[116]

This view that women belonged in the domestic sphere was already well established in Britain by the 1830s; it was shaped by a series of economic and political changes and cultural and social influences. Catherine Hall identified the evangelical movement and a 'new respectability' as the key influences that defined women in relation to home and family. This was an important element of the new industrial bourgeois culture and middle-class consciousness.[117] She described this as a 'recodification' of the ideas about women.[118] Sarah Stickney Ellis, a prolific evangelical writer responsible for many tracts and pamphlets produced during the second quarter of the century, dictated that women should find the true meaning of their lives through their family.[119] The view persisted that submissive, virtuous women could provide homes that were a sanctity for men from the outside world.[120] The care of family and the setting of moral standards were seen as the natural terrain of women; these were outlined for middle-class women in conduct books, and were viewed as desirable aspirations for working-class women.[121] Martha Vicinus described the model of femininity that prevailed in the nineteenth century: the 'perfect lady' was a woman totally dependent

[113] 'Woman's Love', *LJ*, 3rd April 1869, chapter 1.
[114] *Cousin Cecil*, 1852, p. 13.
[115] Davis, p. 21; Alexander, pp. 8-9 & 26.
[116] Sheila C. Blackburn, 'The inspector can check a workroom', pp. 76-95 & 81-82.
[117] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p. 75; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, pp. 114-19.
[118] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p. 75.
[119] Davidoff and Hall, p. 183.
[120] Houghton, pp. 341-53.
[121] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation* , pp. 102-03; Rendall, pp. 33-54.

economically on her breadwinner husband, and tied to the family hearth.[122] It is clear that domesticity was central to the making of femininity in the nineteenth century.[123]

The notion that women belonged in the domestic setting was seen in 'The Flower of the Flock' (the *LJ*, 1857-8). Flora and Mark Wilton's father had temporarily lost his fortune and they responded very differently to his arrest and imprisonment in debtor's gaol. Mark went to America to make a fortune, and returned later a rich and successful man. Flora did not attempt to work or support herself at all. Mr Harper, a neighbour, decided that Flora and her sisters were given over into his care by God so he resolved to take charge of them, house, feed and clothe them. Flora accepted Mr Harper's offer of help willingly, worrying about her sisters who she described as helpless and homeless. They would stay until they were no longer a burden to Mr Harper.[124] Flora, like many 'gentlewomen' heroines in romantic fiction who found themselves without financial support, was placed in the domestic setting, where she waited for the situation of her father (or other male relative) to change and provide her with support. This representation had its origins in the social and cultural environment in which it was written. It was a mark of superiority for the upper-class lady of leisure in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that she did not work, and nineteenth-century industrialisation and capitalism had made this possible for more people, in particular the growing middle-classes. The expanding bourgeoisie took on the ideas of the upper class, emulating their behaviour by restricting women's activities. This reflected the success of the male heads of household.[125]

Amanda Vickery contested the clear division implied by the separate spheres ideology. She pointed out that many middle-class women continued to do their housework, and few lived up to these ideals. She says alternative ideologies were on offer for the 'diverse crew' that made up the middle class. [126] Other historians challenge the notion that women passively accepted these changes.[127] Catherine Hall says these social ideals were in advance of practice, but says that the key thing was that the middle classes now tried to impose these standards on the working classes. She gives the example of a deputation of women who campaigned for the Ten Hour Bill in the 1840s on the grounds that 'the home, its cares and

[122] Martha Vicinus, 'Introduction: The Perfect Victorian Lady', to *Suffer and be Still. Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. by Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. ix.
[123] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation* , p. 102.
[124] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 8th May 1857, chapter 1 & 26th December 1857, chapter 7.
[125] Catherine Hall, pp. 54-66.
[126] Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Catagories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383-414 (pp. 390-93).
[127] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, pp. 37-40.

employments are the woman's true spheres.'[128] The rapid changes that had resulted from industrialisation led to the 'condition of England' debates in the first half of the nineteenth century. The working woman and the perceived detrimental effect they had on the family became the focus of concern, emerging as a 'social problem.'[129]

