‘immaculately pure and very high in tone’:
Proto-feminism in the Novels of Rosa Nouchette Carey

Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

Elaine Marie Hartnell BA (Sussex), MA (Lancaster)
In Memoriam
Brian Thomas Hartnell
'immaculately pure and very high in tone':
Proto-feminism in the Novels of Rosa Nouchette Carey
by
Elaine Marie Hartnell

This thesis constitutes the first in-depth study of the forty-one largely-forgotten ‘domestic’ novels of Rosa Carey [1840-1909]. Jane Crisp’s pioneering monograph on Carey combines a useful essay on the major themes in the novels with extensive bibliographies of Carey’s work and other related material. However, this thesis is the first extended treatment of the novels to place them in their historical context and to apply to them a variety of theoretical readings. Thus, it is germane to the feminist project of ‘rediscovery.’

However, the work also dovetails into existing scholarship in that it begins to chart an area as yet only hinted at by others. Recent ground-breaking work relating to the ‘domestic sphere’ has focused upon three areas: the subversive genres of sensation novel and novels about the ‘New Woman’ [as does Lyn Pykett in *The Improper Feminine*]; historical explorations of the lives of women who wished to escape from the domestic sphere into remunerative employment or alternative communities [as exemplified by Martha Vicinus’ *Independent Women*]; and work on texts of domesticity from the first half of the nineteenth century [especially Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction*]. The first two of these areas cover the period explored by this thesis but do not focus directly upon the construction and function of the normative domestic; the third gives an account of the rise of ‘domesticity’ but ends just before the age of the domestic novel proper. Research in all of these areas places at the periphery what this thesis places at the centre.

Finally, the thesis has something new to say in theoretical terms. The exciting work of Jean-François Lyotard, which has thus far been appropriated by the Postmodernists, has been used to illuminate the literature and society of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.
'immaculately pure and very high in tone':
Proto-feminism in the Novels of Rosa Nouchette Carey

Contents

Abstract.................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements....................................................................................... iv
Introduction.................................................................................................... 1
One: The Mad, the Bad and the Morbid............................................................... 30
Two: Maiden Ladies.......................................................................................... 73
Three: Women and Children Second............................................................ 103
Four: Hearth and Home................................................................................... 146
Five: Sentimental Heresies............................................................................. 176
Conclusion...................................................................................................... 200
Bibliography................................................................................................... 213
Acknowledgements

I wish to record my grateful thanks to all those individuals and organisations who made it possible to complete this thesis. On the home front, I would especially like to mention William Hughes and Rita Hartnell (Mama), also my three ‘sisters.’ Alita Thorpe, Suzanne Forbes and Diane Mason, and Peggy and Bill Burns and Anna and Martin Wrigley.

Amongst my academic friends and colleagues, my supervisor, Professor Clare Hanson, comes top of the list. In addition to supervising me, she has helped in a number of practical ways and listened to my pet theories on poetry and psychoanalysis. I would also like to record my thanks to Professor Vince Newey for his support and encouragement throughout my time at Leicester University. My thanks to Professor Ben Fisher at the University of Mississippi for obtaining for me a number of reviews of Carey’s work but even more so for being a good friend. Thanks also to three people who have helped me to shape my ideas about Rosa Carey the woman: Dr Jane Crisp, Wendy Forrester and Regina Glick. I would like thank Professor Roger Sales and Dr Victor Sage for their moral support and helpful suggestions on a number of thesis-related matters. Other supportive colleagues deserving a mention include those I met at HMSO, especially Kevin Gibbons, and those from in and around the University of East Anglia, including Barry Adamson and Dr. Guy Stephens.

My debts to organisations are innumerable but I would especially like to acknowledge the St Etheldreda’s Church Hall fund for two grants in the early years of the PhD, to HMSO for two grants of tuition fees, and to the Arts Budget Centre Research Committee for a research award. Finally, many thanks to the wonderful librarians at Cambridge University Library and at SOAS.
Introduction

The Problem of History

According to the critic Elaine Showalter, Rosa Nouchette Carey was ‘a popular sentimental novelist around the turn of the [twentieth] century.’¹ But what does this mean? At this stage, the accuracy of the statement according to known criteria is not in question.² The major question to arise is that of how a late-twentieth-century subject can relate to this primarily nineteenth-century subject and her culture in any meaningful way. More specifically, the reader of Showalter’s ‘historical’ statement may question both the extent to which it is possible to access the past within its own cultural context and the extent to which it is possible to eliminate, or rather minimize, the biasing effect of present-day methodology.

Of course, it is impossible to opt out of the late-twentieth-century context altogether. Unique and unconnected historical events do not, in themselves, constitute history. Rather, the unrelated texts which testify to the existence of historical events must be read, structured and interpreted by posterity.³ This very act of interpretation is different in different historical periods and each act of interpretation may fulfill some purpose within the culture of the perceiving subject beyond that of a neutral wish to know ‘how it was.’ As Paul Hamilton notes,

> Our interpretative decisions... will be based on a judgement between different possibilities of the time; and the history of interpretations shows such adjudications to be abundantly and primarily expressive of their own periods of utterance. Historicism is the name given to this apparent relativizing of the past by getting to know the different interpretations to which it is open and deciding between them on grounds expressing our own contemporary preoccupations. (Hamilton 1996, p. 19)

However, more than the ‘contemporary preoccupations’ inherent in the project of investigating the relationship between past and present have changed over time. The very term used to describe the project, historicism, has also been glossed in different ways. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* includes amongst its definitions of ‘historicism’ the following:

² In fact, Rosa Carey’s first novel was published in 1868 and her last in 1909. She remained in print until at least 1924.
³ Paul Hamilton sets out the problem inherent in balancing the necessity for accuracy with the necessity for meaning by reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics*:

> If the historian tells a coherent tale, one that has a point and a purpose, its probability may undermine its possibility and leave the author justified as a philosopher and discredited as an historian - probability, we recall, being the sign that poetry’s is a philosophical imagination. If, instead, the history... records a host of improbabilities, however possible, faithfulness to what happened or could have happened will produce a discourse without point and purpose, philosophically negligible, random in its accuracy and literal in its confusion.

See Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, The New Critical Idiom, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 9. (Hereafter, ‘Hamilton 1996.’) In keeping with his view that historical events are unique rather than scientifically reproducible, Hamilton chooses to examine the nature of history according to the texts of a specific historical moment rather than to state a universal principle. It is acknowledged that this introduction somewhat artificially abstracts a universal principle from his work in order to discuss the problems of historicizing the work of Rosa Carey.
The theory that all social and cultural phenomena are relative and historically determined, and are hence only to be understood in their historical context. (1902) ...a tendency in philosophy to see historical development as the most fundamental aspect of human existence. (1939)

Both of these glosses are at best unfashionable and at worst unhelpful to the literary critic of today. The first denies that the past can be of any relevance to the present; the second, by referring to an 'historical development,' which hints at 'progress,' implicitly appeals for its verification to a disestablished former absolute such as revealed religion or Humanism. Both definitions also omit the contribution of the perceiving critic.

By comparison, most current historico-literary criticism attempts to divest itself of direct appeals to metanarratives and anchors its concerns predominantly in the 'here and now.' Yet in spite of its disjunction with the notion of progress, literary criticism has much invested in the historicist project. After all, to read a text without reference to the conditions of its creation is to miss out on many of the resonances that make it a work of art rather than an object of scientific investigation; to exclude historicism from critical methodology steers literary criticism towards a potentially stultifying formalism. The latter type of methodology is not structured to take into account vanished contexts, cultural diversity, silenced voices or ethical issues of any kind.

The present generation of critics taking a close interest in the historicity of literature style themselves New Historicists, one of the best known being Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt is careful to distinguish the tentative nature of New Historicist research from the supreme confidence expressed by the formalists. Accordingly, he claims that New Historicists 'have turned from a celebration of achieved aesthetic order to an exploration of ideological and material bases for the production of this order.'

Greenblatt further distances himself from the formalists by both acknowledging the limitations of his

4 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 2635. (Hereafter, 'Shorter OED, 1991.') Notably, the term 'historicism' is only listed amongst the Addenda to the Shorter OED and is only deemed to have been in currency since 1901.

5 Hamilton's description of the term, as given above, appears to be fairly neutral by today's standards, though no doubt his definition will be viewed differently by posterity.

6 However, it is difficult to get outside the notion of progress. Present-day historicism is heavily laden with ethical considerations and even Paul Hamilton's belief that 'the present can be significantly altered for the better,' though '[t]he result might not be progress' sounds very little different from it. See Hamilton 1996, pp. 5-6. (This is not in any way to disparage his high ideal.)


8 The current interest in ethical issues per se is discussed in note 6, above. For a discussion of ethical responses and their contribution to meaning, see below. However, Hamilton notes that, in practice, a mixture of both critical formalism and historicism is currently utilized as a way of accessing the text. See Hamilton 1996, p. 151. This thesis also adopts both formalist and historicist methodologies.

project and by asserting the necessity for critical self-awareness. Thus, in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, the following virtual disclaimer is to be found:

if cultural poetics is conscious of its status as interpretation, this consciousness must also extend to an acceptance of the impossibility of fully reconstructing and reentering the culture of the sixteenth century, of leaving behind one’s own situation: it is everywhere evident in this book that the questions I ask of my material and indeed the very nature of this material are shaped by the questions I ask of myself.  

Greenblatt bases his methodology for any possible bridging of the gap between past and present largely upon the social anthropology of Clifford Geertz. According to Paul Hamilton, Geertz’s contribution to Greenblatt’s thought may be seen as that of providing a theory of “‘being here’” whilst writing about “‘being there.’” In practice, this means that Geertz advocates, and Greenblatt endorses, extensive readings of appropriate cultural contexts. To quote Paul Hamilton,

We get over the paradox of inevitably ‘being here’ whilst writing about ‘being there’ by fashioning a ‘conversation’ across the divide. To do this, we do not create a universal, Esperanto-like culture in which we all share, but try to learn and to speak the different languages already in existence.... In Geertz’s ethnology, everything is the context for something else; nothing is the privileged repository of significance. The point is not to devise with hindsight a better explication of past events, but to enhance the way in which they are already ‘scientifically eloquent’ in their own. (Hamilton 1996, p. 153-4).

Thus, two facets of Greenblatt’s methodology appear to be particularly relevant to the discussion of Rosa Carey and her world, one of which is based upon the tenets of social anthropology rather than literary criticism and the other of which is defined in opposition to earlier historicisms and to formalisms of all kinds. The first of these is that any point in the past should be perceived as a unique matrix of cultural artifacts and cultural significations; as a matrix of ‘languages’ to be learnt. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt, quoting Geertz, writes that “‘[t]here is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture’” (Greenblatt 1984, p. 3). Thus, the individual cannot be separated from her or his cultural-historical context. Later in the same text, he goes on to prescribe a similarly contextual method for viewing works of art.

---

10 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, (Chicago and London: The Chicago Press, 1984), p. 5. (Hereafter ‘Greenblatt 1984.’) Greenblatt does not define his notion of a ‘cultural poetics’ here but he does describe the practice which should lead to its realization. It is a culturally- or anthropologically-based concept. Implicitly, a critic should understand that, both particular cultures and the observers of these cultures are inevitably drawn to a metaphorical grasp of reality, that anthropological interpretation must address itself less to the mechanics of customs and institutions than to the interpretive constructions the members of a society apply to their experiences. A literary criticism that has affinities to this practice must be conscious of its own status as interpretation and [be] intent upon understanding literature as a part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture; its proper goal, however difficult to realise, is a poetics of culture. (Emphasis original. See Greenblatt 1984, pp. 4-5)

11 However, his indebtedness to theorists on the Marxist continuum (Marx-Williams-Foucault etc.) is both implicit in the above quotation about the nature of New Historicism and explicitly stated in his introduction to *Learning to Curse*. 

We must, as Clifford Geertz suggests, incorporate the work of art into the texture of a particular pattern of life, a collective experience that transcends it and completes its meaning.\textsuperscript{12}

The second feature of Greenblatt’s work which is pertinent to this discussion is his notion that the critic should establish some kind of empathy with the past; should initiate ‘a “conversation” across the divide,’ this entailing points of contact or analogy. Parts of Greenblatt’s writing are anecdotal, almost confessional, but this insistence upon empathy with the past is far from merely emotive. For Greenblatt, empathy generates meaning and relevance rather than subjectivity. In Learning to Curse, he explains that his own critical practice was shaped by the horrors of the Vietnam war.

Writing that was not engaged, that withheld judgements, that failed to connect the present with the past seemed worthless.... To study the culture of sixteenth century England did not present itself as an escape from the turmoil of the present; it seemed rather as an intervention, a mode of relation. The fascination for me of the Renaissance was that it seemed to be powerfully linked to the present both analogically and causally. (Greenblatt 1992, p. 167)

However, elsewhere, this personal encounter with history is translated into more objective terms; it is presented as a theoretical position which may be espoused by anyone, regardless of her/his life experience.

We do not have direct access to these [Renaissance] figures or their shared culture, but the operative condition of all human understanding - of the speech of our contemporaries as well as of the writings of the dead - is that we have indirect access or at least that we experience our constructions as the lived equivalent of such access. (Greenblatt 1984, p. 7)

Thus Greenblatt further enhances the ‘conversation’ between sixteenth-century England and a troubled late-twentieth-century America by drawing on a common ‘human understanding.’\textsuperscript{13} However, it is equally possible to use his methodology to forge a ‘conversation’ between the England of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth- centuries and the critic of today. By recourse to extensive cultural observation and human empathy, it is possible to know something of the historical Rosa Carey, the books that she wrote and the England that she knew.

\textsuperscript{12} Greenblatt 1984, p. 179. See also Greenblatt 1984, p. 7: ‘[in] the early sixteenth century, art does not pretend to autonomy; the written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power.’ Though Greenblatt specifies the sixteenth century, his comment is equally applicable to the nineteenth century.

This is, of course, a problematic feature of Greenblatt’s work. He posits that the critic should attend to ‘local knowledge’ but that this is to be apprehended by appeal to an apparently universal ‘human understanding.’ However, the notion of ‘the human’ and hence of human understanding is helpfully glossed by Lyotard. To Lyotard, ‘human-ness’ (my term) is a dialectic. Lyotard therefore poses a question rather than making a definitive statement.

What shall we call human in humans, the initial misery of their childhood, or their capacity to acquire a ‘second’ nature which, thanks to language, makes them fit to share in communal life, adult consciousness and reason? That the second depends on and presupposes the first is agreed by everyone.

See J-F Lyotard, The Inhuman, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 3. (Hereafter, ‘Lyotard 1993.’) This definition of ‘human-ness’ as the struggle to accommodate self to society for the purpose of communication, if not truly universal, is open enough to admit both historical and cross-cultural usage and specific enough, particularly in its attention to misery, to permit the establishment of empathies. Lyotard’s notion of the subject per se is discussed below.
At the very least, the New Historicist methodology serves to remind the late-twentieth-century critic that her or his present-day engagement with the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries should be subsumed within an attempt to understand the historical project and not constructed into a set of hierarchical relations with it. With the twentieth-century subject thus positioned in relation to history, it is possible to move on and engage with questions relating to the specific material of this study: an author, her readership and their cultural context.

The Author And The Reader As Subjects
The matter of authorship has been much debated in recent years, with dominant academic thought resting in the assumption that an author simply delimits the edge of the text rather than being the unified subject who can claim the text as the product of her or his own creativity. The prevalent belief is sustained from two theoretical concepts which merge into a world view that is difficult to refute. These concepts are intertextuality and the notion of the wholly-constructed subject. The former posits that no text can be unique or new because it will always consist of fragments of previous texts; the latter challenges the critic to discover and objectively demonstrate the presence of a subject who is more than the sum of her or his biology and conditioning. By this reasoning, 'no-one' is writing 'what has already been written.' Barthes therefore announces 'the death of the author'; whilst Foucault proclaims that,

>a change in the order of discourse does not presuppose 'new ideas,' a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations of practice, perhaps also in neighbouring practices, and in their common articulation. I have not denied - far from it - the possibility of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to do it.

Some critics have aligned Lyotard with this ontology of the wholly-constructed subject. However, if this is the case, his subject betrays an embarrassing autonomy. This is one reason why his writings, and in particular The Inhuman and The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, are so pertinent to the present moment in literary criticism. The discipline is heading towards, as it were, a

---

post-Postmodernism in which there appears to be, for whatever reason, a movement towards a rehabilitation of the subject.

The issue is an important one: the composition of the subject will determine what it is possible for the subject to achieve; and an author (however conceived), is, in this respect at least, a subject, like any other. If it is conceded that environmental factors affect the composition of the subject then it may be said that the subject is at least partially constructed. In this case, there must be, within the subject, a number of contradictions. (As society is plural and antagonistic, so must the subject reflect these qualities.) However, if there is any sense in which the subject is constructed then the number of contradictions necessarily increases. The constructed individual will be at war within her or himself; the partially unconstructed individual will additionally be at odds with society.

In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard certainly acknowledges that a portion of the subject, as constituted at birth, is resistant to subsequent construction (education). Forwarding the notion that human beings have two ‘natures’: ‘the initial misery of... childhood’ and the ‘“second” nature’ which, ‘thanks to language, makes them fit to share in communal life, adult consciousness and reason,’ he briefly discusses the relationship between them:

That the second depends on and presupposes the first is agreed by everyone. The question is only that of knowing whether this dialectic, whatever name we grace it with, leaves no remainder.

If this were the case, it would be inexplicable for the adult himself or herself not only that s/he has to struggle constantly to assure his or her conformity to institutions and even to arrange them with a view to a better living-together, but that the power of criticizing them, the pain of supporting them and the temptation to escape them persist in some of his or her activities. I do not mean only symptoms and particular deviancies, but what, in our civilization at least, passes as institutional: literature, the arts, philosophy. There too, it is a matter of traces of an indetermination, a childhood, persisting up to the age of adulthood. (Lyotard 1993, p. 3)

Thus, it would seem that the civilized ‘“second” nature’ is tailored to the precise requirements for the maintenance of society but that the untutored, residual, ‘child’ nature operates under no such imperative. According to Lyotard, then, this residual nature permits not only the critique of society but also the possibility of individualized creative expression. 19

---

19 The existence of a Lyotardian, partially unconstructed subject is posited here on two grounds: in order to accommodate the presence of otherwise perverse behaviour and in order to locate creativity within the individual. If totally constructed by society, the subject would be entirely tailored to the requirements of society. In this case, even antisocial behaviour would have its purpose. (Vandalism could be construed as creating further demand for commercial enterprise.) However, in a (‘first’) world where capitalism demands consumption for its continuance, people who are anti-capitalist or anti-consumerism at least appear to be making autonomous choices. More importantly, where similarly constructed subjects might be expected to display similar levels of creativity, this does not happen. Creativity is not solely allied to opportunity. An ontology which posits the presence of a wholly constructed subject neither exhibits consistency nor accounts for difference.
However, Lyotard had already prefigured this limited autonomy for the subject in *The Postmodern Condition*. Premised upon the notion that communication within society comprises a series of ‘language games,’ *The Postmodern Condition* propounds the notion that society manifests itself as a network of communications in which every subject participates.\(^{20}\)

no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at “nodal points” of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a post through which various kinds of message pass. No one, not even the least privileged among us, is entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position [them] at the post of sender, addressee or referent. (Lyotard 1987, p. 15)

If, as Lyotard claims, ‘no one is entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position [them],’ and if individuals are indeed included in ‘communication circuits’ then the subject is capable of both originating and circulating utterances. Here, too, the existence of an autonomous subject in turn yields the possibility of an autonomous author.