Another reason for the absence of factory workers was that it would have been difficult for authors of romantic fiction to describe a heroine who spent time in a cotton mill or other factory. Chapter 3 discussed a selection of popular authors' lives and these writers lacked experience of this type of setting. Factory women were also reported as suffering from swollen legs, poor eyesight, asthma and other similar conditions as a result of their work, and would certainly have had rough skin and hands.[130] As explored in chapter 5, heroines all had pale, unmarked skin and represented perfect specimens of female health. A woman who could work or ten or more hours a day in a factory or mill could hardly be imagined to faint or swoon in the way romantic heroines did. Female factory workers also became associated with immoral behaviour; they were believed to drink and smoke, like their male counterparts, and so the popular representation of women factory workers did not fit the bill as 'suitable' romantic heroines, who were always represented with idealised feminine characteristics; they were sweet natured, shy, shied away from all forms of vulgarity and excess.[131] Historians of particular industries have found that they were seen as potential sites of immorality; for example Gill Burke investigated Cornish mine-workers, a profession contrary in every way to the domestic ideology, which were portrayed as 'amazons devoid of any feminine virtues.' Commentators emphasised the corrupting and depraving nature' of their employment' which 'could not be said to offer a suitable training for the angelic afterlife of marriage.'[132] Many contemporary observers disapproved in particular of the freedom and independence that full time factory work could (supposedly) bring, dispensing with the need for a husband and protector.

Popular romantic heroines were dependent, not independent. They were also almost always middle or upper class, and their need to earn a living was temporary. Working in an environment seen as rough and unfeminine like a factory would not have enabled them to maintain their feminine goodness, and so 'recover' their status once their temporary misfortunes came to an end. This did not change throughout the period studied. Dolly, the

[128] Catherine Hall, pp. 54-66.
[129] Alexander, pp. 3-55; Davidoff and Hall, p. 184.
[130] Neff, p. 39.
[131] Neff, p. 85.
[132] Gill Burke, 'The Decline of the Independent Bal Maiden: The Impact of Change in the Cornish Mining Industry', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* ed. by Angela V John (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 179-204 (pp. 180-81).

heroine of an 1889 novelette, waited at home for Darrell Hastings for years while he was making his fortune and clearing his name in America.[133] Ruby Silverton's aunt in another 1889 novelette articulated this when she encouraged Ruby to marry:

> [B]ut after all Ruby, a woman's first great sphere of usefulness is home and this is the place above all others where she shines the brightest.[134]

The notion of separate spheres persisted until the end of the century, as working class women embraced the opportunity to stay at home and to relieve themselves of the double burden. The number of women involved in the textile trades had fallen to 19% by 1881.[135] Affluent workers confined their wives to 'decorative idleness.'[136]

At the same time an increasing number of upper and middle class women were participating in the professions (as teachers, for example) philanthropic work (as Poor Law guardians), campaigning and politics (against the Contagious Diseases Acts , for example).[137] The number of women engaged in clerical work increased from 2,000 in 1851 to 166,000 by 1914.[138] This type of work was acceptable because it did not challenge ideas around feminine grace, was clean, allowed women to dress well and be kept away from men.[139] Both of the penny novelettes cited above were published in the late 1880s, but they did not reflect any of the changes, contestation or uncertainty concerning women's work at the end of the century.[140] There was nothing of the sense of consciousness of living in a 'new age' or the 'modern age' that Jose Harris felt was quintessential of the end of the century, an age of 'evolution, plutocracy, gaslight and feminism'.[141] Some unmarried heroines in popular romantic fiction performed work, but always within the domestic setting, the place where these characters are found.

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[133] *His Brother's Keeper* (c.1889).
[134] *Ruby Silverton's Gold*. (c.1889).
[135] Taylor, pp. 110-13; Bourke, pp. 167-97 (p. 173).
[136] Jose Harris, pp. 77 & 80-1.
[137] Jose Harris, pp. 24-26 & 28-29.
[138] Meta Zemmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls', in *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. by Angela V John, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 153-77; E Roberts, *Women's Work*, p. 26.
[139] Zemmeck, p. 158; Jose Harris, p. 20.
[140] Jose Harris, p. 31.
[141] Jose Harris, p. 32.

Married women and work in popular romantic fiction

In popular romantic literature there was a clear, uncomplicated divide between married and unmarried women. Married women did not work. The only example I found of a married woman earning an income is an 1886 *London Journal* short story called 'A Puzzle to her Father'. In this tale the heroine wanted to be an artist, but her father did not consider this a respectable occupation for a woman; she therefore eloped to Italy with a wealthy local man, where she married and built herself a reputation as an artist.[142] The story has a distinctly comedy element to it, it poked fun at the stuffy upper-class mother of her husband, Mrs General Fitzgibbon. It also sited the working wife in Bohemian Italy, not England. The wife in 'A Puzzle to her Father' was motivated to work by her love of art, a refined area of interest, and she did not need the money. Like all the other romantic fiction of this period, her husband was wealthy.