It is worth pausing here to ‘unpack’ the terminology used in this passage, for the terms sender, addressee and referent provide the key to Lyotard’s understanding of the dynamics of society. They are initially glossed very simply: ‘sender (the person who utters the statement)... addressee (the person who receives it), and... referent (what the statement deals with).’\(^{21}\) However, the three concrete terms are made more complex as Lyotard converts them from apparently fixed entities into fluid energies which are activated by, or at least activated within, the subject at various times. The subject is, from the first, constructed as a referent:

even before [birth], if only by virtue of the name... given, the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around [them], in relation to which [they] will inevitably chart [their] course. (Lyotard 1987, p. 15)

The new subject-referent is thus delivered into an on-going process of definition. Meanwhile, senders and addressees (who are, in different contexts, referents in their own right) perpetually exchange roles with each other in order for communication to be a two-way process. However, the language games played by senders and addressees have consequences which go beyond these routine transitions. The protagonists are:

placed at the crossroads of pragmatic relationships, but they are also displaced by the messages that traverse them, in perpetual motion. Each language partner, when a move pertaining to [them] is made,

---

\(^{20}\) To quote Lyotard, ‘language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist.’ (Lyotard 1987, p. 15.) However, he leaves open the question as to whether the entirety of society’s functions can be described in this way (Ibid.).

\(^{21}\) Lyotard 1987, p. 9. The word ‘referent’ appears, certainly at this stage, to carry little of the baggage associated with Saussure’s use of the term. Similarly, the word ‘statement’ carries little of the technical exactness with which Foucault defines it.
undergoes a 'displacement', an alteration of some kind that not only affects [them] in [their] capacity as addressee and referent but also as sender. These 'moves' necessarily provoke 'countermoves....' (Ibid., p. 16).

In other words, the recipient of a statement is altered by its articulation and her or his own future utterances are modified. This is to is to attribute powerful effects to the transformational nature of language at all levels of communication. It is also to bring into question the nature of the aesthetic text. Where the subject flows effortlessly from one role into another; where two or more roles are enacted by the subject simultaneously, it seems unlikely that there can be any meaningful distinctions between author and reader or between text and author. However, this is to needlessly reduce communications to their lowest common denominators. In practice, some texts are privileged over others and some senders are privileged over others. The mechanisms which are largely responsible for maintaining the privileged status of certain texts and senders, institutions, are discussed below.

To summarize, the Lyotardian subject is partially unconstructed and resistant to construction, and partially constructed by the circumstances into which s/he is born. Subsequently, s/he experiences constant (though only partial) re-construction by society at large. Hence, although such a subject may have 'some power over the utterances that traverse and position [her/him],' in practice, any autonomous thoughts and utterances are largely contained by the circumstances into which s/he is born as a 'referent' and by the messages subsequently received by her/him as an 'addressee.'

This is the version of the subject envisaged throughout this thesis. Thus, its central subject, Rosa Carey, may be viewed as one who made her debut, as a ‘referent’, into a ‘story’ constructed by bourgeois others, who was shaped by the attitudes of the social class into which she was born, and whose initial interpellation did not remain unchallenged. For Carey subsequently became an addressee, a recipient of diverse referents which had the power to modify her initial bourgeois construction, or at least to render it problematic. She was thus obliged to deal with these non-homogenous messages in some way - to accept and assimilate them, to reject them, or to adapt them. The resultant ‘displacements’ correspondingly modified or problematized another of her subsequent roles, that of ‘sender.’ An ordered, though not necessarily well-ordered, version of these re-presented messages is available through the texts of Carey’s novels, the publication of the texts being what, in conventional terms, transforms her from a mere ‘sender’ into an ‘author.’ At the same time, the presence of the written text transforms Carey’s addressee into what is conventionally understood as a ‘reader.’

Lyotard’s work on the status of reading as an activity discrete from theory or interpretation is acknowledged. (For a succinct summary of this work see Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. xix. However, in this context, the verb 'to read' is used in its conventional sense of 'to apprehend mentally the meaning of written or other characters; to be engaged in doing this' (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, p. 1754) or to 'interpret mentally' (The Little Oxford
The adoption of Lyotard's version of the subject permits a text to be viewed from both the author's and the reader's perspective without totally investing the agency of meaning in one party or the other. The author is not dead and the reader is neither simply a 'virtual site' where 'various codes can be located', nor a unified and passive consumer. Writer and reader are identical in construction as both are positioned at various times in the roles of sender, addressee and referent. Each attempts to extract meaning from the 'messages that traverse and position them' and is 'displaced' during the activity; and each, as a multiple and contradictory subject, has the task of trying to reconcile the fundamentally irreconcilable. In other words, an author is bound to write a multi-faceted text and a reader is bound to see within it a multiplicity of possible meanings. By looking at Carey's fictional negotiation of the conflicting and unresolved referents which interpellated her within Victorian/Edwardian society, it is possible to suggest, in general terms, why a nineteenth-century subject might have gained pleasure from reading the novels.

For example, there was a particular disjunction between messages that asserted Carey's subordination on grounds of sex and those which asserted her access to power on account of middle-class affiliation. Carey's response to these messages, of whatever kind, would have been of interest to women readers, if only on the narcissistic grounds that they could read about their own, similar, experience of being women. However, Carey did not - and, indeed, could not - simply replicate any gender-based oppression. Unfavourable references to her gender were met with by the mobilization of class status in order to articulate protest. The result in Carey's writing is that she appears to both support the dominant and subvert it within the same novel.

This contradiction arose because Carey was, as a woman, relatively powerless. Desiring the publication of her work, she was obliged, in her writing, to uphold the (inherently patriarchal) dominant. However, by indirect methods the dominant could be subverted. Thus, the novels contain passages in which characters of both genders support the dominant discourse of male supremacy through direct speech whilst simultaneously an extradiegetic and apparently impartial narrator dramatizes the psychological cost to women of conforming to societal expectation. Elsewhere, Carey utilizes humour to make male characters appear at a disadvantage, though, once again, she does not directly undermine the institution of patriarchy. The presence of such implicitly critical passages suggests a form of collusion with a

---


readership known to be primarily female. From this perspective, Carey appears to be pro-woman and thus a writer of texts which would be attractive to a great variety of female readers.

However, she had good reasons for not disputing everything that the dominant stood for and much to gain by staying within its pale. It was by upholding the social mores of her class that she was permitted the limited and conditional power available to the bourgeois women of her day and it was by ostensibly ‘knowing her place’ as a woman and a lady that she was permitted to make public statements of a contestatory nature via her writing. She may be seen to have colonized a permitted space: the realm of the domestic as defined by the dominant. That is, her novels were published within the public domain but they were almost exclusively about, and almost exclusively read by women within, the private domain of the home. In the more conventional elements of Carey’s novels, the conventionally-minded woman reader would have found a pleasurable sense of self-recognition in terms of class and gender. However, such a reader would also have been able to enjoy Carey’s subversion from a position of safe conformity.

Thus, Carey’s novels are not overtly novels of protest even though they are effectively novels of subversion. Nor are they novels which privilege gender concerns over those of class. Indeed there is a strong emphasis on class differentiation. Rather, matters of gender and class sit uneasily together and are hierarchicalized according to context, if not simply according to the whim of the author at any given point. It is not even possible to posit subversive intention on Carey’s part, though apparently subversive practices may be identified.

It is more profitable to attest to the availability of a number of conflicting readings in her texts, these giving rise to more than one position for even the ‘implied reader.’ For example, the subversive separation of direct speech and narratorial description, as outlined above, does not position the reader unequivocally within one reading or the other. Solely within the parameters of class-based power and sex-based subordination, the nineteenth-century reader might position herself as a ‘feminist’ or as an adherent of the dominant; as someone aspiring to membership of the middle classes or as an impartial observer who is reading about ‘others’ whom she has no wish to emulate.


The word ‘feminist’ is used here, even though the term did not gain currency until the end of the nineteenth century, because it is succinct. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary dates ‘feminism,’ meaning ‘[a]dvocacy of the claims and rights of women’ to 1895 (p. 739). However, it is evident that the concept pre-dated the word.
Yet this is not to suggest that an infinite number of readings is available in a given text. As Sara Mills suggests,

texts must structure the reader’s response to some extent through certain clues and frames which signal to the reader the range of readings which are possible. (Mills 1994, p. 9)

And, in practice, there is a further constraint on the generation of meaning. Besides being shaped by cumulative individual experience, both literary production and reader response are subject to the impersonal structures in society which, in *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard has termed ‘institutions.’ He cites, amongst other examples of these, philosophy, religion, the army, businesses, the family and bureaucracies. For Lyotard, dialogue (of what ever kind) between individuals may be termed ‘conversation,’ this activity requiring a certain amount of consensus (a ‘contract’) between the parties involved (Lyotard 1987, p. 10; p. 17). However,

an institution differs from a conversation in that it always requires supplementary constraints for statements to be declared admissible within its bounds. The constraints function to filter discursive potentials, interrupting possible connections in the communication networks: there are certain things that should not be said. They also privilege certain classes of statements. (Lyotard 1987, p. 17)

Lyotard does not allude to Althusser at this point but his passage on institutions contains more than a slight genuflection towards the latter’s notion of ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ and, rhetorically, he appears to adopt Althusser’s view that institutions function at least ‘secondarily by repression.’ It is easy to see how Carey’s ‘discursive potentials’ could be inhibited and shaped by such institutions.

---

26 From this point, the word ‘conversation’ must be viewed in a strictly Lyotardian sense and totally divorced from the notion of analogy and empathy to be found in the above discussion about Greenblatt.


As distinguished from litigation, a differend... would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend would wrong (at least) one of them.... (p. xi)

John Lechte, in *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), succinctly glosses the differend as ‘the name Lyotard gives to the silencing of a player in a language game. It exists when there are no agreed procedures for what is different (be it an idea, an aesthetic principle, or a grievance) to be presented in the current domain of discourse.’ See p. 248. This ‘silencing’ does not automatically presuppose the conscious ‘terrorist’ behaviour inherent in ‘the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him/her,’ as detailed in *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard 1987, p. 63). The ‘differend,’ before any judgement is made upon it, merely denotes a difference, the certainty that a ‘wrong’ will be perpetrated if current criteria are applied to it and the potential for there to be a ‘victim’ who will suffer a ‘damage... accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage.’ (See Lyotard 1988, p. 5). The latter does not always imply a specific, conscious oppressor. Read in conjunction with *The Postmodern Condition*, the concept of differend is more closely analogous to the ‘filter[ing of] discursive potentials’ and ‘interrupt[on of] possible connections’ engineered by institutions than to the individual application of ‘terror.’ Rosa Carey may thus be seen as one of the parties in countless differends, these including her differences with various institutions. For example, Rosa Carey’s position in relation to Patriarchy (a patriarchal system of government or society; rule by venerable old men) is likely to have entailed the
There was no single individual with whom to negotiate the constraints; and the very anonymity and magnitude of the institutions may have made them appear as absolutes, as an inherent feature of reality rather than as a number of primarily linguistic constructs. This inhibition of 'discursive potentials' would have been doubly experienced by Carey's initial reading subject, who would have been both constructed in relation to institutions in the greater language game of society and re-constructed by Carey's fictional but plausible microcosms.

However, as Lyotard goes on to explain, no institution has a monopoly on meaning or a timeless mandate for its constraints:

> the limits the institution imposes on potential language “moves” are never established for once and for all (even if they have been formally defined). Rather, the limits are themselves the stakes and provisional results of language strategies, within the institution and without. (Lyotard 1987, p. 17)

This is to re-state, using different terms of reference, something which has already been said: that Carey had limited power to originate utterances and that she was potentially able to write into her novels a meaningful resistance to, or affirmation of, the institutional view-point. In turn, the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reader potentially had the power to resist both institutional silencing and Carey's textual closure (if any) with regard to institutions. In linguistic terms, then, resistance to institutions has always been possible. For resistance is simply the result of a process in which the subject makes a personal selection from, or a hierarchicalization of, the referents that are available to her or him, in order to fulfil perceived personal needs.

However, Lyotard's final observation about institutions is the most important: that 'the boundaries [of an institution] only stabilize when they cease to be stakes in the game' (Lyotard 1987, p. 17). Here, he is suggesting that, when an institution becomes well-defined, it ceases to be a vital influence on society; it becomes a form without substance. In short, there is nothing like institutionalising something to make it go out of fashion. It is easy to envisage a situation in which Victorian institutional voices cried in the wilderness about the pleasures of conservatism and certainty whilst, outside the institutions, or even on an unofficial basis within them, society's true dynamic consisted of perpetual change and development. Institutions could ensure dominance but they could not ensure adherence.

dismissal or disallowance of concepts she considered important by certain (powerful) others. Thus, housework was emphatically women's work but also, in an important sense, 'not work,' since not recognized as such by men. (The 'invisible' status of housework is discussed in chapter four of this thesis.)

*The Postmodern Condition* is taken as a central theoretical text in this thesis, in preference to *The Differend* or any of Lyotard's other works, as the former provides an open and plural view of the whole of society without descending into the minutae which characterizes his other writings.
This perspective on institutions, applied to the apparent contradictions in Carey’s novels, yields the suggestion that she wrote of a society which defined itself through two kinds of ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’ which did not always correspond. Thus, Carey wrote of both the stable boundaries of the institution and of actual changes in society; of idealised behaviours and attitudes and of responses to unique historical situations.

Stable Boundaries and Real Stakes: An Example From Carey’s Work

The effect of powerful but not absolute institutions upon this multi-faceted but semi-autonomous author may be demonstrated by reference to her novel, *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters* [1892]. Each of the following passages retails the same event but from a different perspective. The variety of responses to the situation would in itself be interesting. However, the fact that most responses are undermined by a potent though apparently undirected brand of humour completely displaces the implied reader from any position, whether institutional or subversive.

Pamela, the main protagonist in the much-discussed event, keeps house for her brother. After a quarrel, she takes her revenge by starving him at dinner time. Jessie Brown, whose name is invoked in this first passage, is a good but rather dull friend of the family. The other speaker is Mrs Glyn, the vicar’s wife. Pamela begins.

“...There has been a grand scene of reconciliation, and I am on my best behaviour. I think the meagre diet yesterday had a salutary effect on my high and mighty brother...”

“Did they fare so very badly yesterday?” asked Mrs Glyn anxiously; and Pamela’s eyes sparkled with naughty fun.

“Well, it was a cold night, you see, and a leg of mutton on the third day is never very inviting; but there were pickles - plenty of pickles - and with bread and cheese.”

“Pamela, how could you be so unfeeling! It was really barbarous treatment to those poor tired men,” really waxing a little warm in her sympathy. “It was carrying a joke too far - it was almost ill-natured.” But Pamela took this outburst with surprising meekness.

“I think I must call for Jessie Brown,” she observed with a deep sigh, “or the fruits of repentance will be wanting. What a pity both Mr Glyn and Mr Higginbotham disapprove of auricular confession - it would be such a comfortable ordinance to a sinner like myself.”

“Pamela!, do not be irreverent!” (SGG, pp. 168-9)

---


30 To use a Greenblattian perception here, the ‘cold night’ refers, not to the weather, but to an almost obsolete dietary habit. The meat would have been carved from the newly-cooked joint on the first day but eaten in other forms on subsequent ‘cold nights’ until it was used up. Thus, Pamela appears to justify her prank by pleading both economy and standard household practise. The fault in her logic is that she does nothing to make the ‘cold’ meat appetizing for the men in her life, as any ‘good’ home-maker would have done. Had she read Mrs Beeton, she would have found twelve ‘cold meat cookery’ recipes in the section on mutton alone. See Mrs Isabella Beeton, *Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, (London: Chancellor Press, 1982 [1861]), pp. 331, 334, 336 (3 recipes), 338 (2 recipes), 339, 345, 346, 347, 351.
In this first passage, the focus is upon the perpetrator of the deed. Pamela is ‘almost ill-natured’ and the suggested remedy (albeit not adopted with any degree of seriousness) is religion. Thus the institutional/dominant position debated is that of femininity (in the form of appropriate behaviour and proper feeling) and its posited modus operandi that of personal regulation (in terms of reverence and, where necessary, repentance). When Mrs Glyn later discusses the exchange with her niece, Gerda, the parameters are set quite differently.

‘Aunt Clare,’ asked Gerda in a dubious tone, ‘do you not think that Pamela treats her brother very badly?’

‘I think I shall decline to answer that question. I am afraid they are a rather ill-assorted couple to live together.... Things always went smoothly in the old times - he has told me over and over again. “When Hester married, I had no more home comfort,” he said once. It is my belief that Pamela is really devoted to her brother, and that in some ways he repels and disappoints her. She is a most exacting little person, and all this flightiness and nonsense is her way of taking her revenge. If only [he] could afford a wife.' (SGG, p. 169)

In this second passage the focus is primarily upon the man who has supposedly been wronged. The parameters of the debate are the institution of the home (home is a male right; home is ‘normally’ serviced by a complaisant female), and the expectations of its female inhabitants (familial warmth). This passage more nearly reaches a closure which favours the institutional viewpoint. That is to say, the mode of housekeeping rather than the mode of familial relationships is deemed to be most in need of amendment.

Nor is this tentative conclusion disturbed in the initial lines of the final passage on the subject. At first, Hester, the perfect house-keeper, seems poised to close the debate and to firmly position Pamela as the delinquent. However, the force of her criticism is quickly and finally undermined.

Hester wore her schoolmistress’s look... ‘It is no laughing matter, I assure you,’ she continued. ‘I never saw Alick more put out.... She behaved as badly as possible that night and as [the cook] was in her airs he could get no redress. It was literally a mutton-bone that was placed upon the table; and to make things worse, there were five or six kinds of pickles.’ Then, as Gerda laughed, and Mrs Glyn followed her example: ‘So it was the most uncomfortable meal possible... and there was Pam in her ridiculous harlequin dress - that red and pink thing we all hate - smiling and chattering as though nothing were the matter.’

‘I am perfectly ashamed of Pamela,’ observed Mrs Glyn, who was quite exhausted with laughing. (SGG, pp. 173-4)

Although Hester, perfect supplier of home comfort, is theoretically entitled to be outraged, it is she who brings out the full comedy of the situation. Does it really ‘make things worse’ that there were six kinds of pickle, as opposed to four or seven? And does the fact that Pamela wore a tasteless dress really imply a greater degree of delinquency than would otherwise have been the case? Are Mrs Glyn’s final words an effective closure? And if Pamela is so reprehensible, why do Mrs Glyn and Gerda laugh?
Arguably, Rosa Carey elected to present the incident in this comic fashion because it was a way of accommodating, within her writing, the conflicting messages she received with regard to the society in which she lived. Whether or not it was by intent, she wrote of two kinds of truth. In utilizing and upholding traditional attitudes concerning the female role, she was invoking the crystallized boundaries of the institution. In simultaneously representing Pamela in such a way as to disarm censure, she was acknowledging the real stakes in the game. She was acknowledging that alongside the ‘traditional’ woman existed ‘the girl of the period’; that the modest, dutiful and self-denying ‘Angel in the House’ might have wanted to be the assertive and autonomous woman who worked outside the home, smoked cigarettes and rode a bicycle. Above all, she was betraying an awareness that the woman of indecision looked upon these disparate paradigms in ambivalent degrees of nostalgia, envy or absolute horror.

Lyotard and Other Theorists

However, the extent to which Lyotard’s propounded metanarrative can be utilized to examine the unique events of history, or even the specific events of the present, is ultimately determined by its ability to mesh with other theories of cultural production. Another gloss on Lyotard’s narrative is certainly necessary. For the simplicity and clarity, which aids an understanding of the over-all construction and interpellation of the subject, is less helpful as a method for engaging with the nature of institutions and their work within society.

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard notes that institutions are as prone to ‘displacement’ as individual subjects; that the major purpose of an institutional utterance is to articulate the boundaries of the institution from whence it came; and that institutions retain a great and diffused power to make meaningful utterances even whilst they are being challenged or undermined (Lyotard 1987, p. 17; p. 13). However, in keeping with his project of examining society as a series of language games, very little is said about their actual composition. His major comment upon the power or powerlessness of institutions, in relation to the conversations or ‘temporary contracts’ of individual subjects, forms part of his conclusion to *The Postmodern Condition.* The passage is located specifically in the late

---

31 The title of Coventry Patmore’s sentimental domestic poem, *The Angel in the House* [1854-62], has long represented a woman of domestic tastes and talents, innate piety and a belief in her own inferiority to men. The expression ‘the girl of the period’ was coined by Eliza Lynn Linton to describe a woman who showed no respect for the traditional values described above. Linton’s essay with this title was published in the *Saturday Review* in 1868.

I am not suggesting that Pamela in *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters* is portrayed as wishing to be a ‘girl of the period.’ However, this character is emphatically no household angel and her independence may be viewed as contrary to the dominant version of femininity for the eighteen-nineties.
nineteen-seventies as befits the temporality of the text. However, a general principle may still be abstracted from it:

the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family and international domains, as well as in political affairs. This evolution is of course ambiguous: the temporary contract is favoured by the system due to its greater flexibility, lower cost, and... creative turmoil.... In any case, there is no question here of proposing a "pure" alternative to the system: we all now know, as the 1970s come to a close, that an alternative of that kind would end up resembling the system it was meant to replace. We should be happy that the tendency toward the temporary contract is ambiguous: it is not totally subordinated to the goal of the system, yet the system tolerates it. (Lyotard 1987, p. 66)

Lyotard effectively posits that, whilst institutional absolutism is (and has long been) in a state of decline, the institutional structure per se is unlikely to be totally superseded. The final statement, concerning the system's tolerance of temporary contracts is simply a recapitulation of his earlier statements that 'No one... is entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position [them]' and that 'the limits the institution imposes on potential language “moves” are never established for once and for all'.

However, in that they retain power even whilst being challenged or undermined, Lyotard's institutions may be sited within Raymond Williams' version of the hegemonic. According to Williams, the hegemonic

does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged. Speak of 'the hegemonic' rather than the 'hegemony', and of 'the dominant' rather than simple domination... [H]egemony... while by definition... always dominant... is never either total or exclusive ...cultural process must then always include the efforts and contributions of those who are in one way or another outside or at the edge of the terms of the specific hegemony....

Yet Williams does more than rhetorically locate institutions within the dominant. He also takes issue with the notion that these organs of the dominant are monolithic ideological/repressive apparatuses.

With Althusser explicitly in mind he states that

Hegemony is... not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination.' It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values.... It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society... beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. (Williams 1977, p. 110)

This refutation of Althusser has the effect of exploding Lyotard's neatly-packaged institutions into millions of more or less coherent fragments which are then to be found scattered across far vaster tracts

---

of society than previously. However, to gloss Lyotard in this way is to study his ‘social bond’ in greater
detail rather than to refute it. It is to provide, for the institution, the treatment that Lyotard has already
provided for the individual subject.33

Elsewhere, Williams appears to echo Lyotard’s institutional ‘boundaries’ which ‘only stabilize when
they cease to be stakes in the game’. That is, he provides terminology which makes it possible to
historicize the continued existence of the more seriously undermined, as opposed to merely challenged,
institution. He supplies for that which is ‘formed in the past, but... still active in the cultural process’,
the term ‘residual’ (Williams 1977, p. 122). Then, having explained how the past encroaches upon the
present, he completes his theory of cultural production by naming the currently knowable elements of
that which is likely to be dominant in the future the ‘emergent’ (Ibid., p. 123). If we accept the notion
that both institution and subject are - and have always been - in a continuous state of mutually defining
flux, then the terms dominant, residual and emergent become invaluable tools for focusing upon the
functional state of society at any given point in history.

Thus, taking as an example the institution of the monarchy in the late-twentieth century, it is possible to
view certain forms of state ceremony as being residual, media interest in, and comment upon, the private
lives of the royal family as expressing the dominant, and the manifest unpopularity of individual
members of the royal family, together with recent government curbs on royal expenditure as signs of an
emergent position in society for them. However, something of a particular historical moment is also
recoverable from the specifically literary text. This is not to say that even ‘realist’ texts simply mirror
society; it is to suggest that a version of society’s preoccupations manifests itself in fictional works.34

For example, Rosa Carey’s novel, Our Bessie, initially serialized between 1888 and 1889, dramatizes a
version of the contemporary societal concern about the changing nature of ‘femininity’.35 The
eponymous heroine is ‘an old-fashioned little person’ who upholds the values of domestic and filial duty
(OB, p. 102). She might thus be taken to represent the residual. By comparison, a minor character
called Florence Atherton is denigrated on the grounds that she is ‘a typical girl of the period’, who
‘talk[s] slang like [her] brothers’(Ibid.). She, then, may be viewed as representative of the emergent
feminine. However, a third character, Edna, fits into neither category as she neither ‘lay[s] aside her

33 Although writing from a Marxist perspective, Williams is far from utopian or even humanist in his
assessment of society. Indeed, his appreciation of the fragmentary nature of social interaction is more
akin to the Postmodernist concept of the autonomy of representation than it is to his own ostensible
founding myth of alienation.
34 For a discussion of the relationship between literature and society, see Andrew Blake, Reading
35 All quotations taken from this text are from R. N. Carey, Our Bessie, (London: The Offices of the
Girl’s Own Paper, 1914), hereafter, ‘OB.’
dignity and borrow[s] masculine fashions’ nor thinks that ‘disobedience to parents [is] a heinous offence’ p. 103; p. 11). Though there is nothing wrong with the way she speaks, she is deemed to follow a ‘present code that allows young people to set up independent standards of duty’ (p. 11). She may thus be viewed as representative of the dominant, albeit that her supposed values are described in critical terms.

One final term requires discussion in order to complete the basic theoretical framework of this thesis, this term being ‘discourse.’ This widely-used, almost innocuous and non-theory-specific term is not, however, one concisely glossed by Greenblatt, Williams or Lyotard in so far as they have been quoted here. Therefore, some kind of rationale is required for its inclusion. A partial explanation for its use is to be found in Diane Macdonell’s description of the concept.

A ‘discourse,’ as a particular area of language use, may be identified by the institutions to which it relates and by the position from which it comes and which it marks out for the speaker.... Moreover, any discourse concerns itself with certain objects and puts forward certain concepts at the expense of others.36

In other words, a discourse is a group of related referents emanating from within an identifiable group of institutions and acting against similar but oppositional groupings. It would be more convenient if each discourse related to a single, identifiable institution but this is not the case. As Lyotard’s subject is positioned by the vast number of messages which traverse them ‘in perpetual motion,’ so institutions, part of the fabric of the dominant, are traversed by messages which ‘displace’ them into uneasy alliances (inter-institutional ‘conversations’?) with one another. The result is a discourse, a group of referents which does not centre on any single institution but which gains a quasi-institutional status of its own. Once again, the adoption of a non-Lyotardian term is not to undermine Lyotard’s ontology but rather to emphasise both its plurality and its basis in language games.

It may initially seem that the theories of Lyotard and Williams make an odd juxtaposition. However, they mesh very well. Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* provides an ontology for the semi-constructed subject and focuses attention upon ‘language games’ as the basic means of communication within society whilst Williams provides a gloss upon Lyotard’s apparently Althusserian notion of institutions, emphasising their fragmentary nature and emphasising their assailability. Williams also facilitates the historicization of such institutions (though without any attendant notion of progress) via his theory of dominant, residual and emergent. In turn, the systematic theories of Williams and Lyotard may seem to be of a totally different order to Greenblatt’s New Historicist

---

36 Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 3. In its favouring of certain concepts, the discourse is similar to the institution. However, the two are distinct.
prescription of critical empathy. Yet such empathy is based upon the cultural matrix in all its complexity and plurality; and, above all, it encourages the critic to be self-critical.
Rosa Carey and the Fiction Market of Her Day

Rosa Nouchette Carey [1840-1909] never married and never worked outside the home; and her novels reflect this background, being closely bound up with the concerns of the relatively conservative middle-class Anglican woman of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Thus, they may be classified as ‘domestic’ in so far as they tend to deal with the private sphere of the home and family rather than the public sphere of male employments and overtly political activity.37 Her first novel, Nellie’s Memories (1868), was published in the decade designated as that of the sensation novel; her last, The Key of the Unknown (1909) was published two years after Conrad’s triumph of Modernism, The Secret Agent.38 In terms of style and genre, her work has seldom been bracketed with the former and never with the latter. Nor, indeed, has she been associated - by her contemporaries or by posterity - with any other literary or cultural innovations. Ouida’s creation, the New Woman, is never central to any of Carey’s novels and, for all the impression it appeared to make on her works, the Fin de Siècle might well never have happened.39

In terms of focus, Carey’s novels are similar to those of Margaret Oliphant and Anthony Trollope, many of her male characters being clergymen and the focal point of her fictional societies frequently being the local church. However, Carey’s novels are of a more sentimental cast and, indeed, the reviewers blasted her for this perceived fault.40 It might also be added that, in spite of her ability to

---

37 In Carey’s fiction many female protagonists undertake remunerative employment but even they stay primarily within the realm of the domestic: they are governesses, companions, teachers and nurses; caring women who often quit paid employment to marry and to undertake similar tasks within their own homes.

The British Library also attributes four pseudonymous novels, published under the name of ‘Le Voleur’ to Carey. (Full details of these are given in the Bibliography to this thesis.) However, they are not included in the total sum of her novels here on the grounds that they do not fit into her attributable œuvre which places her as an author of ‘the domestic.’ Poorly constructed, predominantly sensational and quite unlike her other novels in terms of their major subject-matter, the ‘Le Voleur’ novels cannot be said to belong to the entity/construction called Rosa Nouchette Carey, regardless of their authorship.

38 The women’s sensational novel of the 1860s and the New Women writings of the 1890s were among the chief literary sensations of their day. [Lyn Pykett, The ‘Improper’ Feminine, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. ix. Hereafter, ‘Pykett 1992.’]

The distinctive features of [the Sensation novel] were its passionate, devious, dangerous and not infrequently deranged heroines, and its complicated, mysterious plots - involving crime, bigamy, adultery, arson and arsenic. Perhaps most shocking of all was the fact that these ‘fast’ novels ... were all set in the context of the otherwise mundane domestic life of a contemporary middle-class or aristocratic English household.... [Ibid., p. 47]

Eugene Lunn... offers a general outline of the key characteristics of modernism which would probably command broad assent: aesthetic self-consciousness or self-reflectiveness, simultaneity, juxtaposition, or montage, paradox, ambiguity, and indeterminacy or uncertainty; ‘dehumanization’, and the disappearance or dispersal of the integrated individual human subject. [Lyn Pykett, Engendering Fictions: The English Novel of the Early Twentieth Century, (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 10]

39 The New Woman of the Fin de Siècle had a multiple identity. She was, variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women’s movement. [Sally Ledger, The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle, (Manchester: Manchester University Press,1997), p. 1. Hereafter, ‘Ledger 1997.’]

40 See, for example, the review of Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters in The Graphic, 25 March 1893,
clinically dissect character and motivation, her social satire was far gentler than that of her contemporaries. As one reviewer noted, 'the graces and charities of domestic life are treated by her with never-failing sympathy.'

Rather closer comparisons may be made between Carey's novels and those of Charlotte Yonge, Ellen Wood and Annie S. Swan, writers who also have a connexion with Carey in that they were editors of journals who published her work. Heriot's Choice was serialized in Yonge's Anglo-Catholic journal, The Monthly Packet, between 1877 and 1879, whilst Wood accepted shorter fiction for the Argosy during her editorship. Her son Charles, editor after her death, serialized The Mistress of Brae Farm in 1896 and Swan serialized the opening chapters of Other People's Lives in The Woman at Home in 1897.

The location of much of Carey's periodical fiction is certainly an indication of its implied readership and of Carey's own religious and social affiliations. Wood wrote sensation fiction but both her novels and her journal were regarded as morally unexceptionable. Meanwhile, Yonge was a well-known exponent of the Oxford Movement and Swan's religious convictions permeated all the literary projects that passed through her hands. Yet this is not to suggest that Carey's beliefs were entirely congruent with those of Yonge, Wood and Swan. In spite of a close mentorial friendship with Wood which lasted for nearly twenty years, Carey did not so often or so emphatically draw upon the same type of sensational plot as the latter. Similarly, Carey's own writing tended to be neither so resistant to female autonomy as that of Yonge nor so overtly pious as that of Swan.

However, it is likely to have been Carey's close association with the Religious Tract Society rather than her dealings with Wood, Yonge and Swan that most effectively compromised her reputation as a serious writer. For Carey wrote at least seven short novels for the Religious Tract Society's popular journal, the Girl's Own Paper, these being serialized between 1883 and 1897 before appearing in volume form under the Society's own imprint. She also became a member of the paper's advisory body. These novels were directed at younger readers and were rather more didactic in tone than the rest of her work. Always regarded as conservative, if not thoroughly innocuous, Carey appears to have been regarded more and more consistently as a writer for the young from this point.
Yet in spite of a reputation for writing novels 'without a particle of mystery, wickedness or excitement,' Carey's novels were far from devoid of value within their own cultural context and are far from wanting in interest to critics in the present day. Their value to the culture in which they were created is evident in that they were bought and read in fairly large numbers; their value for the present day lies in that they may be made to reveal certain preoccupations of their own era. More specifically, they are interesting for their commitment to women's concerns and for their valorization of female experience. They provide a positive response to the supposed 'spare woman problem', treat housework as real work and depict the woman's caring role as something that can be legitimately and usefully employed in the context of remunerative employment.

Their critical perusal has the power to enlighten the present-day reader about aspects of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century society eclipsed by the crude division of its fiction into populist Sensationalism, the collision of gender with politics and elitist Modernism. Carey's novels may have been allocated a space labelled 'as harmlessly unexciting as may be imagined' on account of their morality but to read any writer allocated this kind of space is to place into context other literary preoccupations of the day, such as sexual scandal and the early development of metafiction. It is also to make visible other equally valid, equally popular, more widely-distributed movements and tendencies of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

However, in this process of recovering the currently-invisible or undervalued aspects of Victorian and Edwardian culture, it is also necessary to examine the assumptions underpinning existing critiques. For any method of classification is based upon expediency rather than inalienable truth and the 'will to truth' (to use Foucault's phrase) changes over time. Nineteenth-century classifications of Carey's novels as 'domestic', ‘unexciting’ and so on are based upon the (conditioned) eye of the beholder; are based upon 'a will to knowledge which impose[s] upon the knowing subject - in some ways taking precedence over all experience - a certain position, a certain viewpoint.' Similarly, the academic readers of today have their own agendas and preoccupations; they, too, promote certain types of knowledge to the detriment of others. Writers from both periods frequently deny domestic fiction any kind of critical acclaim, though for different reasons: nineteenth-century patriarchal reviewers because it is not masculine; feminists of the present day because it is not perceived to be empowering to women.

---

44 Review of Dr Luttrell's First Patient in The Athenaeum, 6 November 1897, p. 630.
45 By 1908, almost 52,000 copies of Carey's much-maligned first novel, Nellie's Memories, had been sold. Almost 41,000 copies of her 1884 novel, Not Like Other Girls, had been sold by the same date. See Jane Crisp, Rosa Nouchette Carey: A Bibliography, Victorian Fiction Research Guides XVI (Queensland: University of Queensland, 1989), p. 2.
47 See The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, pp. 217-8. For a demonstration of this concept, see below.
However, to adhere too rigidly to notions of genre and to hierarchies of genre is necessarily limiting; is necessarily to inhibit a conception of all narrative as bricolage. The monolithic genre blocks out significations; disguises the plurality of the text; disables the text as an expression of a disparate culture. It is the current trend in literary theory to show an awareness of a greater level of overlap between categories and to explore the uncertain boundaries between genres. This thesis therefore works on the *a priori* assumption that it is possible to re-appraise certain genre categories, though without necessarily debunking them completely.

For example, it may be observed that one hostile reviewer of Carey’s first novel, *Nellie’s Memories*, focused upon the way in which ‘the most minute incidents of family life are dwelt upon,’ completely ignoring both a long episode which reads like a Gothic novel in miniature and some decidedly sensational elements.48 With regard to the Gothic interlude, the eponymous heroine and a sister step into it whilst visiting Nellie’s godmother, witness its key events and then step out again at its conclusion; with regard to the more contemporary sensation element, a married man, erroneously believed to be a bachelor, appears to paying his addresses to another woman. His wife is, at the time incarcerated in a lunatic asylum for the murder of their infant son. These elements do not automatically make *Nellie’s Memories* a sensational novel or a Gothic tale.49 Rather, they complicate its simple classification as nothing more than ‘domestic.’ The chronological date of Carey’s novel is beyond reasonable doubt, as is its primary subject-matter. Yet, if it is to be addressed in terms of genre, a single designation is inappropriate. It simultaneously harks back to the eighteenth century and alludes to the sensation novels of more recent peers as well as being a simple chronicle of home life.