'The Generous Sacrifice' was a short story that was published in the *LJ* on 2nd March 1850 and provided a prime example of a married woman who remained in the domestic sphere. The heroine, Amelia Valentine, was about to marry when a mysterious woman arrived. She explained that she was the real wife of Amelia's late father, and that his marriage to Amelia's mother was bigamous. Amelia's mother, described at the start of the story as 'an interesting, virtuous and excellent mother', did not know that when her husband left their estate for six months every year he spent that time with his 'other' wife. This was explained thus:

> Mrs Valentine had not left Castleview since her marriage, for it was a beautiful mansion, surrounded with gardens, and a spacious park, in which there was a lake. In the neighbourhood there were several opulent families, and while her husband was alive she saw a great deal of company.[143]

His other wife had 'resided constantly for twenty years' in Mr Valentine's other estate, a castle in Ireland. Both women realised they have been deceived, and their late husband was portrayed as the villain, but none of the characters considered it strange or unusual that either wife had remained domestically sited for their entire marriages. The description above indicated that as long as the setting was beautiful, and the 'right' sort of company was available, home could provide all that a married woman should want. The first Mrs Valentine was kind enough to return to Ireland and not claim her husband's English title and estate so that Amelia could marry, making the 'generous sacrifice' of the title.

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[142] A.B, 'A Puzzle to Her Father', *LJ*, 17th July 1886, p. 46.
[143] St L, 'The Generous Sacrifice', *LJ*, 2nd March 1850, pp. 414-15.

Sally Alexander saw the influence of evangelicalism, combined with political economy and an atmosphere where the fear of revolution still echoed from Europe, exerting pressure on women's roles in the first half of the century. She says:

> While political economy asserted that the laws of capitalist production were the laws of nature herself, evangelicalism sanctified the family, along with industriousness, obedience and piety, as the main bulwark against revolution. The Victorian ideal of womanhood originated in this counter-revolutionary ethos. The woman, as wife and mother, was the pivot of the family, and consequently the guardian of all Christian (and domestic) virtues.[144]

The economist Adam Smith had viewed women as providing a vital counterbalance against capitalism. He saw them as occupying a sphere where morality, not profit, determined social relations.[145] The discourse surrounding working-class women became steeped in 'improving moralism'; women were needed in the home to act as 'moral regenerators'.[146] Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the House* was first published in 1854, but its popularity grew through the century.[147] Patmore used the poem to extol the virtues of woman based on his first his wife, Emily.[148] He drew a picture of the feminine ideal; a woman who is submissive, deferential to her husband and forgives all. Her greatest aim should be to please her husband.[149] Bess Leslie, the heroine of *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), epitomised the type of wife Patmore was describing. It was published a year before this poem and is evidence that this version of femininity existed in the popular domain before Patmore articulated it. Bess's husband was prone to jealous rages so Bess did not go out of the house for a whole winter because it calmed her husband's temper and introduced calm to the household, although she was miserable and often cried in secret.[150] Bess was described by one of the servants as having the 'disposition of an angel' because she resolved to ignore her husband's unpleasant behaviour to restore peace to her home.[151] The message to the reader was clear: Bess was not the instigator of the conflict (it was her twin sister's behaviour and the cases of mistaken identity that caused gossip and aroused Hastings's suspicions) but she was responsible for its dissipation. To do this she had to stay in the

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[144] Alexander, p. 5.
[145] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation* , p. 102.
[146] Alexander, pp. 5-6; Catherine Hall, p. 86; Davidoff and Hall, pp. 115-17.
[147] Elaine Hartnell, '"Nothing But Sweet and Womanly": A Hagiography of Patmore's Angel', *Victorian Poetry*, 34 (1996), 457-76 (pp. 474-75).
[148] Hartnell, p. 475.
[149] Coventry Patmore, 'Canto IX, The Wife's Tragedy', *The Angel in the House* (1854), <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4099/pg4099.html>[accessed 27th March 2012].
[150] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapter 22.
[151] *The Curate's Daughters* (1853), chapter 22.

domestic setting; this situation made her miserable, but she accepted it because it was her duty.

John Ruskin, a prominent art critic, lecturer and essayist, delivered a lecture 'Of Queen's Gardens' at Manchester Town Hall in 1864, which was published in *Sesame and Lilies* in 1865.[152] Ruskin said women should be treated with chivalry, almost like royalty, and offered 'obedient devotion' by their male partners in return for the harmonious effect they have on the home environment. Women should be offered the 'subjection' of their hero, the 'young knight', but Ruskin made it clear women's role was to *guide* men in the appropriate arena:

> But how, you will ask, is the idea of this guiding function of the woman reconcilable with a true wifely subjection? Simply in that it is a GUIDING, not a determining, function.[153]

Women were granted this honoured position because of the inherently different natures of men and women.[154] Ruskin was talking to middle and upper class scholars and philosophers, but his message can be seen repeatedly in popular romantic fiction. A later example can be seen in the 1875 *LJ* serial, 'A Daughter of Fortune'. Lady Lennox, a key character, spent a lot of her time helping her neighbours' wife, Suzanne, who was the daughter of a showman and therefore from the 'wrong' class. Lady Angela Lennox was portrayed as kind and generous, helping the girl turn into a 'lady' and helping her 'deny her origins in society'.[155] Jose Harris said that the centrality of the home both limited and enhanced women's power: they may have moral and economic power (working class women were usually responsible for household budgets) in the home, but they were separated from outside society.[156]

The 1880 penny novelette *During the Honeymoon* demonstrated the notion that a mother was needed in the home to provide moral guidance to her children, and how the absence of someone's mother could have disastrous consequences for them. Henrietta Lemington married after being widowed for ten years and went on a long honeymoon in Europe. Her daughter, Freda, had been propositioned by her tutor, and was unsure how to act. She was agitated, worried about her mother's marriage and departure. She went to see her mother

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[152] Millet, pp. 122.
[153] John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext98/sesli10.txt> [accessed 27th March 2012].
[154] Millet, pp. 124-27.
[155] 'A Daughter of Fortune', *LJ*, 11th September 1875, chapters 34-36 & p. 166.
[156] Jose Harris, p. 27.

fifteen minutes before the wedding to try to ask her advice, but her mother was too busy to talk to her:

> If only her mother had cared for her a little more, and had not lived so divided from her by constant gaieties, Freda might not have had another and still heavier trouble pressing on her young heart that day. She had had to decide a momentous question, and left thus to herself, had decided most unwisely.[157]

After her mother left Freda was persuaded to elope with her brother's tutor, a villainous criminal. Mr Gerald Ennismore, the hero of the tale, rescued her before she married him. Freda's brother, Claud, was also persuaded to elope with Freda's governess, the anti-heroine, Miss Crane. She stole Claud's money and ran away. The narrator made Freda's mother's *absence* responsible for Freda's near fall and Claud's misfortune, and not the two 'children' (Freda is seventeen, Claud twenty) who made the poor decisions.

Women were responsible for peace and harmony in the home, and its place as a haven for the rest of the family. Elizabeth Gaskell articulated this in *Mary Barton*, written in 1848. Mary was discussing women's role in the home with Mrs Wilson, a family friend:

> "Father does not like girls to work in factories," said Mary.
> "No, I know he doesn't; and reason good. They oughtn't to go at after they're married, that I'm very clear about. I could reckon up" (counting with her fingers), "ay, nine men I know, as have been driven to th' public house by having wives as worked in factories; good folk, too, as though there was no harm in putting their little ones out to nurse, and letting their house go all dirty, and their fires all out; and that was a place as was tempting for a husband to stay in, was it? He soon finds out gin-shops, where all is clean and bright, and where th' fire blazes cheerily, and gives a man a welcome, as it were."[158]

The image of the fire blazing in the hearth, or not, is a strong one, and was used several times. In the subsequent paragraph Alice, a member of the Wilson family, said she thought Prince Albert would not like it if Queen Victoria worked away from home and failed to 'keep a bright fire in his grate.'[159] This extract made it clear that even if women had to earn an income to balance the family budget, they remained responsible for the welcome a man felt in his own home; the imagery of the empty grate and the cold room says any decision a man makes to go out (and drink) was his wife's fault.

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[157] *During the Honeymoon*, (1880). p. 1.
[158] *Mary Barton*, p. 113.
[159] *Mary Barton*, p. 113.

Conclusions

The dominant ideology of the nineteenth century clearly placed women in the private sphere, specifically the domestic setting. This was influenced by a variety of factors, and gained strength throughout the century; popular romantic fiction can be seen as one of the channels through which working-class women encountered this ideology. This fiction idealised the role of wife and mother, and allocated her a harmonising role in the family, giving her responsibility for the moral temperature of the home. Some unmarried women did work in romantic fiction stories, but this work was clearly gendered; these women work as needle-workers and they were based in the home. There was some sympathy for the plight of poorly paid, sweated needle-makers, and this was reflected in some of the stories. These issues were being discussed and humanised, however there was no alternative suggested. The Protestant work ethic was supported, and women were being told to work when it was necessary, but the key message was that this work should be 'female' and domestically sited.