As with Carey’s novel, so with the century within which most of her novels were written. If it is indeed possible to designate the eighteen-sixties as the era of the sensational novel, the writing of the day being typified by the early novels of Ouida, M.E. Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood and Wilkie Collins, it is equally pertinent to point out that there were other writers and other styles worthy of note. The sixties must also be designated as the era of Charles Dickens and George Eliot, two canonical writers who have by far out-last their overtly sensational peers. The eighteen-sixties also saw Anthony Trollope’s later Barsetshire novels (1855-67) and heralded the arrival of Margaret Oliphant’s most enduring works, *The

---


49 Besides, there are limits to Carey’s enjoyment of the sensational style. She neither provides sensual descriptions of the female body nor lavishly describes material possessions to the same extent as, for example, does M.E. Braddon in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1863). Scenes of high society engaging in rapacious marriage-mongering and fashionable infidelity in the style of Ouida (for example in *Moths* (1880)) are also eschewed by Carey.
Chronicles of Carlingford (1863-1876). Both of these latter writers are more renowned for their satire on church politics than for the lurid events and uncontrolled sexuality inherent in the fiction usually categorized as Sensational. It is also pertinent to recall that popular though conservative works of primarily domestic fiction were being published by Dinah Mullock Craik in the wake of her best-known novel, John Halifax, Gentleman (1856) and Charlotte Yonge, following the astonishing success of The Heir of Redclyffe (1853).50

Ultimately, categories such as ‘the domestic’ and ‘the sensational’ can have no absolute meaning, whether in terms of content or in terms of their date of production. Such categories may be more profitably viewed as thematics rather than as genres. As Gail Cunningham argues, the domestic in particular was the framework upon which many other kinds of novel were built throughout the nineteenth century:

The subject matter of fiction... fell characteristically into a woman’s sphere: even in novels whose thematic interests lie primarily elsewhere, the standard plot and setting were almost invariably domestic and family-orientated, with courtship and marriage providing a major part of the narrative thrust.51

Thus, for example, Mrs Henry Wood’s best-seller, East Lynne (1861), may be described as a sensational novel with strong domestic elements, dealing as it does with a woman who marries to acquire a home, whose attempts to fulfil her domestic duties fail to meet the dominant standard for the day, and who is ultimately replaced by a rational and efficient household manager. The sensational elements, especially that of the unhappy Isabel running away with a base seducer, occupy a comparatively small part of the narrative.52 Conversely, Rosa Carey’s other novel of the 1860s, Wee Wifie (1869), is predominantly ‘domestic’ though it contains sensational elements.53 The difference between the two is merely one of proportion. It is also worth noting at this juncture that the combination was far from rare in Carey’s works. However, spectacular wrong-doing, especially on the part of

---

50 Craik published A Noble Life in 1866; Yonge published The Clever Woman of the Family (1865).
52 Similarly, whilst Anthony Trollope’s The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867) is clearly about church politics, it too details the domestic circumstances of a number families in the imaginary city of Barchester.
53 In Wee Wifie, a young woman throws acid at a supposed rival and instead blinds the man she loves. One of the male protagonists is addicted to drug abuse and one of the female protagonists is the daughter of a woman who cannot marry in case she has inherited the lunacy which caused her mother to end her days in a lunatic asylum.
women, is a subject more frequently to be met with during her most prolific period of production, around the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{54}

If the 'sixties have been labelled the era of sensationalism, the fiction of the 'seventies and 'eighties has not been so vividly characterized in terms of style or subject matter, whether by contemporaneity or by posterity. However, the beginning of each of these decades may be viewed as the end of an era. For Dickens died in 1870 and Eliot in 1880. Perhaps these decades were (and are) deemed to be periods of interregnum rather than innovation. They were indeed years in which many writers of the sixties retained their popularity. Yet they also brought changes to the fiction market. These were the decades in which writers of adventure-stories, such as G. A. Henty, Rider Haggard and Stevenson established themselves. Meanwhile, in the early eighteen-eighties, Sarah Grand, George Meredith and Olive Schreiner each brought into print at least one work which might be designated a ‘New Woman’ novel before the commonly-designated decade of the ‘New Woman’ novel had even begun.\textsuperscript{55}

Though by no means an avowed Feminist, Carey’s novels of the period once again reflect the preoccupations of those around her. Whilst continuing to both depict and advocate the domestic life, Carey infused her fiction with the awareness that many women were either unable or unwilling to fulfil the traditional female role. The New Woman novelists \textit{per se} recorded a dismal picture of women’s frustration at their social and legal disability and depicted, in fictional form, the gender imbalance which meant that, not only was it impossible for all women to marry, but also that unmarried women could not rely on the good offices of male relatives for home comforts and subsistence. Yet Carey managed to represent this uncertainty in fairly positive terms. For example, whilst the eponymous heroine of Meredith’s \textit{Diana of the Crossways} (1885) fails to find happiness in a marriage of convenience and only as a second choice makes a career for herself as a writer, the three young heroines of Carey’s \textit{Not Like Other Girls} (1884) defy convention and self-reliantly set up a successful dress-making business when their widowed mother’s investments fail. Similarly, the heroine of \textit{Uncle Max} (1887) not only escapes the shallow social round enjoyed by her aunt’s family and takes up the profession she loves - nursing - she also gains the respect of the local doctor who initially accuses her of sentimentality and ‘hysterical goodness’.\textsuperscript{56} Ultimately, the heroines of both of Carey’s books achieve one of the fictional

---

\textsuperscript{54} In \textit{My Lady Frivol} (1899) a widow, who has possibly been an unfaithful wife, gives up the child she has always neglected, in return for a handsome allowance, and becomes an actress. Meanwhile, the child’s uncle worries (with cause) that the daughter might take after her unsatisfactory mother. In \textit{The Household Of Peter} (1905), a father who has, in the past, only just prevented his wife from leaving him for a lover, discovers that his daughter has entered into a clandestine marriage.

\textsuperscript{55} The actual expression ‘New Woman’ may be precisely dated 1894 but the type of fiction which came to be associated with this epithet clearly predates it. For a critic who views the New Woman fiction primarily as a product of the nineties, see Pykett 1992, p. 3; for a critic who posits that the ‘heyday’ of the New Woman was ‘the 1880s and 1890s’, see Ledger 1997, p. 2.

New Woman’s major aims: they are taken seriously, though without the need for suicide, marriage or repentance.\textsuperscript{57}

Notably, Carey manages to carry her point without employing Meredith’s themes of sex scandals and divorce, and without recourse to graphic portrayals of syphilis in the style of Sarah Grand in *The Heavenly Twins* (1893). Carey’s depictions of any disease apart from consumption tend to be neither graphic nor explicit and her portrayals of mental illness (which appear to be largely based upon the work of Henry Maudsley) are, in general, confined to those cases that are treatable at home rather than in the asylum.

Nor did Carey seem to need to express in her novels any kind of feminist - or anti-feminist - agenda. This is perhaps a more curious omission. The matter of women’s rights appears to be broached only three times in the entire corpus of her work.\textsuperscript{58} Yet, in her way, Carey was doing her own negotiations of the various concerns of her contemporaries. Though designated as conservative by reviewers she was far from reactionary. Her novels indicate that she was aware of the issues raised in the novels of the *Fin de Siècle* even if she chose not to dwell upon them extensively.

The eighteen-nineties, in addition to being the decade of the New Woman proper, saw the appearance of Oscar Wilde’s ‘gospel’ of aestheticism, *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891), Bram Stoker’s immensely-popular horror story, *Dracula* (1897) and a small flurry of novels by the remaining sensationalists. However, Carey never seems to have been attuned to either Aestheticism or horror and, although she still had her admirers and some of her best novels were still to be written, reviews indicate that her popularity was very much on the decline. The fragmented nature of the fiction market at the *Fin de Siècle* is highlighted in a review that points to both sustained sales and critical derogation:

\begin{quote}
We are glad to see that a new and cheaper issue of Miss Rosa Nouchette Carey’s stories is announced by Messrs. Bentley, for the fact shows the existence amongst us of a taste too likely to be extinguished by the varied and piquant items in the menu now offered to readers of fiction.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

However, if the New Woman novel had been one such piquant item, by the first decade of the new century she had lost her topicality. For this was the decade in which Joseph Conrad wrote four of his...
best-remembered works and collaborated with Ford Maddox Ford on two others. Already substantially in print on his own account, Ford Maddox Ford’s own best-known work, *The Good Soldier* (1915) was to be only a few years in the future. Experiments in form had come to replace clever characterization as the literary criteria of the day. Yet many of the popular Victorian novelists were still writing. Annie S. Swan still had the greater part of her career ahead of her; Marie Corelli still had several powerful and highly coloured romances to write, though she had reached the zenith of her popularity with *The Sorrows of Satan* in 1895; and, though the veteran writer of domesticity, Charlotte Yonge, died in the same year as her queen (1901), her books were widely available until at least the nineteen twenties. Nor were novels by these writers mere anachronisms. For up-and-coming writers made their names in precisely the same genres. To give just two examples, in 1907 a new Sensation novelist, Elinor Glyn, delightfully shocked the world with an extravagant confection called *Three Weeks* and in 1908 a new domestic novelist, Florence Barclay, published her first work, *The Wheels of Time*.

In keeping with these trends, when Rosa Carey died in 1909, her novels - realist, chronological and, for the most part, concerning everyday events - continued to be simultaneously read by enthusiasts and reviled by reviewers. She continued in print until at least 1924 and her novels remained on library shelves until the eve of the Second World War. They virtually vanished from the minds of the critics and the imaginations of the readers thereafter.

* * * * * * * *

Rosa Nouchette Carey wrote forty-one novels over a period of forty-one years. Thus, it is impractical as well as undesirable to take the work-by-work approach. The sheer number of novels would make this approach unwieldy and methodologically repetitive; in addition, the division of Carey’s *oeuvre* into discrete units would break up any continuity of subject-matter between one novel and another. Instead, five recurrent themes in her work have been selected for consideration.

Chapter One deals with Carey’s approach to insanity. A product of her own age and of the middle class, Carey inevitably reproduces the contemporary anxieties about irrationality and loss of self-control. Three particular aspects of this large subject are explored in this chapter: the ‘unnaturally’ assertive woman who is constructed as deviant and, rhetorically, as insane; the sufferer from the ‘moral’ and wholly literary illness called brain fever, whose inner mental conflicts manifest themselves in physical illness; and the passive victim of circumstance who, for what ever reason, cannot rise above

---

60 First-hand evidence of Regina Glick of Leeds (b. 1912), who began to read and collect Carey’s novels in the nineteen thirties. See also Jane Crisp, *Rosa Nouchette Carey: A Bibliography*, p. 2, in which the author notes that her father bought her grandmother a complete set of Carey’s novels in ‘about 1928.’
poor physical health or uncongenial life-situation. Yet, in spite of her anxieties, Carey displays great compassion towards these sinners against the gospel of rationality and order, representing them in almost all cases as attractive miscreants, authors of their own painful dilemmas, potential heroines and wretched victims. This latter aspect of her writing is also taken into account.

The second chapter, 'Maiden Ladies' explores Carey's positive and creative responses to the demographic phenomenon of more women than men. She provides within her fiction positive role models for women of all ages, whether working entirely within the home or following an occupation elsewhere. In the main, she appears to wholeheartedly accept the images of womanhood provided by the dominant (male powered and empowered) discourses of the day. However, the boundaries of the dominant are interrogated. Carey actively engages with the proposition that single women are in any way 'redundant,' advocating paid employment and decent living accommodation for lone women and condoning remunerative employment for the more prosperous. Thus, in this chapter, aspects of Carey's indirect championship of the single state are placed in their contemporary context.

The third chapter is directed towards Carey's construction of male characters. Given her class bias, the chapter compares the construction of her characters with texts constructing the English gentleman. It is contended that the conventions of 'gentlemanliness' are defined and regulated by, and exist solely for the benefit of, other men rather than women. Correspondingly, the vulnerability of female characters within the novels and the emphasis Carey places upon minor instances of male approval are also noted.

The fourth chapter turns to the stage upon which Carey's feminine dramas are performed: the home. In particular the chapter focuses upon the uneven nature of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century home experience: men and children are serviced; women provide this servicing. Carey's evident adherence to the dominant domestic ideal is set against the various ways in which, consciously or unconsciously, she subverts it. As Carey may be termed a didactic writer, the role-models she provides for the 'trainee' house-keeper are examined in some detail. In addition, attention is paid to the fictional rewards supplied to those who have done their domestic work well.

The fifth and final chapter examines Carey's negotiations of the established religion. Whilst Carey herself appears to have been a conventional adherent of the Church of England, her novels reveal a whole range of alternative or supplementary narratives to the Bible: sentimental heresies. The purpose of these narratives appears to have been largely that of dealing with the partings in families wrought by death. Whilst some of them have their counterparts in other sentimental fiction and poetry - indeed, some are even to be found in popular theological books - Carey appears to have developed her own.
Essentially, Carey's novels are viewed in this thesis in much the same way as Janice Radway has been compelled to view late-twentieth-century romances: as experiential rather than purely intellectual texts. That is, as texts which are as important for what they do for the reader as for what they say to her. In her survey of romance-readers, Radway notes that she was obliged to 'give up [her] obsession with textual features and narrative details if [she] wanted to understand [her respondents'] view of romance reading';

romance reading was important... because the simple event of picking up a book enabled [respondents] to deal with the particular pressures and tensions encountered in their daily round of activities.61

It is posited that Carey's novels function like romances in this sense.62 It is not possible to interview Carey's original readership, as did Radway with her late-twentieth-century romance-readers, and thus to find out why they enjoyed the novels. However, it is possible to find within the texts a number of themes that may have addressed themselves to such a readership. Thus, Carey's sympathy towards the fictional delinquent, her creative responses towards spinsterhood, her provision of vicarious male approval, her valorization of housework and her comfort for the bereaved may be seen as functions of the novels that lies beyond formal literary criticism. This is not to say that Carey's novels are devoid of literary value. However, the presence of this extra-literary function of the texts might go some way to explain their value to their readership in spite of their undoubted lack of appreciation by reviewers.

---

61 In discussing the methodology of her survey, Radway notes that she had to relinquish her 'inadvertent but continuing preoccupation with the text' because the women she interviewed 'always responded to [the] query about their reasons for reading with comments about the pleasure of the act itself, rather than about their liking for the particulars of the romantic plot.' Romance reading was important... because the simple event of picking up a book enabled [respondents] to deal with the particular pressures and tensions encountered in their daily round of activities. Although [she] learnt later that certain aspects of the romance's story do help to make this even especially meaningful, the early interviews... focused... resolutely on the significance of the act of romance reading rather than on the meaning of the romance. (Emphasis original.)

62 See Janice Radway, Reading the Romance, (London: Verso, 1987), p. 86. However, it would be to unnecessarily limit interpretations of them were they to be formally categorized as such.
Chapter I: The Mad, The Bad and the Morbid

i. The Lady is Not Mad

"The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness with the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr Audley, she is dangerous!"¹

Or is her secret that "insanity" is simply the label that society attaches to female assertion, ambition, self-interest and outrage?²

Imagine Mary Braddon's novel, *Lady Audley's Secret*, which first exploded into the literary market place in 1862, as a Religious Tract Society publication. Needless to say, it is not. It seems a far cry from what might be classified as 'improving' literature, dealing as it does with a woman who fakes her own death, abandons her child, commits bigamy and attempts murder, all in order to gain and retain social position and material comfort. However, characters with similarities to Lady Audley may be met with in several of Rosa Carey's apparently innocuous tales of domestic life. It is therefore pertinent to look closely at their apparent paradigm.

Braddon explains Lady Audley's behaviour in two apparently contradictory ways: criminality, with its attendant religious discourse, and madness, with its discourse of tainted heredity. The tension between the two is maintained virtually until the last. Only in the final chapters does the culpability of criminality overwrite the amorality of insanity. After all, repentance can only be urged upon a woman who is responsible for her actions. Yet if Lady Audley is sane, why is she certified?

The text is unequivocal: Lady Audley is indeed sane but she is too dangerous to be left at large; and the alternative to the asylum, criminal proceedings followed by certain execution, cannot be contemplated because the resultant scandal would punish the innocent along with the guilty. Ostensibly, a criminal has been apprehended and dealt with; explicitly for the convenience of those characters upholding the dominant moral order, a discourse of criminality is translated into a discourse of insanity. Rhetorically, however, the case appears to be different. Lady Audley is certified on account of one kind of madness but is incarcerated because of another. The doctor signs the certificate on the formally stated, though dubious, grounds that,

"There is latent insanity! Insanity which might never appear, or which might only occur once or twice in a life-time. It would be dementia in its worst phase, perhaps: acute mania; but its duration would be very brief, and it would only occur under extreme mental pressure. The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood." *(LAS, p. 292)*

However, his comment regarding the incarceration of Lady Audley in a lunatic asylum, 'I believe that you could do no better service to society than by doing this' is of greater interest *(LAS, p. 294)*. It is

---

perhaps this kind of comment that leads Elaine Showalter, as an (albeit twentieth-century) reader of the text, to make an alternative diagnosis. She posits that "Insanity" is simply the label that society attaches to female assertion, ambition, self-interest and outrage.' In this reading, the formal medical diagnosis on the part of the doctor may be seen as a legal fiction, resorted to because Lady Audley cannot be certified for having 'the cunning of madness' and for being 'dangerous.' Yet even this rhetorical construction of insanity yields a discourse of culpability if not actual criminality. Female ambition is madness but a woman can choose not to be ambitious. Conversely, the act of choosing madness may be construed as wilful wrong-doing. Ultimately, the madwoman is a criminal and the criminal is a madwoman; the closure is no closure. For brevity, this phenomenon of the female character who is interpellated alternately between the discourses of criminality and madness may be called the Lady Audley syndrome.

Arguably, Braddon oscillated between these diagnoses of criminality and madness for two reasons: to create a sensational story which might be enjoyed for its own sake and to create a discursive space within which to focus upon the late-nineteenth-century construction of femininity. Presented with the apparently antithetical positions of criminality and madness in the novel, the nineteenth-century reading subject would have been obliged to negotiate a personal synthesis or closure, or, indeed to construe some alternative reading.

The conflicts and confusions which arise out of Braddon's dual explanation of 'deviant' womanhood certainly invite the reader to question the veracity of both discourses. However, there has been debate as to how well she manages to produce or permit viable alternatives to the dominant. In A Literature of Their Own, Showalter admits that the appeal of the eponymous heroine lies in her transgression:

As every woman must have sensed, Lady Audley's real secret is that she is sane and, moreover, representative.3

As evidence for this conclusion, Showalter cites known patterns of 'supportive identification' between middle-class women and such of their peers as are on trial for domestic murder (Showalter 1988, p. 170). However, she ultimately calls Lady Audley's Secret by its proper name: 'a carefully controlled female fantasy' (Showalter 1988, p. 163). Showalter's emphasis is decidedly upon the word 'controlled.' Lady Audley's criminality/madness must be paid for; the fantasy must come to an end and the 'real' world both assert itself and deal with the aberration. Thus, whilst acknowledging the achievements of sensationalists such as Mary Braddon in portraying the female condition, Showalter locates Lady Audley's Secret outside the explicitly feminist:

---

The sensationalists were still...thwarted...by Victorian convention and stereotypes; but they did move well beyond the code of renunciation and submission that informed earlier fiction...In their own novels, they deliberately revised and rewrote...challenging the myth of the happy December-May marriage in Mrs Marsh and Charlotte Yonge, and the self-sacrificing masochism in George Eliot...But even as they recorded their disillusion...frustration...anger [and]...murderous feelings, they could not bring themselves to undertake a radical enquiry into the role of women. The novels of the 1860’s and 1870’s, pregnant with...inchoate rage, generally miscarry. Anger is internalized or projected, never confronted, understood or acted upon...Typically, the first volume of a woman’s sensational novel is a gripping analysis of a woman in conflict with male authority...By the second volume guilt has set in. In the third volume we see the heroine punished, repentant and drained of all energy. (Showalter 1988, p. 162; p. 180)

Showalter thus claims that, in spite of their appeal for the nineteenth-century reader, novels such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* failed to provide either an effective critique of existing society or a way forward to some form of female emancipation. According to this reading, the inevitability of Lady Audley’s defeat in fiction simply replicated an existent power/gender relationship which existed in ‘reality’ and helped to bolster the status quo. Yet Showalter’s assessment hierarchizes a twentieth-century reading over an (albeit reconstructed) nineteenth-century reading. That is, she attaches more importance to her twentieth-century feminist project of establishing a theory of feminine, feminist and female writing than she does to understanding the nineteenth century text and its reader on their own terms.