Popular romantic fiction carried the constant message that married women should not work, yet Andrew August concluded that working-class married women, contrary to the ideology, entered the labour market when and where they could, according to the demands made on their family finances, and when their domestic responsibilities allowed it.[160] Paid work sited in the home offered an ideal solution to some women, yet this meant women's work became more hidden – it was performed in the house and away from the public eye.[161] David Vincent pointed out that the system of sweated labour that was so common in the nineteenth century meant that home was not a domestic idyll for many working-class women. It was where 'the arena in which the consequences of exploitation and inequality were experienced and battled with.'[162] Married women had to squeeze in paid work whenever possible, while still meeting the demands of the family, carrying the 'double burden'.[163] Despite the fact that women battled against pollution, dirt, lack of resources and exhaustion, the value of housework, because it does not result in money wages, was discounted, resulting in its low social status.[164] Mary Davis said oppressive ideologies sustain subservience, and become *culturally rooted*; they become the 'natural order of things.'[165] Popular fiction was one way

[160] August, chapter 4; Hudson, 'Women and Industrialisation', p. 29.
[161] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation* , p. 113.
[162] Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation,* p. 111.
[163] Taylor, pp. 110-13; Bourke, pp. 167-97.
[164] Ross, *Love and Toil,* pp. 3-26; Rendall, pp. 86-90; Bourke, p. 170; Men who performed household task were feminised and ridiculed. Engels commented on this, Clark, p. 238; Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation* , p. 101.
[165] Davis, p. 23.

this happened; it contributed to the 'cultural rooting' of the ambition to give up work after marriage that Joanna Bourke and Elizabeth Roberts found working-class women to have had by the end of the century.[166]

None of the heroines of romantic fiction did heavy or dirty work. Some of them worked temporarily, when they had to, but they were not domestic servants and none of them worked (for more than a day) in settings outside the home. One of the key roles of these novels, as discussed, was to provide an escape, and a description of the day-to-day drudgery of work would not allow for this. What this qualified, specific approach to women and work did was categorise occupations as *feminine* and therefore *suitable*, and kept women confined to the domestic setting. What much of the prevalent discourse did, along with this popular fiction, was limit the occupations deemed as acceptable and suitable for them.[167] In reality some women were unable to marry, others were widowed, and poor wages for many men meant most working class women had to work at some point in their lives, and the work available to them depended on variables outside of their control.[168]

[166] Bourke; E Roberts, *A Woman's Place*.
[167] John, p. 25.
[168] Vicinus, *Suffer and be Still*, p. xii; Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialisation*, pp. 8 &12-14, 35-50; Clark, p. 270; Ittmann, pp. 17, 141, 143-44.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

I set out to answer a series of questions about the penny novelettes Flora Thompson described at the end of the nineteenth century – how popular were these? What were they like? Who published them? What did they say? Why did women with few resources buy them? Most importantly, what could they tell us about the lives of their readers? I found that penny romantic fiction sold in high numbers between 1839 and 1889; the profit motive drove publishers to produce popular material while the easing of copyright regulations, technological innovation and reduced costs meant the market continually expanded through the century. It is not unreasonable to suggest half the adult female working-class population was reading penny fiction in the mid-nineteenth-century, forming the first real mass-media for working-class women, and challenging Sutherland's notion that *Pickwick Papers* opened the first mass-market for serialised fiction – its circulation was very small in comparison.[1] The evidence is that women read these at home, on trains and at work. They read them openly and shared with friends, and they read them in secret and hid them from husbands and children. They clearly got a great deal of enjoyment out of them, and some women developed an addictive reading habit.[2] So-called 'low-brow' or 'cheap' fiction can be dismissed as just a form of entertainment, but the messages in this reading material mattered. These publications had the potential to influence an enormous audience.

The key producers of this literature were predominantly male and were extremely influential as they were in control of the reading material of a large number of people. Although the number of female readers increased, many were certainly male, as were the publishers and editors, who made decisions about what was produced. They commissioned work from professional writers, determined the authors' standard of living and writing conditions and arguably these factors affected the content, quality and style of the writing. Authors who were producing to a formula under strict time constraints, sometimes in terrible living conditions, were in a subordinate, weak position. If a writer did not have an independent income, he or she had to write to please the marketplace in order to keep sales high and receive further commissions from the publisher.

The influence of respectability must be stressed. Authors and publishers wanted to avoid criticism from middle-class commentators and appear respectable, and readers may have selected particular material for the same reason. Respectability also dictated the decisions of

[1] Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, p. 87.
[2] *Life As We Have Known It*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies, pp. 26-27; Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p. 109.

other agencies involved in the process, for example the RLF. Author Hannah Maria Jones was denied access to relief from poverty because of the moral code of Octavian Blewitt; the same code did not prevent her partner from receiving aid.

In the sample of penny romantic stories on which this thesis is based, a formula developed. This fiction was influenced by the reading material for the working-classes that preceded and developed alongside it (the chapbook, broadsheet, religious publications and early working-class newspapers), and it grew with the novel as a popular form of entertainment. The penny romance shared and combined the features of other genres of the novel –the Gothic, the silver fork, domestic and sentimental novels, sensation fiction and it contained elements of melodrama. These stories had common themes, plotlines and tropes that meant the reader could quickly anticipate the outcomes or endings of certain actions and behaviour. Their formulaic nature, the predictability the stories and the repetition of the same messages made these publications powerful. The people and events in these stories may have been fiction, but the printed words on the page - the books and periodicals themselves - were tangible, real objects.[3]

I examined this fiction in detail to consider *why* particular storylines and messages appeared, and were repeated. In order to determine possible meanings I considered the relationship between the messages and the prevailing ideologies concerning womanhood and feminine behaviour. These stories are undoubtedly multivalent, and are, at times, contradictory, but, as McWilliam says the incoherence of some of these texts and the way they handle issues and the complexity of them draws us closer to the way popular fiction made sense of the world the readers inhabited.[4] Fiction can also provide a 'window on [the reader's] world' and readers' interpretations of their literature are 'cultural productions', so fiction can work as a 'cultural clock' for the researcher.[5] Sonya Rose says people construed their experience in particular ways and were affected, some deeply, by the multiple, diffuse and varied influences on their lives, and penny fiction was clearly one of those influences.[6] The messages found in it reflect the ideologies of the period because literature has an intimate relationship with social power.[7] The messages in this popular romantic literature were consistent with patriarchal authority and they reinforced a particular cultural model, at times attempting to influence behaviour where lived experience was contrary to ideology, for example the promotion of legal marriage. These novels perpetuated the idea that wholly

[3] McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress', p. 101.
[4] McWilliam, 'The Melodramatic Seamstress', p. 113.
[5] Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, p. 12; Sonya O Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 8-9; James, *Betsy*, p. 365.
[6] Sonya O Rose, pp. 1-21.
[7] Eagleton, pp. 10-19.

satisfying relationships between men and women are possible.[8] They also provided continuity when there was unsettling change, for example the notion that women could remain protected despite the upheaval caused by industrialisation and urbanisation. Sally Mitchell says nineteenth century fiction was moral, but it did not tackle society's problems.[9] I think this can be applied to the concerns expressed in these books that women who migrated away from their families faced a threat from men who preyed on the vulnerable and isolated. These stories warned women about this danger - but made women responsible for avoiding it, rather than tackling or challenging the men who behaved this way.

My findings indicate that the most important influence popular romances had concerned the construction of gender roles. The subordination of women was naturalised and perpetuated by them. Penny fiction persuaded the readers of particular views, for example the notion of femininity that regarded women as weaker than men, and repressed alternative views, like the evidence of women's physical and mental strength as industrial workers. Joan Scott talked about the power of language in determining gender difference, and literature is language.[10] Authors were clearly influenced by the times they lived in, the prevailing ideologies, and the language and discourse of the period. The formulaic nature of these romances determined much of their content, but with careful reading it is possible to decipher what authors felt was 'natural' in gender relationships; fiction can be used to understand the world as the author saw it.

Central to the deciphering of gender roles are the choices heroines made when they faced the various obstacles and trials set for them by the plot. They were urged to seek the protection of someone older, preferably a man. This message highlighted concern over the migration of women for work and the resulting freedom and lack of family control, and suggested they should relinquish independence and adopt a child-like position. There was some notion in the middle of the period that women could work and support themselves, but they were urged to do so in a domestic setting, and to work in a 'feminine' occupation like needlework. The gendered division of labour is reinforced by these stories; they helped it become 'culturally rooted.'[11] This reflected societal concern over the 'de-sexed', unregulated mill girls and other female workers created by industrialisation.

[8] Stubbs, p. xiv.
[9] Mitchell, *Fallen Angel*, p. 17.
[10] Scott, p. 1068.
[11] Davis, p. 23.

Women were told that to be a wife was the greatest ambition, ideally a wife who did not need to work after marriage. To achieve this they were urged to become an ideal woman - physically attractive, kind, loyal, generous, caring, honest and chaste - to attract a hero. The characteristics of the ideal woman are culturally and temporally specific, and in this period the heroines were passive; they allowed events to happen to them, and allowed their futures to be determined by the more active male actors. They had the responsibility to guard their reputation, but rarely the agency to determine their own fates. It was also a woman's responsibility to maintain peace and harmony in the home. Legal marriage was represented as sacrosanct; there is no discussion of, or questioning of, women's lack of equality once married. Feminist pressure for change is not acknowledged. To borrow Sonya Rose's phrase, marriage and subordination became a 'naturalised' state of being.