Lyn Pykett, in providing a critique of Showalter, not only reverses the latter’s priorities but provides an alternative thesis. She suggests that sensational writers were actually quite radical in their treatment of women’s issues. Beginning with the assertion that interpretation is problematized by ‘concentrating too much on endings at the expense of the complex middles of novels,’ Pykett goes on to say that,

Showalter’s early, feminist-inspired desire to see women and women writers transcend the historical conditions of their oppression left her insufficiently interested in, or alert to, the ways in which the women’s sensation novels rework and negotiate, as well as simply reproduce, the contradictions of these conditions.... We need to see [the sensation novel] not simply as either the transgressive or subversive field of the improper feminine, or the contained, conservative domain of the proper feminine. Instead we should explore [it] as a site in which the contradictions, anxieties and opposing ideologies of Victorian culture converge and are put into play....

Thus, Pykett appears to be suggesting that the capitulation to a more conventional standard which forms the closure to most sensational novels is not to be regarded as the major site for investigation. Taking Pykett’s view, the initial assertiveness of the heroines becomes of more positive interest. The discussion of femininity prompted by the ambiguous if not misleading construction of Braddon’s Lady Audley may thus be returned to the stage at which Showalter suggests that “Insanity” is simply the label society

---

Correspondingly, it becomes possible to positively rate the nineteenth-century woman reader's pleasure in identifying with a successful Lady Audley. In gaining, through the fiction, a temporary (and safe) liberation from mundane reality, the reader additionally gained a space in which to try out an alternative female role without fear of the consequences.

To summarize, *Lady Audley's Secret* is not simply about the 'normal' and the 'deviant' female psyche. It is also about a woman who is able to pit her wits against the financial, social and legal disabilities suffered by women in the 1860s. Nor yet is the novel simply a humourless tract about the wrongs of women. Whilst the eponymous heroine is ultimately defeated, one must not ignore the appeal, to the reader, of a safely fictional woman who gets her own way most of the time and who is not, in the final reckoning, punished as severely as she might have been. Having identified these potential areas of reader interest relating to the construction of Lady Audley, it is pertinent to move on to a discussion of Rosa Carey's equivalents.

Although Carey was never described by reviewers as a sensationalist novelist, one reviewer going so far as to describe her as 'immaculately pure and very high in tone,' several of her plots are enabled by the Lady Audley syndrome. For example, Etta, the poor relation in *Uncle Max* [1887], is, like Lady Audley, culpable at law but never brought to trial. Her function in terms of plot, is that of controller and manipulator of others. One of only two real villainesses in Carey's writing, she is made to obstruct three marriages, to nearly drive one of the six victims insane (and is possibly poisoning her) and to incriminate an innocent man in the theft that she has herself committed. Until the very end of the novel, she remains plausible to the male head of the household and so proceeds unchecked. Carey's creation differs markedly from Lady Audley on only two major counts: that Etta lacks the charm of the original and that she operates under her own name.

As Lady Audley's mental condition is discussed in one novel, so is Etta's in the other. The diagnoses differ but, rhetorically at least, the symptoms of the "disease" and its "treatment" are very similar. Though the diagnosis for Carey's character is supplied by a servant and not by a doctor who is attempting to certify her, the terminology used indicates more than a mere lay opinion:

5 The words 'immaculately pure and very high in tone' come from a review in *The Lady*. This review is often cited alongside the advertisements for her work to be found at the back of Macmillan editions. See, for example, R. N. Carey, *Sir Godfrey's Granddaughters*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1899.)

6 The only other real villainess is Madame Mercier in Rosa Carey, *Rue With a Difference* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1914 [1900]). Her career is much like that of Etta in *Uncle Max* in that she tyrannizes over the household in which she is effectively a poor relation. She is the least attractive of all the Lady Audley-type figures as she mistreats a child. The characters of Etta and Madame Mercier are so similar that only the former is dealt with in this chapter.
‘Somehow crooked ways come natural to her: the old mistress knew that, for she once said to me towards the last, “Leah, I am afraid that my poor child has got some warp or twist in her nature; but I hope that my nephew will never find out her want of straightforwardness”’.

In clinical terms, the expression ‘twist or warp in her nature’ connotes a blighted heredity. For the expression gains a kind of medical authority if it is allied to the alienist Henry Maudsley’s comment that,

in consequence of evil ancestral influences, individuals are born with such a flaw or warp of nature that all the care in the world will not prevent them from being vicious or criminal, or becoming insane.

If Carey was echoing Maudsley at this point, whether consciously or not, she was writing a diagnosis with multiple possibilities for the fictional Etta’s mental state. The attribution of ‘vicious[ness]... criminal[ity and] insan[ity]’ to the same source appears to be an admission on Maudsley’s part that the actual form which poor heredity will take remains unknown until it is visibly manifested. The inferences to be drawn from this are that the lines of demarcation between the three manifestations are far from clear and that more than one type of manifestation may be present in the same individual.

It is possible to find, within the character of Etta, evidence for all three. In spite of ‘all the care in the world’, Etta is, from a legal point of view, a criminal. In addition, she is vicious, meaning that she has a strong tendency towards depraved habits. She has an excessive love of fine clothes (this is the vice that leads her to crime) and she takes drugs for other than purely medical purposes (UM, p. 442; p. 440). As to whether Etta can, strictly speaking, be construed as insane, this is not so straightforward. With much discussion of her ‘sin,-perhaps I should say crime’ and of ‘obedience and submission’ and the necessity for her to atone, it seems that, once again, ‘the lady is not mad.’ Yet, as in Lady Audley’s Secret, even where discourses of sin and crime appear to prevail over the discourse of insanity, they do not furnish the novel with an absolute closure. Etta’s ‘hysterical state... border[ing] upon frenzy’ which lasts for ‘some hours’ after the discovery of her schemes is hardly emblematic of “normal” feminine

---


The term ‘alienist’ has been used here and subsequently in order to denote ‘One who treats mental diseases.’ The Shorter English Oxford Dictionary [reprinted 1991] gives the date of the term as 1864, though it was applied retrospectively to the earlier part of the nineteenth century and was probably going out of use by the 1880s. The term is used because it is temporally specific and thus pertinent to discussion of Carey’s novels. The terms ‘alienism’ and ‘alienist discourse’ refer to the texts and ideas of the prominent alienists - people such as Maudsley. The word ‘psychiatry’, meaning ‘Medical treatment of diseases of the mind’ is to be found in the Nuttall’s Pronouncing English Dictionary [1879]. However, it does not seem to have been in use in popular medical texts from around this date.
behaviour. (Carey’s approach to hysteria is taken up at greater length below.) Nor do the
expressions ‘my poor child’ and ‘warp or twist in her nature’ indicate total culpability on Etta’s part. In
addition, the reader familiar with Maudsley’s work is able to furnish Etta with a latent insanity which is
commensurate with her criminality and viciousness and which might emerge at any time. She, like Lady
Audley has a ‘hereditary taint in her blood’.

Significantly, Carey uses this same diagnosis of ‘a flaw or warp of nature’ to explain the behaviour of
another Lady Audley figure, Mrs Blake in Lover or Friend? [1890]. At point of discovery, Mrs Blake
has dissociated herself from her husband, who is serving a prison sentence for fraud, and is passing
herself off as a respectable bourgeois widow, under an assumed name.9 On this occasion, too, the
explanation is expressed in terms of pity as well as condemnation:

Could she help it...if her moral sense were blunted and distorted? There was something
defective and warped in her nature - something that seemed to make her less
accountable than other people. Truth was not dear to her, or her marriage-vows sacred
in her eyes.10

It additionally seems to reflect Maudsley’s contention that

there are...many persons who, without actually being imbecile or insane, are of a lower
moral responsibility than the average of mankind; they have been taught the same
lessons as the rest of mankind, and have a full theoretical knowledge of them, but the
principles inculcated never gain that hold of their minds which they gain in a sound and
well-constituted nature.11

Maudsley’s reader might well be confused by the notion that an incorrigibly irresponsible person with a
badly constituted nature can be sane. However, arguably, Maudsley qualifies the ascription of sanity to
such persons by use of the words ‘without actually being... insane.’ The implication is that these
persons are not actually sane either. Notably, this is the category into which Maudsley places the
‘wicked’ and ‘habitual criminals’ (Maudsley 1874, p. 25). Mrs Blake fits this paradigm of ‘lower
moral responsibility’ exactly. Her unacceptable behaviour consists of transgressions against morality
and class for which she may be blamed but for which she is not ultimately responsible. Like Lady
Audley, therefore, Mrs Blake is interpellated alternately into the discourses of criminality and madness.

---

9 Blake is the assumed name; her actual name is O’Brien.
10 Rosa N Carey, Lover or Friend, (London: Macmillan and Co. 1915 [1890]), p. 410. (Hereafter LoF)
11 Henry Maudsley, Responsibility in Mental Disease, The International Scientific Series Vol. VIII
(London: Henry S King & Co., 1874), pp. 24-5. The word “moral” in this passage is likely to have had
two meanings: ‘We can translate the term ‘moral’ as a rough nineteenth-century equivalent of the contemporary term
“psychological” which at the same time retains certain ethical implications’. See Vieda Skultans, Madness and Morals:
Yet Mrs Blake is an altogether more complex figure than either Lady Audley or Etta in that a whole matrix of language relating to insanity is applied to her throughout the novel. This "myth" of insanity begins in the early chapters as emphasis is placed upon her embarrassing artlessness in conversation. She is also portrayed as indulging in obsessive bouts of a single activity. To select just two examples, her daughter says of her that 'She never does things quite like other people. She likes either to work all day long...or else to do nothing'; whilst Mrs Blake herself admits on one occasion that 'for...two days it has been “stitch, stitch, stitch”...until I was on the brink of delirium' (LoF, p. 58; p. 118). Traits such as these in themselves suggest a chronic level of mental unbalance, if not actual lunacy.

However, by the later chapters of the novel, the reader might be led to conjecture that Mrs Blake has actually reached a state of permanent mental alienation. She suffers two lengthy hysterical attacks, the first upon the discovery of her real identity and the second at the death-bed of her son (LoF, p. 375; p. 436). After the first occasion, another character, Michael, remembering what he 'ha[s] been told' about her, utilizes a more sustained alienist discourse. The reader is supplied with a set of case-notes allied to what appears to be an expert medical opinion, albeit one inexactly theorized by the character in question:

he had been told that from her youth she had been prone to fits of hysterical emotion. She was perfectly unused to self-control, and only her son had ever exercised any influence over her. Was there not a danger, then, that, the barriers once broken down, she might pass beyond her own control? He had heard and had read that ungovernable passion might lead to insanity.
(LoF, p. 310)

With regard to the hysteria, Michael is possibly alluding to the following passage in George Man Burrows' book, Commentaries on Insanity [1828]:

Some go so far as to assert, that hysteria is of that class of maladies which, whenever it is manifested, betrays a maniacal diathesis. Occasional hysteria... in young and susceptible females ...may certainly occur without any such suspicion. But habitual hysteria clearly approximates to insanity.12

Henry Maudsley, in Body and Mind, similarly warns that 'the ordinary hysterical symptoms may pass, by degrees into chronic insanity' (Maudsley 1873 p. 79; see Skultans 1975, p. 234). However, the fictional Michael does more than speak of mental illness; by default, he supplies a recipe for good mental health: self-control, good influences and proper government of the passions. By implicitly advocating these personal qualities, Michael is made to subscribe to another strand of alienist thought:

that of long-term self-cultivation and self-control as a prophylactic. This case for mental self-regulation is epitomized in the work of another medical man, John Abercrombie, whose book, *Culture and Discipline of the Mind* was published in 1837.

We cannot determine...what degree of inattention to the diligent culture of the powers within, may be fatal to the best interests of the man, both as an intellectual and a moral being. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the mastery of the mind,-and of watching with earnest attention the trains of thought which we encourage there, as we cannot determine at what period a habit may be formed, the influence of which shall be permanent and irremediable.13

Nor did this view rapidly fall from favour as the century progressed. Henry Maudsley, writing nearly forty years later, also concluded that ‘in the wise development of the control of the will over the thoughts and feelings there is a power in ourselves which makes strongly for sanity’ (Maudsley 1874, p. 269).14

Unhabituated to self-control and consequently prone to emotional excess, Mrs Blake provides a foil for the heroine of the novel, Audrey. The latter, who, by the death of Mrs Blake’s son, loses a fiancé, is made to display far greater fortitude. Her more fortunate temperament means that, even when disposed to grieve, ‘Audrey’s strong will and sense of duty soon overcame the hysterical emotion’ (*LoF?* p. 458).

As with Etta in *Uncle Max*, it is possible to say that Mrs Blake has signs of at least a predisposition to insanity. She is imperfectly socialised, passionate and prone to hysteria. However, Michael’s words are mere conjecture. What he says cannot be taken as an authoritative statement that Mrs Blake is, or will ever become, insane. Indeed, he destabilizes the diagnosis himself by glossing what he has read about ‘ungovernable passion’ possibly ‘lead[ing] to insanity’ with the comment that ‘he almost believed it.’ The “myth” of Mrs Blake’s insanity is also undermined as the invisible narrator, arguably Carey herself, cites local gossip on the subject.

it was said and believed by more than one person that... hereditary insanity [had been discovered] in the Blake family; indeed, one lady - notorious gossip, and who was somewhat deaf - was understood to say that she had heard Mrs Blake was at that moment in a private lunatic asylum. (*LoF?*, p. 418)


\[14\] Appearances suggest that, although Carey had read a great deal of Maudsley’s work, she was also familiar with many of the earlier alienists, some of whom, like Abercrombie, were writing before she was born. Carey appears to be enjoying a private joke in *Lover or Friend?*, in that she names the doctor who attends the death-bed of Mrs Blake’s son Abercrombie. Like his namesake, the fictional doctor is a ‘rough, hard-featured Scotchman’. See *LoF?*, p. 424; Skultans 1975, p. xiii (‘Biographical Notes’).
Even the reader who has dutifully suspended disbelief in order to engage with the fiction might have cause to doubt the veracity of a notorious gossip who is deaf.

The dubious medical diagnoses made in respect of Lady Audley and her fictional sisters, Etta and Mrs Blake, do not - and indeed cannot - constitute closures even though they are ostensibly used as such. By the time each diagnosis is made, the picaresque career to which it relates has drawn to a close but the interface between culpability and madness continues. An ambiguous diagnosis/judgement is followed by an ambiguous prescription of treatment/punishment. In each of the novels alluded to so far, the deviant woman is banished to some form of asylum or penitentiary, apparently in order to learn appropriate behaviours and values.

Lady Audley proper is placed by the Audley family in a ‘maison de sante,’ with the recommendation that she repent; but Dr Mosgrave, the medical man who certifies her, speaks of mere incarceration:

“From the moment in which Lady Audley enters that house... Whatever secrets she may have will be secrets for ever! Whatever crimes she may have committed, she will be able to commit no more. If you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations”. (LAS, p. 293)

Similarly, the wronged head of the household in Uncle Max banishes his ‘unfortunate cousin’ to where she can do no further harm. He tells her,

I have found you a home far from here... and tomorrow you will be taken to it. The Alnwicks are kind, worthy people - not rich... or what the world would call refined... and they promise to treat you like a daughter. You will be in comfort, but not in luxury; luxury has been your curse, Etta.... Let your future conduct atone to me for the past.... Your only course now must be obedience and submission. (UM, pp. 441-2)

This sentence of banishment, too, appears in the light of punishment. Etta is to be deprived of her current home and to have her expenditure curtailed. Yet the Alnwicks have all the hallmarks of keepers of a private asylum. They are not her social equals but they are to have a kind of parental authority over her; and although Etta has nowhere else to go, she is to be delivered up to them rather than being allowed to travel to their home of her own free will.\(^{15}\) As with Lady Audley proper, she evades criminal proceedings but her future is far from bright.

\(^{15}\) Certainly private asylum-keeping was not highly regarded by the rest of the medical profession in the nineteenth century, either medically or socially. See Charlotte MacKenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich: A History of Ticehurst Private Asylum, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 193. However, even less status was accorded to the many medically unqualified persons who made a living from keeping a single insane patient in their own homes. (Carey’s Etta appears to have been supplied with this kind of accommodation rather than entering an asylum as such.) Such keepers did not have to be licensed by the local authority and the single patient had little legal protection until the Act of 1890
The ultimate fate of Mrs Blake in *Lover or Friend?* only differs in that Carey has her choose seclusion of her own free will. Mrs Blake changes her religion from a nominal Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism and enters a convent with a very strict rule. This voluntary segregation places her in much the same position as her fictional peers. The convent may be viewed as another pseudo-asylum or penitentiary. Mrs Blake will be away from the world, under the tutelage of a Reverend Mother and a Mother Church, learning the ultra-feminine role of poverty, chastity and obedience.

However, not all of Carey’s Lady Audley figures replicate this pattern of discovery followed by permanent exclusion from a former place in society. Joan, the eponymous heroine of *Only the Governess* [1888], feels compelled to leave her hypercritical husband and the sister-in-law who is trying to drive a wedge between them; but she ultimately returns in triumph, to a re-negotiated position within the marital home. Her use of an assumed name is in no way malevolent. It is merely a means by which she can feel free from the constraints put upon her by her husband and his sister. An advantageous proposal of marriage from her employer’s step-son brings about not bigamy (as with Lady Audley proper) but a full confession of her deception. The remainder of the narrative, in so far as it concerns her, is about reconciliation rather than punishment.

Nevertheless, Joan is, like the other Lady Audley figures, constructed alternately within discourses of insanity and transgression. She is ‘undisciplined’ and has a ‘passionate and ill-disciplined nature,’ these character faults, in keeping with the alienist thought that pervades Carey’s other novels, being ascribed to her upbringing. Joan’s father was ‘one of those impulsive, hot-tempered Irishmen that one dreads to have much to do with’; and ‘the aunt who brought her up was one of those worldly, scheming women that have so bad an influence on girls’ (*OTG*, p. 75). Thus, the reader may deduce that Joan, like Mrs Blake, has not had the right kind of early environment in which to practice ‘the wise development of the control of the will over the thoughts and feelings... which makes strongly for sanity’, as advocated by Maudsley (Maudsley 1874, p. 269).