The didactic nature of these stories, and the repetition of the core messages, taught readers that 'good' women (the culturally-specific 'ideal' heroine) would be rewarded, and the 'bad' (anti-heroines like fallen women or spinsters) would be punished. There were slight variations, unusually one heroine supported herself financially and married someone several rungs above her on the social scale.[12] The author justified this at length towards the end of the serial, her goodness compensated for her class. His discussion served to prove the existence of the rigid class system she was contravening. There were subtle changes, such as the reflection of female sexuality. There were a few examples in earlier novels where women acted on sexual attraction. Ela is allowed to find herself attracted to Wallingford and Bell Leslie is attracted to the Marquis of Ledbury, but this led to their downfalls.[13] Both were products of Edward Lloyd's more sensational publishing house, and were written before mid-century when attitudes changed and women were denied such feelings.[14] All the other romance novels and stories I sampled carried the consistent message that women did not feel sexual attraction. They fell in love with heroes, but there was no sense that they found them physically attractive. Men were allowed to feel sexual attraction, but only villains acted on it; heroes demonstrated a gentle, courtly love. This representation was unlikely to have prepared young women for the reality of male/female relationships. There was some variation in the way heroines met heroes: in early novels they met through families and close friends, in mid-century serialised stories they met in public places, but the later novelettes returned to the message that they should meet potential suitors through family. Again, this reflected concern over women's uncontrolled physical contact with men resulting from

[12] 'The Flower of the Flock', *LJ*, 1857-8.
[13] *Ela the Outcast* (1841); *The Curate's Daughters* (1853).
[14] Ela was first published in 1839. The edition of *The Curate's Daughters* I used was published by Lloyd in 1853, but it was written before 1844 as she includes it in a list of publications she wrote in a letter to the RLF that year. RLF, MS BL96 RLF 1/553, item 25.

societal changes. These stories attempted to act as a method of behavioural control, and gave women a warning that transgressions would be punished.

These stories reflected other changes during this period, for example the women volunteers involved in helping the poor and the emphasis on regeneration of slum housing. The heroine Ruby Silverton was an accurate reflection of a late nineteenth-century middle-class philanthropist when she involved herself in a project to provide better housing for the poor in East London. However, most messages were consistent and unchanging, for example that couples should legally marry. There was an increase in marriage in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, and legislation, such as the 1836 Marriage Act, was unlikely to have changed couples' behaviour without other stimuli. I would argue these stories acted as a powerful stimulus - they did not offer an alternative future, and becoming a bride is represented as the ultimate fantasy, despite the disadvantages and inequalities for women in marriage at that time.

It is important to ask why the young unmarried women continued to read the stories when what they portrayed was possibly very different to what they witnessed around them. Few working-class women could expect to discover they were a dispossessed heiress, or that their fiancé was a baronet. Also, what sense did many older, married women make of them when they lived in relationships with men who were unlike the heroes in their romances? Twentieth-century studies of romance reading can help answer questions about nineteenth-century romance reading, although they were concerned with a different place and time. The respondents in Janice Radway's study of a group of American women who regularly read romance novels in the early 1980s described their reading as 'a declaration of independence' as they could temporarily absent themselves from their roles as wives and mothers. She developed the notion of romantic literature as a method of escape from their everyday lives to a fantasy life; the women used their reading as a temporary barrier between themselves and their families to avoid the demands made on them as a wives and mothers. Her subjects insisted that 'romance reading create[d] a feeling of hope, provide[d] emotional sustenance, and produce[d] a fully visceral sense of well-being.'[15] Radway was influenced by Nancy Chodorow's feminist interpretation of Freud, and could see how these romance novels presented heroes as both tender and nurturing, consistent with the pre-Oedipal state, and representing power and masculinity as associated with the Oedipal father.[16] She said:

[15] Radway, p. 12.
[16] Radway, pp. 14, 83 &85.

> Later I would come to see the romance as a symptom of the on-going instability of the heterosexual solution to the Oedipal dilemma, that is, as a ritual effort to convince its readers that heterosexuality is both inevitable and natural and that it is necessarily satisfying as well.[17]

I think Radway's findings are relevant to nineteenth-century romance reading. Working-class women often had arduous and difficult lives, and many demands were made upon them. Romance reading would have not only provided a distraction from this during the act of reading, but also afterwards, as the reader imagined these fantastical situations, possibly the gentle courtly love happening to her. I also think it is possible that some women fooled themselves into believing the possibility of the happy ending because the reality they saw around them was different from this. It is the very *fantasy* that these stories provided in the predictable happy ending that allowed these women to *hope* that heterosexuality could create a coherent and satisfied female subjectivity (and often, of course, it did). Radway makes a similar comment about romance writers supplying a myth 'in the guise of the truly possible.' She says reading 'in that case would be… a ritual of hope.'[18] In her analysis of Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* Alison Light is also optimistic. She has argued that women's romance reading is 'as much a measure of their deep satisfaction with heterosexual options as of any desire to be fully identified with the submissive versions of femininity the texts endorse.'[19] I think what is important in both of these theories is the clear sense of enjoyment the predictability, security and sense of hope these books engendered. It rather answers the question about why women would read books filled with weak, submissive women that peddled an unrealistic myth.

It is therefore possible to consider nineteenth-century romances as providing reassurance and hope to readers. Improbable coincidences and rescues told readers help would be available if they needed it; these stories said the world was not as big as it seemed. The predictability of the stories also provides reassurance - anti-heroines are punished, heroines are not, happy endings are available. At the beginning of this period social change was being brought about by industrialisation and by the end the first wave feminists were demanding change. These messages provided a constant in a changing world, and helped make sense of it. The heroines in romance novels appeared to be individuals, they appeared to be unique and different, but their futures were identical: 'women in romances, like mythical

[17] Radway, p. 14.
[18] Radway, p. 207.
[19] Alison Light, ''Returning to Manderley'- Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class', *Feminist Review,* 16 (1984), 7-25.

deities, are fated to live out a predetermined existence,' and this involved the acceptance of the roles of lover, then wife and mother.[20]

Radway sees the form as 'conflicted' in that it allows the opportunity for escape from the 'real' world, and therefore the stories provide some resistance to patriarchal structures, yet their contents reinforce these structures. Tanya Modleski also investigated readers of romance fiction in the twentieth century, and she agreed with Radway that they are a vehicle for the dominant ideology, yet are also a site for exploration for women who used them to negotiate the world they lived in. She urged scholars not to view romances as a simple reflection of dominant male ideology, because, she says 'while serving to keep women in their place, [romances] may at the same time be concerned with real female problems.'[21] Modleski proposes that because the reader knows the formula of these novels, she is not identifying with the protagonist, but is superior in wisdom to her and so detached from her, she doesn't 'suffer her confusion'.[22] In fact, she sees romances as a revenge fantasy, as the heroines always end up with power over the heroes who are hopelessly in love with them, as Modleski puts it 'the woman is bringing the man to his knees.'[23] I do not think this is the case with nineteenth-century romances; these heroes are not brought to their knees, but there are similarities. I think it is possible that nineteenth-century women read and used romance novels in the same or similar ways to twentieth-century women - they offered the opportunity to escape from the real world into a fantasy one, and they offered the hope that heterosexual relationships could offer fulfilment and happiness for women. There is a reassurance in the message that if the heroine behaves appropriately she will be rewarded, and certainly comfort in the message that the badly behaved will be punished. These romances offer a site where readers can consider the problems and dilemmas women face, but in a safe, fantastical space.

However I also think these stories played a strong role in perpetuating patriarchal structures and the subordination of women. It can be argued that these representations, or the readers' interpretations of them, played a central role in the development of young women's subjectivities. Reading therefore contributed to the unconscious gendering of subjectivity.[24] These readers were exposed to limited mass media, they saw little but the real world around them and the imaginary one in their romance stories. Imagining the future was a way to

[20] Radway, p. 207.
[21] Modleski, pp. 37-38.
[22] Modleski, p. 41.
[23] Modleski, p. 45.
[24] Cherland, pp. 188-90.

escape the present, but in this imagined world they were expected to accept their subordinate position.

APPENDIX

Contents of *The London Journal*, 1845-1889

All editions contain 16 pages. The following gives the number of those pages containing predominantly fiction.

	Pages of Serial Fiction	Pages of Short stories	Total pages of Fiction
1845, 1st March (vol.1, ed.1):	3	3	6
1850, 2nd March (vol.10, no.262)	6	5 ½	11 ½
1855, 16th June (vol. 21, no. 538)	6 ½	5	11 ½
1860, 4th Aug (vol. 32, no. 808)	12	0	12
1864, 1st Oct (vol. 40, no. 1025)	11	1	12
1870, 3rd Sept (vol. 52, no.1334)	7	5	12
1875, 6th March (vol. 61, no.1569)	13 ½	0	13 ½
1880, 27th Nov (vol. 72, no.1868)	10	3	13
1884, 1st Jan (vol. 1, no.1)	11	2	13
1889, 28th Dec (vol. 12, no. 313)	12	2	14

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104 parts

Rymer, James Malcolm. *Phoebe the Miller's Maid. A Romance of Deep Interest.* (London: Edward Lloyd, 1842)
39 parts

Prest, Thomas Peckett. *May Grayson; Or, Love and Treachery. A Romance (*London: Edward Lloyd, 1842)
32 parts

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