Nor does this lack of moral development entirely free Joan from culpability for her actions, her transgression being couched in a discourse of sin rather than criminality since she has committed no

(see MacKenzie, p. 216). MacKenzie further suggests that ‘it was those patients whose status before the law was most ambiguous... who were likely to be confined in single lodgings.’ (Ibid., p. 106). Given Carey’s interest in Alienist writings, it is perhaps not surprising that the asylum motif occurs in three different novels during an intense period of public and parliamentary debate about lunacy legislation. The three novels discussed here are dated 1887, 1888 and 1890. The Act of 1890 was the culmination of at least six years of debate (see MacKenzie, pp. 198-201).

---

16 As a governess, she uses the name Miss Huldah Rossiter; her name is actually Mrs Joan Thorpe.
Upon discovery, she is told ‘you have done very wrong, for you have sinned against the truth,’ and she acknowledges the justice of this (OTG, p. 197). Elsewhere in the novel, Joan’s employer tells her ‘You must be very humble towards your husband, for your sin against him is very great’ (OTG, p. 219; p. 229). Yet Joan’s story differs from the other Lady-Audley-style narratives in more than its ending. It is the most interesting of the three novels by Carey dealt with here because there lies within it a protracted discussion of the mitigating circumstances in the protagonist’s unacceptable behaviour.

The ‘complex middl[e]’ of this novel which, had it been a sensation novel as such, Pykett would have described as ‘a site in which the contradictions, anxieties and opposing ideologies of Victorian culture converge and are put into play,’ contains the most even-handed discussion of the transgressive female to be found in any of Carey’s Lady Audley-style novels. It is therefore discussed at greater length below.

It seems that, in placing her Lady Audley figures within the competing discourses of insanity and transgression, Carey was not merely emulating Braddon and creating a discursive space for the reader. In undermining a diagnosis of insanity in Lover or Friend?, and a diagnosis of incorrigible badness in Only the Governess, she may indeed have facilitated debate about suitable modes of feminine behaviour. However, she appears to have done far more than this with her material. The allusions to alienist texts, especially to those of her contemporary, Maudsley, appear to be far too plentiful if included solely for the purpose of encouraging an extra-textual debate on femininity. Arguably, Carey also had an explicitly didactic agenda, that of advocating the teaching of self-control from an early age and of warning about the dire consequences of neglecting such education.

Thus, it appears that the discursive space opened by the presence in the text of a woman placed within the competing discourses of insanity and transgression is, at least in part, closed by the didactic teaching embedded within those same discourses. However, the didactic subject-matter placed within the novel and the discussion of the female role, potentially to be generated from without, only partially map over

---

18 Similarly, a minor male character in the novel is described as culpable but not quite sane, and thus to be pitied. Job Wilkinson ‘has a small allowance of brains and...his moral sense is not quite developed; but even incorrigible people must be fed’. See OTG, pp. 213-4.

19 That the general public was well-equipped to detect the alienist discourses of self-control and self-culture is testified to by the existence of these discourses in non-specialist medical books and in general literature. See, for example, Enquire Within Upon Everything to which is added Enquire Within upon Fancy Needlework, (London: Houlston and Sons, 1871), p. 256: ‘children who have been the least indulged...acquire more...vigour of mind, than those who have been constantly favoured, and treated by their parents with the most solicitous attention: bodily weakness and mental imbecility are the attributes of the latter’. See also C M Yonge, Womankind, second edition (London: Mozley and Smith, 1877), p. 13. For an example of a popular general medical book which discusses mental disease, see J. M’Gregor-Robertson, The Household Physician, A Family Guide to the Preservation of Health and to the Domestic Treatment of Ailments and Disease, with Chapters on Food and Drugs, and First Aid in Accidents and Injuries, (London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin: Blackie & son Ltd, undated, [c. 1888]). Maudsley is referred to by name in the section entitled ‘Predisposing Causes’ of insanity. See p 106.
each other. Early training as a prophylactic against insanity is not an issue that relates solely to feminine behaviour. (As will be seen later in the chapter, males can equally be seen to suffer from defective education.) Moreover, Carey’s focus, in the Lady Audley-style novels, upon the specific moral and social dilemmas experienced by female characters as they negotiate a potentially hostile society, are not totally founded upon the moral/mental health of the individual. Arguably, the two readings, utilizing the same source material, can run in parallel. However, if Carey’s novels are not merely didactic, it is pertinent to look at other features of the texts which might have been of interest to the nineteenth-century reader.

Many of the pleasures provided by Carey’s Lady-Audley-style texts may be said to revolve around an identification of the reader with the Lady-Audley-style character herself. These pleasures include both the gratification of the reader’s narcissistic desire simply to see herself reflected in the text - however unfavourably - and the subsequent opportunity for her to engage with the competing discourses in the text, which construct her now-fictionalized self. If it is accepted that a reader’s access to narcissistic reflection is through identification with a character in a novel, it is possible to usefully re-

In this discussion, the word ‘pleasures’ is not related to Roland Barthes’ notion of the ‘text of pleasure’, meaning a text which does not challenge cultural assumptions. Rather, the word is intended to denote the enjoyment a nineteenth-century reader might have gained from the text. In this specific instance, it is suggested that pleasure is gained by identifying with a key character in the text and by exploring, from this vantage point, the discourses that construct the character in question. This is a discursive/active role for the reader rather than a passive one, even if the reader’s personal ‘closure’ is ultimately conservative.

Freud, quoting Paul Nacke, describes narcissism as ‘the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated - who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction through these activities’. See Sigmund Freud, On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psycho-analysis, The Pelican Freud Library Volume 11, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987), p. 65. Freud suggests that, in adults, this extent of self-love is a perversion; but he also posits ‘a primary narcissism in everyone’ as a normal stage in human development (Ibid., p. 82). Freud’s own comment on supposedly deviant adult narcissism, given below, provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the reading subject as one who identifies with a character within the text.

We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance, such as perverts and homosexuals, that in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking themselves as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed ‘narcissistic’. (Ibid., p. 81)

Whilst disagreeing with Freud’s classification of homosexuals as people ‘whose libidinous development has suffered some disturbance’ and whilst positing that a certain amount of adult narcissism is normal, if not socially acceptable, it is possible to formulate the theory that narcissistic readers can temporarily ‘take[e] as a model not their mother but their own selves.’ In the private action of reading, normal readers are permitted to egotistically experience themselves as they believe they are portrayed in the novel rather than being obliged to look outside themselves and to emulate ‘mother,’ who represents concepts such as society, duty and self-denial.

That Freud did not think that primary narcissism entirely disappeared in the “normal” adult is evident. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he claims that many women after puberty experience ‘an intensification of the original narcissism’ (Ibid., p. 82). Meanwhile, he suggests that ‘A man who has exchanged his narcissism for homage to a high ego ideal [that is, the next stage of ‘normal’ development] has not necessarily on that account succeeded in sublimating his libidinal instincts. It is true that the ego ideal demands such sublimation, but cannot enforce it.’ (Ibid., P. 89).
interrogate Showalter's contention that "'insanity' is simply the label that society attaches to female assertion, ambition, self-interest and outrage".22

That the nineteenth-century woman reader might have felt herself to be categorized as transgressive or otherwise abnormal if she challenged the minor mores of the dominant is all too plausible if analogies are drawn between women readers in the late-nineteenth century and respondents in a study by Dale Spender in the late-twentieth.23 Spender notes that all of her respondents identified with a nameless problem characterized only as 'the automatic classification of women as wrong.' The subjects in her study were thus 'obliged to resort to a description of the circumstances in which this experience arose because there is no ready-made name by which to label it.'

Whilst Carey does not 'name' this nameless problem of being female and thus wrong either, there is a sense of its presence in the Lady-Audley-style novels. Many rational explanations for transgressive behaviour are given in the texts but somehow there lies beyond them all an ultimate classification of 'women as wrong' when measured against the dominant version of femininity. Joan and Mrs Blake in particular are too normal to be insane; too rational to be incorrigibly criminal; and too individual to be paradigms of the dominant. It is simply their misfortune that (fictional) nineteenth-century society finds their behaviour largely unacceptable.24 The most self-aware of the Lady Audley figures, Joan, in Only the Governess, best sums up their plight:

'I can justify nothing. Everything is wrong, and the only pity is that I was ever born, to be the misery of myself and other people.' (OTG, p. 249)

22 For an affirmative discussion of reader identification with the 'heroine' in literature, see Janice Radway, Reading the Romance, (London and New York: Verso, 1987), p. 64. Radway's study is of twentieth century readers of mass-produced romances but it has the merit of being an in-depth engagement with individual readers. It therefore seems a suitable analogy from which to abstract evidence for similar nineteenth-century reading behaviour. Showalter also posits that identification between reader and heroine is common. Hence, her remark that, 'As every woman must have sensed, Lady Audley's real secret is that she is sane and, moreover, representative'. However, it is also well to keep in mind Kate Flint's reservation, that most commentators on nineteenth century fiction, including Showalter, 'tacitly accept that readers identify almost automatically with the most attractive - if not the most conventional - central woman character available'. See Kate Flint, The Woman Reader 1837-1914, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 36. The position, tentatively suggested, in this thesis, is that the reader gains most narcissistic pleasure from identifying with the character who is most like herself, regardless of that character's centrality to the plot, attractiveness or social and material conditions.

23 Spender's study posits that an absence of suitable language can negate the reality of female experience. She writes specifically about women in dialogue with men. However, an analogy can be made between speaking to men per se and the place allocated to nineteenth century women in discourses of the patriarchal dominant. For Spender's study, see Dale Spender, Man Made Language, (London, Boston and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 182-90. (The quotations that follow in the main text are from p. 187.)

24 For example, there is no behaviour by Joan or Mrs Blake that has not its counterpart in Moll Flanders. However, the 'spirit of the age' in each case has determined both the writing and the reading of texts containing such characters.
It is thus possible to posit that Victorian/Edwardian readers would have been able to find, in Carey's Lady Audley-style texts, fictional 'description[s] of... circumstances' in which characters attract the 'automatic classification of women as wrong' and to have found parallels with their own experience.

Readers would also have been permitted to engage with issues of morality and conduct which might not have their analogy in the lives of the majority. For example, in identifying with Etta in Uncle Max, the reader can decide whether or not it is reprehensible to take control of a household when the alternative is to live there as an obscure poor relation. Similarly, in identifying with Mrs Blake in Lover or Friend?, she can decide whether the satisfactions of being honest are sufficient to compensate for the social ruin inherent in acknowledging that her husband is a felon. Carey facilitates this kind of debate in her novels by giving, on most occasions, at least two points of view. Even the villainess, Etta, who is the most censured of Carey's Lady Audley figures discussed here, is briefly represented sympathetically towards the close of the novel. Having been stripped of her power over others, she becomes merely a defeated, defenceless and ageing woman:

She looked pinched and old and plain... [There were] grey hairs in the smooth dark head; before many years were over [she] would look an old woman.' (UM, p. 437)

However, if Lyn Pykett's view of sensation novels by women may be applied to Carey, the negotiations and reworkings of dominant viewpoints are not exclusively centred on the Lady Audley-style character herself. Although her madness or badness provides a focus in terms of plot, the competing discourses enabled by her presence are of equal interest.

In Only The Governess, the initial antagonism displayed by other female characters towards Joan is especially rich in theoretically intersecting discourses which clash where they might be expected to map over each other. This collision of ideas might be said to have a didactic purpose as rhetoric is in favour of narratorially approved modes of behaviour rather than those which are initially exhibited.

Thus, Rachel Thorpe, Joan's sister-in-law, lovingly and selflessly keeps house for her brother and donates both her time and her money to the administration of a charity. However, she operates within the letter rather than the spirit of divine law. As she herself muses,

Had she not made an idol of her brother? had she cared for aught in life but for him and for her work? What would it avail to her that she had fed the hungry and clothed the naked, when her cruelty, her coldness and hardness, had driven her sister-in-law away from her home - when her narrow jealousy, her hard judgement, had first alienated Ivan from his wife, and had led to their separation?...The life that had looked so pure and
self-denying to others was full of hideous uncleanness to the Divine eyes of her Judge. (*OTG*, p. 325)  

Here, discourses of the religious and discourses of the conventional are shown to have disparate aims. Conventionally, a charitable woman is a good woman and one who attracts the admiration of others. However, institutionalized charity is seen to be nothing without the old adage of charity beginning at home. Even Rachel’s love for her brother is exposed as a selfish emotion in that she will not place her brother’s interests before her own.

On a strictly social level, the precedence of an inefficient wife over an overbearing unmarried sister is debated and put into the context of whether an unmarried sister should leave her brother’s home at all costs. Rachel has looked after her brother since he was a boy, and brother and sister have a very close relationship. Besides, she has nowhere else to go and cannot afford her own establishment. However, the wife has both societal and religious entitlement to superior status, whether or not she receives it. Rachel may well be right in saying of her brother that ‘Joan does not love him; she makes him miserable’ but she is told in no uncertain terms,

‘This is your brother’s house; his wife is its rightful mistress. ...No sister has the right to come between a man and his wife.’

Viewed as a usurper and a trouble-maker within the home, Rachel may be regarded as a kind of Lady Audley figure herself. As with Etta in *Uncle Max*, her refusal to give place to the societally endorsed lady of the house is based upon the plausible premise that household harmony would otherwise be in jeopardy. Rachel’s sanity might be insisted upon throughout novel but she is certainly no different in virtue to the sister-in-law she disparages so often.

Another female character whose dual standard is explored in the text is Madella, Joan’s employer. She is constructed as a pure woman whose purity has been guaranteed by lack of temptation and who thus cannot empathise with the temptations of others:

she was as innocent now, when she was surrounded by her grown-up children, as though she were in her teens. Length of years and many troubles had not taught her knowledge of the world. She believed vaguely and sorrowfully in evil and sin. Of course there were wicked people, people who did wrong, the criminal classes and

---

25 The distinction between formal charity and charitableness of disposition is couched in biblical terms. Note the allusion to Jesus’ words ‘I was an hungered and ye gave me meal...Naked, and ye clothed me’ (*Matt. 25:35-6*); but also note an allusion to the words ‘though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give up my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing’ (*1 Cor. 13:3*).  

26 *OTG*, p. 220. The issue of precedence amongst females is taken up in the chapter of this thesis entitled ‘Hearth and Home’.
others, but - but - she never cared to enter on the subject; with so much goodness in the world, it was foolish and morbid to dwell on the darker shades of life. (OTG, p. 97)

However, even before she shows a lack of charity towards Joan, this supposed virtue is subjected to scrutiny. Though ‘Her husband had adored this innocence’, it is also stated that

more than one strong-minded woman who thought it her duty to renovate society and was prepared to wade through the mire, that she might benefit her fellow-creatures, had been heard to express her opinion, that an old childhood was hardly a becoming age, and that there was something narrow and self-indulgent in a nature like Mrs Chudleigh’s. (OTG, p. 98)

Whilst ‘strong-minded women’ are hardly praised in this passage, they do provide a foil for the extreme unworldliness of Madella. Even the step-son who adores her says,

‘sor long as she lives will Madella dwell in her own house, and pull down her blinds, and stop her ears with cotton-wool, that she may not hear the groans of human victims, or see how cruelty still stalks abroad.’ (Ibid., p. 99.)

Yet Madella has been the ideal wife and is now the ideal widow. Her femininity and her motherhood are unquestioned. Her high but conventional standard of womanhood and her lack of experience in anything beyond it thus make her initial hostility to the erring wife, Joan, inevitable. When Madella discusses Joan’s delinquencies with her step-son, a predictable range of arguments is voiced by each of them. Madella’s concern for her family, ‘Think of the bad example to our girls.... A mother must first think of her own children’ is more than countered by her step-son’s retort,

‘but a mother’s duty need not stop there. That is the worst of you good women - you will mother your own girls, but you will not extend your guardianship and charity to a poor misguided young woman.’ (OTG, p. 207)

Thus, even the approved paradigm of womanhood is seen to be inadequate if it excludes from its make-up charity towards those who cannot meet its standards.

In this discussion of the various discourses of religion, convention, charity and female status, it may seem as though the subject of the Lady Audley figure has been left far behind and that such discussion is out of place in a chapter on insanity. However, the point is that the Lady Audley figure is not mad. Each of the Lady Audley figures in Carey’s novels is constructed within the alienist discourse but, as with Lady Audley proper, it is not the alienist discourse alone that attempts to convict her of either clinical insanity or totally indefensible transgression. There are parts of the following passage that could apply to all three of Carey’s protagonists, as well as to their paradigm:

‘She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left in the hope of finding better. There is no madness in that… When she found herself in a desperate position, she did not grow desperate. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a
conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that. (LAS, p. 290)

However, in each case, a jury of her fictional peers is effectively made to add the words ‘The lady is not mad... she is dangerous!’ The danger lies in permitting female ambition - or even self-preservation - to destabilise the existing structure of society.
ii ‘Thoughts too long and too intensely fixed on one object’

However, it is not only assertive and ambitious female characters who are likely to be described in terms appropriate to insanity in Carey’s novels. Another significant group of victims succumb to, or are only just saved from, a form of acute mental illness which she describes as ‘brain fever.’ By the late-nineteenth-century, this disease, ‘brain fever’ had been doubly dismissed by the general medical establishment even whilst it retained and renewed its place within fiction as diverse as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* [1897] and John Strange Winter’s *A Blameless Woman* [c. 1896]. Medically speaking, the name of the complaint had been relegated to the realm of popular parlance and the symptoms had been transmuted from the psychological into the physical. Far from being a mental disease, in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century medical books, brain fever is most often conflated with simple meningitis. The *Cassell’s Family Doctor*, published in 1897 contains a description of the illness as it was generally understood by the medical establishment of the day.

Inflammation of the brain and its membranes is a very serious disease, and often terminates fatally... the disease is called meningitis... It is to this affection that the title “brain fever” is most justly due, although it is used in a popular sense to include all feverish diseases accompanied with brain symptoms... simple meningitis is caused by injuries to the head, disease of the ears, exposure to the sun, over-excitement of the brain, or excessive brain work.29

Another Cassell publication, dated about 1914, states that ‘SIMPLE MENINGITIS is the disease which is popularly spoken of as “brain fever,” but that term is very vague, and is not now used by medical men in reference to any particular disease.’30 It is safe to say that, by the eighteen-nineties - and probably a decade or two earlier - ‘brain fever’ as a disease in its own right belonged to fiction alone.

The fictional symptoms of brain fever are remarkably consistent throughout Carey’s work and that of her peers: acute anxiety is followed by physical prostration and actual fever which often culminates in delirium.31 No organic disease is present but the prognosis (albeit never realised) is that of chronic

---

27 John Barlow, *Man’s Power Over Himself to Prevent or Control Mental Disease* [1843]. Cited in Skultans 1975, p. 166.
29 ‘A Medical Man’, *Cassell’s Family Doctor*, (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1897), p. 312. (Hereafter, *Cassell’s 1897.*) See also *The Nuttall’s Pronouncing English Dictionary*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1879), p.81: ‘Brain-fever, s. An inflammation of the brain.’ Whilst some of Carey’s novels considerably pre-date these sources, it is possible to abstract from them the medical view of brain fever from earlier in the century.
31 Harry Dane in Mrs Henry Wood’s novel, *Lady Adelaide*, broods himself into ‘a long nervous fever, prostrating both mind and body.’ when he discovers that his fiancee has been having illicit romantic meetings with his brother. See Mrs Henry Wood, *Lady Adelaide*, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1896 [pre-1887]),
insanity or death. The passage below, from Our Bessie [1888-9], contains a typical description of the early symptoms. Here, the sufferer is still more or less compos mentis so she is able to speak about her condition to others:

'I have been thinking myself stupid; but I am still too restless to lie down. I feel as though I never want to sleep again, and yet I am so tired... One seems on wires, and all sorts of horrid, troublesome thoughts keep surging through one's brain, and there seems no rest, no peace anywhere.' 32

However, the outlook for an ill-treated child, Emmie, in Carey's novel Queenie's Whim [1881], is even less auspicious. The doctor predicts that,

'When she wakes up I fear she will not know [anyone]; brain fever is the least we can expect... Acute terror on an exhausted system often leads to very sad results, especially with nervous children'. 33

Fortunately, the fictional Emmie did not die, neither were her physician's worst fears verified; but for many a long week the frail existence hovered between life and death. When the lethargy had passed a long period of delirium intervened, and every symptom of severe brain fever manifested itself.... The child lay upon her pillow smiling idly and waving her emaciated arms to and fro upon the quilt; the fair hair was closely shaven, the eyes dilated and brilliant.34

Given that fictional characters who suffer from brain fever never have any underlying physical disease and that they always recover from the complaint, their creators cannot be said to reproduce even the popular conflation of brain fever with meningitis. However, the blurring of distinctions between a

---

32 Rosa Carey, Our Bessie, (London: The Office of the Girl's Own Paper, n.d. [1888-9]), pp 165-6. (Hereafter OB.) See also Wee Wifie, (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1894 [1869]), p. 189; Robert Ord's Atonement, (London: Richard Bentley and Son 1898 [1873]), p. 396. See also text below. (Where the date of a text runs over two years, as with Our Bessie [1888-9]), this indicates that the novel was first issued in serial form between these dates.)

33 R. N. Carey, Queenie's Whim, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1898 [1881]), p. 59. (Hereafter, QW.) Cf. 'Sudden fear has sometimes acted beneficially... more generally, however, its operation is the reverse, and many cases of epilepsy, mania, heart disease, &c., date from fright. In children, particularly of a nervous temperament, the influence of fear... is most sedulously to be avoided... further, if a child has been systematically frightened about the dark, &c., it may, if accidentally placed in it, suffer serious injury from fright.' See S. Thomson and J. C. Steele, A Dictionary of Domestic Medicine and Surgery, thirty-fourth edition, thoroughly revised and enlarged by A. Westland, G. Reid and J. Cantlie, (London: Charles Griffin & Company Limited, 1899 [1882]), pp 265-6. (Hereafter Thomson and Steele, 1899.)

34 QW, p. 60. In this context, as death is not the worst outcome to be feared, the ultimate threat is insanity. Emmie's treatment was typical of that for delirium in the late nineteenth century: 'the head should be shaved and kept cool... the feet should be kept warm, the room darkened, and every source of excitement removed' (Thomson and Steele, p. 182). Her condition appears to be that of low delirium: 'in the low forms of delirium, the mental disturbance is equally complete as in the acute forms, but the violence of the inflammatory fever is absent; generally, the person lies in a dreamy state of incoherent thought... the hands are tremulous... and... perhaps affected with convulsive startings' (Ibid.)
mental condition and meningitis was useful to them in terms of plot. Authors had at their disposal both the cliff-hanging, almost certain fatality, of meningitis and the advantage of not losing credibility if the victims recovered.

In fiction, brain fever is always the result of 'over-excitement of the brain' rather than disease or injury. Thus it remains, in spite of its physical symptoms, what the Victorians would have called a 'moral' rather than a physiological disease. In an important sense, this word 'moral' simply alludes to the mental processes of the brain as distinct from its physiological entity. Yet the term cannot be divorced from resonances of moral conduct. Vieda Skultans glosses the word as 'psychological' but at the same time 'retain[ing] certain ethical implications' (Skultans 1975, p.2). Today, writers would probably use the more common and less judgemental word 'functional'. However, were this latter term to be used in this particular context, a major means of understanding why brain fever survived as a literary phenomenon long after it had ceased to be taken seriously by the medical establishment would be lost.

Seen as a 'moral,' that is as a psychological condition rather than as a physiological one, the causes and symptoms of fictional brain fever appear to parallel early-nineteenth-century alienist thought. For example, in his treatise, Man's Power Over Himself to Prevent or Control Mental Disease [1843] John Barlow states that,

Insanity from misdirection of the intellectual force... has one very general character... at first there are very few symptoms, if any, of structural disease... the evil originates rather in the misuse than the impairment of the organ. Thoughts too long and too intensely fixed on one object, weary the part of the brain so employed, and we usually then seek relief by varying our occupation: if this is not done, the weariness may end in disease. (Skultans 1975, p. 166. Emphasis original.)

Barlow then illustrates the perils of brain-weariness with a case-study of a man who imposed upon himself the task of learning Greek grammar:

he persevered in spite of weariness, but in a short time delirium came on. He took the hint, laid aside the Greek primitives, and recovered himself very quickly. Here the misuse of the organ had produced temporary disease: had the subject been one not so easy to lay aside, the temporary disease might have become permanent (Ibid.)

To an extent, this passage describes the experience of fictional brain fever victims. First they dwell on something too long or too intensely; then they begin to suffer from temporary disease. The complaint eventually manifests itself as delirium and the prognosis is insanity or death. However, Barlow was far

35 As used in e.g. 'Mental Illness' in R. L. Gregory (ed.), The Oxford Companion to the Mind, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 470-1: 'organic disorders... and functional disorders.'
from being alone in assigning moral causes to mental diseases. Even the more physiologically
grounded Henry Maudsley grudgingly admitted that this was possible:

To the argument that madness is produced sometimes by moral causes, which must be
admitted, it is sufficient to reply... that long-continued or excessive stimulation of any organ
does notably induce physical disease of it, and that, in this respect,... the brain only obeys a
general law of the organism.... 36

Maudsley’s categories of ‘long-continued’ and ‘excessive’ stimulation of the brain conveniently ally
themselves to the two basic causes of fictional brain fever: protracted brooding and sudden shock. Thus
Emmie in Queenie’s Whim (whose illness has been described above), may be placed in the ‘sudden
shock’ category. She succumbs to brain fever after the ‘acute terror’ of being locked up in a dark room.

Similarly, Miss Bretherton, a character in Carey’s novel The Mistress of Brae Farm [1896], is
prostrated after witnessing the sudden and unexpected death of her fiancé.37 In such cases, brain fever
is merely a literary device utilized to bring colour and drama into the narrative. The nature of the illness
excites the pity of the reader and potentially provides a catalyst in terms of plot.

However, Carey devotes more space in her novels to characters in whom ‘long-continued’ stimulation of
the brain brings about disease. Characters who fall ill after protracted brooding generally suffer due to
causes of the chronic kind, which are ‘not so easy to lay aside’ and their suffering generally has a more
obviously moral or ethical dimension. Thus, Gladys, in Uncle Max [1887] is an ideal candidate for
brain fever. She fears that her adored twin brother has drowned and that the man she had hoped to
marry no longer loves her; and, most importantly, she is out of charity with her elder brother. She has
no-one to whom she can confide her anxiety and sadness and so broods in unhealthy isolation.

Yet, in spite of the affinities with alienist writing, insanity and brain fever are deemed to be different
conditions. Neither Maudsley nor Barlow uses the latter term at all and fictional texts tend to maintain
a distinction between them. In Carey’s novels, insanity is most feared as an outcome; brain fever is the
potential cause of insanity, not a manifestation of it. 38

36 Maudsley 1874, p. 16. From mid-century, the tendency was increasingly towards physiological rather
than ‘moral’ explanations of mental disease. In particular interest focused upon matters of heredity as
opposed to environment.
38 In Uncle Max, the question of Gladys’ sanity is obliquely raised during a discussion about suitable
medical care. Gladys’ malevolent cousin Etta tells the nurse, ‘Gladys’s case is far too serious for me to be...
sanguine. I believe you have not nursed these nervous patients before. If Giles had taken my advice he would have had a person
trained to this special work.’ See R. N. Carey, Uncle Max, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912
[1887]), p. 382. (Hereafter, UM.) The word ‘person’ suggests someone who is not a hospital-trained
nurse; the phrase ‘this special work’ hints that the patient is suffering from something other than physical
ill-health. These insinuations are immediately refuted by the reply that ‘Gladys’s case does not require that sort
of nurse’ (UM, p 382). Similarly, in Wee Wifie [1869], Sir Hugh is raving and violent but he is treated
As to the general opinion of the medical establishment, this can only be judged by its response to the symptoms of brain fever because the disease itself is accorded no real existence. Thus, it is necessary to look at medical views on its major manifestation, delirium. Nineteenth-century physicians Thomson and Steele view delirium as 'a temporary disordered condition of the mental faculties, occurring during illness, either of a febrile or of an exhausting nature' (Thomson and Steele 1899, p. 181). They carefully distinguish it from insanity even whilst acknowledging the difficulties of doing so:

In true delirium the presence of fever more or less, the acute disorder of the functions generally, such as digestion &c., and the disorder of the whole mind, generally sufficiently indicate its distinctness from insanity, in which the faculties of the mind are only perhaps affected or perverted, and disconnected.... Still, the two affections may nearly approach one another.... (Ibid., p. 182)

They additionally identify, almost as an aside, the most probable cause of brain fever. The passage continues,

Still more difficult of discrimination are some cases of hysterical delirium, which, when long continued, might well be taken for insanity, unless subjected to medical judgement.... (Ibid. My emphasis.)

Brain fever was thus, in medical terms at least, deemed to be simply a manifestation of the chameleon-like pathology of hysteria. However, it might be asked why brain-fever sufferers en masse should be regarded as hysterical. The Cassell's Family Doctor provides a number of suggestions. Hysteria could be caused by

many conditions which produce an exhausted, overwrought state of [the nervous] organs. Among these may be mentioned sudden fright, strong religious impressions, unhappy love affairs, hope deferred, and other powerful emotional conditions.... (Cassell's 1897, p. 535)

For Rosa Carey’s brain fever victims, with the exception of the child Emmie, the common factor is that of thwarted sexual expectations: that is, they suffer ‘unhappy love affairs’ or ‘hope deferred’. An explicit connexion between sexual anxiety and hysteria had been recognized at least as early as 1853, with the publication of Robert Brudendall Carter’s influential book, On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria. He writes at length about the woman whose hysterical condition has arisen due to her anticipation of licit sexual pleasures which then fail to materialize:


Unlike many of his peers, Carter posited that men as well as women were prone to hysteria and that in each the cause could be sexual frustration. He states that ‘in many cases of hysteria in the male, the sufferers are recorded to have been “continent”.’ Cited in Ilza Veith, Hysteria: The History of a Disease, (Chicago: Phoenix Books, The University of Chicago Press, 1965) p. 202. Thomson and Steele suggest that sexual frustration should predispose women to hysteria (Thomson and Steele 1899,
The emotions likely to be secretly dwelt upon as a consequence of the pleasures derived from them are thus reduced to a very small number; and it is evident that a young woman whose chief enjoyment rests either upon a complacent contemplation of her own perfections, mingled with an angry sense of the neglect shown to them by her associates, or else upon an imagined gratification of her sexual desires, is not in the best possible frame of mind for withstanding the pressure of a new temptation; such as is held out by the discovery that she can, at will, produce an apparently serious illness, and thus make herself an object of great attention to all around her, and possibly, among others, to the individual who has been uppermost in her thoughts. (Ibid., p. 203. My emphasis.)

Notably, in this early treatise, hysteria is viewed as a matter of ‘moral’ perversity, in both senses of the word. It is possible to make a large number of links between Carey’s individual brain fever victims and Carter’s version of hysteria. For Sir Hugh in Wee Wifie, the lassitude following acute brain fever excuses his illicit desire to see his first love even though he is married to another; for Edna in Our Bessie, an hysterical cough and the first symptoms of ‘brain fever’ elicit the sympathy of her mother and friends after she has, of her own volition, dismissed the fiancé she was shortly to have married. Meanwhile, Gladys in Uncle Max, with her surfeit of problems, could be construed as pining in a carefully contrived manner in order to play on the guilt of her clergyman lover.

However, fictional brain fever, whether or not purely attributable to hysteria, is very much more than an illness; it not only provides pathos and aids plot development but also frequently carries with it heavily didactic overtones. Brain fever, as a ‘moral’ complaint, encompasses concepts of the ethical as well as the purely mental. It indicates to the reader that the sufferer is wrestling with an apparently insoluble predicament or dilemma, perhaps one requiring an as yet unattained Christian forbearance or faith. It can also signify a point of personal crisis and an opportunity to change course in life.

Rosa Carey makes full use of her brain-fever victims for this kind of didactic purpose, her favoured issue being that of appropriate Christian behaviour. Hence the ethical predicament of Gladys in Uncle Max. Gladys cannot forgive her elder brother, Giles, for his part in driving her rebellious twin, Eric, away from the family home. Consequently, she cannot forgive herself for her lack of charity; ‘a sense of sin oppressed her; she must be more wicked than other people, or... Providence would not permit her to be so unhappy.’ In the same passage, Gladys goes on to express her feelings in explicitly doctrinal form, both ‘blame[ing] herself with influencing [her younger brother] Eric wrongly: she ought not to have taken his part against his brother’ and expressing her anxiety about her feelings towards her elder brother:

---

p. 340). Cassell’s (1897) reluctantly concedes that ‘rare cases occasionally occur in very impressionable men.’ (Cassell’s 1897, p. 535)
"He that hateth his brother is a murderer." Ursula, there were times, I am sure, when I hated Giles. And, with this thought upon her she would beg him to forgive her when he next came into the room. 40

Thus, the fictional Gladys is represented as being at least partially responsible for her own situation. She is represented as knowing that she must be reconciled with her elder brother in order for there to be a happy issue. Indeed, her recovery actually begins when she is able to ask Giles for a good-night kiss (UM, p. 373). In another of Carey’s novels, Our Bessie, a character called Edna becomes ill after she has dismissed her fiancé in a fit of ill-temper and then begins to regret it. On this occasion, Carey takes the opportunity to enlarge upon the perils of neglecting early moral training in children. Edna’s mother is made to say,

"I am afraid it is all my fault. I have indulged Edna too much, and given her own way in everything; and now she tyrannises over us all. If I had only acted differently." (OB, p. 147)

And Carey’s narrator somewhat sententiously adds that

She had not taught her child to practice self-discipline and self-control. Her waywardness had been fostered by indulgence and her temper had become more faulty. (Ibid.)

Yet Our Bessie does not merely deal with the shortcomings of an over-indulgent mother. Once again, a character cannot fully recover her health until she has taken some responsibility for her own behaviour. As the eponymous heroine muses at the height of her worries about Edna,

‘Oh, why, why were people so mad and wicked? How could anyone calling herself by the sacred name of Christian suffer herself to be over-mastered by these bitter and angry passions?’ (OB, p. 158)

Explicitly, Edna must start to live as a Christian daughter and prospective wife. However, implicitly, she must learn self-control in order to improve her mental health and in order to ensure that illnesses such as brain fever do not recur. The major part of her narrative concludes when she has sought, and received, the forgiveness of both her fiancé and her long-suffering mother (OB, p. 224).

Given that Our Bessie was written for, and published by, the Religious Tract Society, it is likely that Carey had in mind the Old Testament injunction to “Train up a child in the way he should go” that “when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Yet, in its preoccupation with the inculcation of self-control, Carey’s writing is, at this stage, equally reminiscent of Maudsley’s assertion that,

in the wise development of the control of the will over the thoughts and feelings there is a power in ourselves which makes strongly for sanity. (Maudsley 1874, p. 269)

40 All quotations from UM, p. 380; see also I John 3:15.
In both *Our Bessie* and *Uncle Max*, the 'moral' aspect of brain fever is clear: the conduct of the individual is at variance with the professed creed of Christianity. For brain fever victims such as these, a successful appeal to the conscience and the will is sufficient to bring about a full recovery. However, the greater complications experienced by the fictional Hugh in *Wee Wifie* yield further variations on the now familiar themes of religion and alienist thought. His sufferings begin when the woman he loves refuses to marry him because there is hereditary insanity in her family. In a fit of pique, he marries someone else. Thus he drives himself to mental break-down because he will not accept that the 'Divine Will' has forbidden the union of his choice and because he knows he has 'done a mean thing to marry [another] when his heart was solely and entirely Margaret's' (*WW*, p. 34; p. 171). His symptoms are typical for the early stages of brain fever: an exhausting restlessness, morbid thoughts and lack of sleep; but this is not the entire sum of his physical and mental ills (*WW*, pp.143-4);

often he had yielded to the temptation to drown his inward miseries with pernicious drugs;...in those solitary vigils whilst his innocent child-wife was sleeping peacefully like an infant, his half-maddened brain conjured up delirious fancies that seemed to people the library with haunting faces. (*WW*, pp 189-90)

The use of narcotics is not explicitly implicated in his eventual illness; there is an implied pre-existent state of 'nerves' (*WW*, p. 144). Rather, recourse to them is depicted as symptomatic of moral weakness: he is addicted to self-indulgence; he lacks self-control. Yet the picture of Hugh attempting to throw himself out of the window and that of his servants having to strap him down suggest, to the late-twentieth-century eye at least, the withdrawal symptoms attendant upon drug addiction.

---

41 *Wee Wifie* is a novel about notions of social and moral responsibility. Hugh tells Margaret, 'such things happen again and again in families, and no one thinks of them. If I am willing to abide by the consequences, no one else has the right to object.' (*WW*, p. 33). Carey's narrator adds, 'How could he think of the consequences to his unborn children, of the good of future generations of Redmonds, when he could hear nothing but the voice of his passion that told him no other woman would be to him like Margaret?' (*WW*, p. 34). In the latter the reader once again hears echoes of Henry Maudsley:

> When one considers the reckless way in which persons, whatever the defects of their mental and bodily constitution, often get married, without sense of responsibility for the miseries which they entail upon those who will be the heirs of their infirmities, without regard... to anything but their own present gratification, one... (thinks)... that man is not the pre-eminently reasoning and moral animal he claims to be... He has persuaded himself... that... there is in the feeling of love between the sexes something of so sacred and mysterious a character as to justify disregard to consequences in marriage... on the contrary, it is a passion he shares with other animals... (Maudsley 1874, p. 276-7)

Ironically, Hugh's *behaviour* borders on insanity even though he is *constitutionally* sane, whilst the reverse is true of Margaret. She displays the sanity/social responsibility necessary to forbid the banns even though she is the one with the constitutional *predisposition* to insanity. However, she also represents the best that can be achieved by good moral training and strong religious faith in spite of a blighted heredity.

42 *WW*, p. 193. Nor would Maudsley have disputed the possibility of drug abuse. He suggests that 'it is possible to produce experimentally, by entirely physical causes, mental derangement exactly similar to that which is produced by moral causes' (*Maudsley* 1874, p. 16). Carey may have fictionalized a common phenomenon for her time without ascribing its biological cause. Some real-life instances of 'brain fever' in the nineteenth century may well have been caused by unwitting drug abuse. Drugs, in particular opiates, were more readily available and less was known about safe doses. Dr Bryce suggests that many women became addicted to narcotics through taking medication to relieve painful menstruation. Free availability of drugs which are now restricted is indicated by Thomson and Steele's list of suggested medicines for a
Unlike his fictional peers, Hugh is made to see his illness retrospectively as a point of personal crisis, as a vital opportunity to change his course in life and thus to avoid absolute destruction. He is made to wonder,

What would have become of him...if the hand of Providence had not laid him low before he had succeeded in ruining himself, body and soul? (WW, p. 189)

The implicitly Christian discourse at work here has as its underlying rationale that God works all things to the ultimate good, whether it is in preventing a marriage or in bringing about an illness. Margaret, his first love, is able to say from the first that, ‘It is not I but the Divine Will that has interposed this barrier to our union.’ However, Hugh cannot be brought to a proper understanding of the Divine Will until stricken by the ‘hand of Providence.’ Hugh must learn, through various tribulations what he will not learn by other means. However, he becomes a better person because of his sufferings. Eventually,

there was... in Hugh Redmond’s face... a nobler expression than it had ever worn in happier days. The old fretful lines round the mouth were gone;... there was a chastened gravity about his whole mien that spoke of a new and earnest purpose; of a heart so humbled at last that it had fled to its best refuge, and had found strength in the time of need.

Only when he gains religious faith can Sir Hugh thank God for Fay, ‘the wife He has given me’ (WW, p. 412). Thus, he is ultimately made to acknowledge that his initial wilfulness was wrong and that his tribulation was not without good cause or happy issue.

The fictional condition of brain fever may thus be seen as a disease with two overlapping pathologies. In purely medical terms, one of these was obsolete and the other topical. By the late-nineteenth century, no medical complaint called brain fever - whether physiological or purely psychological - was given serious consideration. Yet victims of brain fever were to be found in novels as late as (and probably later than) the eighteen-nineties. Looking at the fictional symptoms from a medical aspect, the condition

"domestic" materia medica.' On the list are ether, chloroform, chlorodyne, lead, mercury, and four kinds of opium (Thomson and Steele 1899, p. 394).

Yet although Sir Hugh is Carey’s only violent brain fever victim, his behaviour is within the expected bounds for someone suffering from delirium: ‘In fever, and febrile diseases generally, delirium may be no more than a slight confusion of ideas on waking from sleep, or it may amount to furious and dangerous excitement, or merge in low muttering, or terminate in confirmed coma or stupor....’ (Thomson & Steele, 1899, pp 181-2.)

WW, p. 33. Cf. the widowed Madella in Only the Governess, of whom it is said ‘not one of her children had ever heard her say a single repining or rebellious word.’ As Carey’s approved model of Christian submission, she is made to say to a less resigned widow, ‘we must not fight against God. Why don’t you give it all up, like a tired-out child, and ask Him to help you bear it?’ (OTG, p. 226).

WW, p. 361. Cf. ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise’, (Psalm 51:17). The latter is included in the Book of Common Prayer amongst ‘Sentences of the Scriptures’, some of which are to be read at the beginning of morning and evening prayer in the Church of England. Cf. also ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble’ (Psalm 46:1 in the King James Bible. However, the Book of Common Prayer translates the word ‘refuge’ as ‘hope.’)

---

43 WW, p. 33. Cf. the widowed Madella in Only the Governess, of whom it is said ‘not one of her children had ever heard her say a single repining or rebellious word.’ As Carey’s approved model of Christian submission, she is made to say to a less resigned widow, ‘we must not fight against God. Why don’t you give it all up, like a tired-out child, and ask Him to help you bear it?’ (OTG, p. 226).

44 WW, p. 361. Cf. ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise’, (Psalm 51:17). The latter is included in the Book of Common Prayer amongst ‘Sentences of the Scriptures’, some of which are to be read at the beginning of morning and evening prayer in the Church of England. Cf. also ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble’ (Psalm 46:1 in the King James Bible. However, the Book of Common Prayer translates the word ‘refuge’ as ‘hope.’)
called brain fever seems to belong to the earlier part of the century. That is to say, the ‘moral’ aspects of the disease - in both senses of the word - as represented by early writers such as John Barlow rather than physiological or hereditary aspects as represented by Henry Maudsley are emphasized. The second pathology, that of clinical hysteria, seems to be a more appropriate paradigm for understanding the complaint because the novels under discussion are products of the later nineteenth century.

Yet why should authors have written novels which simultaneously suggest both of these historically distinct pathologies? It would seem that it is because they serve different but equally necessary ends. Case studies of hysteria were fashionable or at least compatible with contemporary medical theory and practice. It may be argued that, to a certain extent, readers wanted to read, and writers wanted to write, about what they believed was a recognizable reality. However, nineteenth-century authors and writers also deemed the novel to be a suitable location for the discussion of moral issues. Andrew Blake, author of Reading Victorian Fiction [1989], asserts that,

> The novel... was public property in a way in which family life and letters were not: it gave people a chance to discuss domestic ideology in public without touching upon their own domestic secrets. It is therefore a most important point of contact between the public and private.  

It is suggested, therefore, that the disease called brain fever survived in fiction long after it had become obsolete in medical terms because it suited this requirement on the part of both writers and readers for a moral dimension. For Carey in particular, the illness is a didactic device through which she debates matters of self-control and religious motivation. Brain-fever sufferers not only survive their illnesses but also live on to work through their dilemmas. Certainly in Carey’s novels, the flirtation with something approximating insanity has a salutary effect.

However, there are also major characters in her novels who are more than rhetorically insane; those who cannot, for whatever reason, conform to a pattern of adult rationality and effectiveness based upon these twin virtues of religious observance and self-control.

---

iiii ‘a mixture of mental and bodily disorder and irritability’

Hitherto, discussion has focused upon the ‘unnaturally’ assertive woman, and upon the character whose lifestyle or conflicting values cause illness. However, this final section of the chapter will concentrate on characters who are portrayed as passive victims of circumstance. The three novels to be discussed contain characters who cannot be assertive/criminal in order to improve their lot so they become depressive and introverted. In two instances this feeling of helplessness is due in part to ill health; in the third, the sufferer additionally experiences two bereavements in rapid succession. Thus the ailments are far from being simply fashionable ennui. Notably, in all three cases the end result is death rather than cure. The characters and Carey’s treatment of them are interesting in a number of ways. Certainly they are more realistic than the invalids portrayed in Charlotte Yonge’s popular novels, The Daisy Chain and The Clever Woman of the Family. Carey would probably have shared Yonge’s actual ambivalence towards such characters, as it is expressed in the latter’s non-fictional work, Womankind.

The invalid of books, who lies on the sofa ready to do everything for everybody, and to hear every care and trouble, is an excellent ideal for the invalid herself...

But all invalids have not the free head and nerves, lively spirits, and unfailing temper, required for such a post to be easily fulfilled. Heads and nerves will be shaken and need silence, backs will be jarred by hasty or heavy steps... attention will flag to the best devised amusement, and the young brothers and sisters will go off declaring that their patient is so cross there is no pleasing her.... (Womankind, p. 261)

Carey’s depressive invalids indeed lack the ‘free head and nerves, lively spirit, and unfailing temper’ of Yonge’s ideal. In all, they are not pleasant characters with whom it is easy for the reader to sympathise. However, they are plausible and, though none of them even approximates Yonge’s ‘invalid of books’, they are well-developed characters who play an equally central role in the plots of their respective novels. Far from being mere shades to be acted upon by others, they have minds of their own, albeit disturbed ones. Carey is also very explicit about the reasons for their illnesses. She deals in well-founded physical impairment and psychological damage rather than in gratuitous sensibility. The constant feeling of wretchedness experienced by Hatty, a character in Our Bessie, is both mental and physical in its origin;

46 Quotation from Thomson and Steele 1899, p. 416, from a section entitled ‘Nervous Disease, or Nervousness.’ The complaint is ‘indefinite’ and ‘generally the product of weakness.’ The reader is told that ‘Females are much more liable to nervous disorder of males, independent of hysterical affection, which marks one of the most marked phases of the malady...’ The characters from Carey’s novels discussed in this section of the chapter conform more nearly to this diagnosis than to insanity proper as they cannot be easily classified according to the College of Physicians’ recognized categories of mania, melancholia, dementia, paralysis of the insane, idiocy and imbecility. (For details of the latter, see Thomson and Steele 1899, p. 357.)

47 Charlotte Yonge, The Clever Woman of the Family, (London: Virago Press Limited 1985 [1865]); The Daisy Chain or Aspirations: A Family Chronicle, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited 1920 [1856].) In the former it is said of the invalid, Ermine, ‘No burden is a burden when one has carried it to her.’ (p. 43); in the latter, bed-ridden Margaret is teased with the petty cares of the entire household:

- orders to butcher and cook - Harry racing in to ask to take Tom to the river - Tom, who was to go when his lesson was done, coming in perpetually to try to repeat the same unhappy bit of As in Proseenti, each time in a worse whine... enter a message about an oil-lamp, in the midst of which Mary burst in....(p. 102)

48 Charlotte M Yonge, Womankind, (London: Mozley and Smith, 1877)
All Hatty’s failures, her miserable derelictions of duty, her morbid self-accusations and nervous fancies [were] bred of a sickly body and over-anxious temperament.... (OB, p. 33)

Hatty, “‘Sour seventeen,’ as Tom called her on her last birthday,” also tortures herself with guilt about not living up to the feminine ideal of quiet fortitude and amiability (OB, p. 15). As she tells her sympathetic sister Bessie,

‘I am always irritating some one.... I can’t think how any of you can love me. I often cry myself to sleep, to think how horrid and disagreeable I have been in the day. I make good resolutions then, but the next morning I am as bad as ever, and then I think it is no use trying any more. Last night Tom made me so unhappy that I could not say my prayers. (OB, p. 31)

Thus her ‘sickly’ body and her ‘over-anxious’ mind prey upon each other. Her lack of health makes it impossible for her to participate in the expected norms of good temper and womanly service to others whilst her self-perceived failure to live up to the ideal makes her depressed. As a result, she experiences a high level of anxiety and a consequent lack of sleep. She thus becomes even more physically debilitated and the cycle of decline continues. She provides an obvious foil for her healthier sister, Bessie, who,

was not easily depressed. She was a cheerful young person, an optimist by nature; and thanks to a healthy organisation, good digestion, and wholesome views of duty, was not given to mental nightmares, nor to cry out before she was hurt. (OB p. 7)

At first glance, it seems that Hatty is hardly the stuff that heroines are made of. Yet she serves a number of important functions in the novel. In descriptive terms, she is a species of Everywoman. She reflects the fact that society has its Hatties as well as its more healthy and amiable characters. The general reader may simply view her as a probable inhabitant of the Lambert household but the young invalid reader is able to enjoy the basic narcissistic pleasure of seeing herself reflected in the text, even though the portrayal is mainly unfavourable. In addition, the latter is able to vicariously participate in the praise given to Hatty for her positive talents. For example, Hatty is an accomplished needlewoman and eager to put this talent at her family’s disposal (OB, p. 62). Moreover, she is described by Bessie as ‘the purest, humblest little soul breathing’ (OB, p. 34).

\[49\] She hardly conforms to Patmore’s notion of an Angel in the House.

\[Marr’d less than man by mortal fall\]
\[Her disposition is devout,\]
\[Her countenance angelical;\]

However, Hatty really comes in to her own in the overtly didactic content of the novel. As has already been noted, Our Bessie was a religiously-orientated book aimed primarily at the young. Hatty therefore provides not just a mirror-reflection for the invalid reader but an active role-model for all readers. She may be viewed as a stock Sunday School prize-book character who, though an invalid, has the same opportunity to achieve salvation as her more active sisters. The work involved may differ but the basic process is the same. Hatty’s sister Bessie advises her accordingly.

‘why don’t you look upon your unhappy nature as your appointed cross, and just bear with yourself as much as you expect others to bear with you?... Why don’t you say to yourself “I am a poor, weak little creature, but my Creator knows that... and He bears with me. I cannot get rid of my tiresome nature... but my one prayer and my one effort shall be to prevent other people suffering through me”?“52

However, Hatty is the subject of another didactic discourse besides that of religion. Their father, Doctor Lambert, advises Bessie on the most judicious treatment for Hatty from within the medical discourse. Too much indulgence is not good for her.

It is not... in the power of any man living...to give that poor child health; but we may help her a great deal by teaching her self-control. Half her misery proceeds from her own nervous fancies; if we can help her to overcome them, we shall do more for Hatty than if we petted and waited on her.’ (OB p. 91)

In providing Bessie with this advice he provides, by extension, advice to all those involved in caring for young women like Hatty. Once again, the emphasis is upon the inculcation of self-control and once

---


51 See, for example, Agnes Giberne’s evangelical tale for children, Floss Silverthome or The Master’s Little Handmaid, (London: John J Shaw & Co., Ltd., nd. [this edition c. 1905-10]), p. 120. The delicate nine year old, Gerald, ...th[at] other little servant had gone early to his rest. It was not much that he could undertake, but he could manage just as much as his Master gave him to do. More was not needed. He was only told, perhaps, to stand still, and hold a heavy taper, and let its light shine around. And he had bravely, smiling at his weariness. (p. 120)

52 OB, p. 66. Carey seems to have paraphrased Charlotte Yonge’s Womankind at this point, though Yonge appears to have been writing of purely physical ill-health.

If ill-health does set in...the only way not to be a burthen to ourselves and all around is in the double meaning of the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer, submission to His will and doing it, first accepting the cross and then thinking of it and oneself as little as possible. (p. 259)

The notion that everyone has their cross to bear is also taken up by Carey in Robert Ord’s Atonement. However, the effect is rather comic. A group of children in an infirmary are told ‘about the Child Christ, who had come to their beds when they were little and weak, with His arms full of tiny crosses, and had laid one down by the side of each child, bidding them carry them bravely for His sake.’ When the children are asked, ‘And when do we lay down our crosses, children?’, the replies are variously ‘never’, ‘when we die’ and ‘one small boy opined, “When their backs ached or they were tired,” but he was a cripple and a hunchback, and spoke feelingly’. The appropriate answer to the question is that ‘they must carry them right up to the Golden Gate itself, and there, laying them down for ever, should receive tiny jewelled crowns...’(pp. 451-2). The notions of metaphorically carrying a cross and earning a crown are to be found separately in the Bible - see, for example, Luke 14:27 and James 1:12. However, Carey probably alludes to the baptismal hymn in Hymns Ancient and Modern, (London: William Clowes & Sons Limited, 1916 [1861]), which allies the two. The last verse contains the words: ‘And may the brow that wears his cross/ Hereafter share his crown. (Hymn 328, p. 90 ; see also hymn 331.)
again there is an apparent appeal to Maudsley's 'wise development of the control of the will over the thoughts and feelings... which makes strongly for sanity' (Maudsley 1874, p. 269).

Yet Hatty is not merely constructed as a case for treatment. She is also depicted as capable of heroism and self-denial at the last. Her behaviour is not of the kind that wins worldly fame but she lives up to the nineteenth century ideal of every-day heroism as propounded by, for example, Charles Kingsley:

true heroism must involve self-sacrifice. Those stories certainly involve it... which the hearts, not of philosophers merely, or poets, but of the poorest and the most ignorant, have accepted instinctively as the highest form of moral beauty- the highest form and yet one possible to all... For it is nobler far to do the most common-place duty in the household, or behind the counter, with a single eye to duty, simply because it must be done- nobler far, I say, than to go out of your way to attempt a brilliant deed... any man or woman who will, in any age and under any circumstances, can live the heroic life and exercise heroic influences 53

Thus, when Hatty gains a small victory over her 'tiresome nature', this is as important morally as a general's victory on a battlefield. Bessie is away visiting a friend when Hatty enters into her final illness but Hatty will not have her recalled until absolutely necessary. She tells Bessie,

‘of course I wanted you,'... in a weak happy voice,' and that’s just why I would not let them send. You know how unhappy I have always been because of my horrid selfishness, and I did want to be good for once, and I said to myself..."Bessie shall not know how poorly I feel, nor what strange suffocating feelings I have sometimes. I won’t try to get my own way this time; she shall be happy a little longer."’(OB, pp. 177-8)

However, Hatty does not deny herself merely in order to prolong her sister’s enjoyment. Later she tells Bessie

“I am glad you went away and gave me something to bear. I used to be glad every night when I prayed; it was something to do for you and something to bear for His sake.” And Hatty dropped her voice reverently, for she was speaking of the Lord Jesus. (OB p. 181)

Thus, through her self-denial, Hatty becomes a true Christian as well as a heroine. In terms of the pleasure to be gained from the text, if the socially unimportant and unproductive Hatty can become a Christian heroine, then this becomes a possibility for the invalid in the real world. In addition, the paradigm for identification, Hatty, is within the realms of credibility. Her heroism, like Lady Audley’s


The Hydra is the embodiment of evil, Hercules is the impersonation of youth... The Book of books teaches us that life is a... perpetual combat from the cradle to the grave; the infant Hercules strangled the serpent, but in the flush of his youth the Nemean lion met him, later on the monster hydra towered in his path.

So do evil habits stretch their misshapen heads before our eyes[. ]In every life, in yours and mine... is the old story of Hercules and the hydra enacted... Yes, dear girls... [l]ittle duties lovingly undertaken, petty offences patiently borne... tiny seeds of daily virtue dropped broadcast into the soil of life... as we do them we are burning out and reducing to ashes one of the many heads of the hydra....
cupidity, has its limits. Lady Audley’s picaresque career is halted by the non-tolerance of those upon whom she practices her deceptions and manipulations; Hatty’s capacity for Christian fortitude and self-denial is, appropriately enough, curtailed by a happy and religiously-conceived death. That the capacity for human transcendence of her/his material condition is limited is explicitly stated. For, having achieved this victory over the self, Hatty does not want to live. She is aware that her physical illness has somehow given her respite from her perpetual depression rather than cured it:

‘I don’t want to get well, Bessie. I should have all the old miserable feelings over again. I have been “Little Miss Much-Afraid” all my life, and the fears have been part of me.’54

However, this blatant courtship of death is by no means a negative thing from the Christian viewpoint. The alternative to continuing this life is being ‘where Jesus is’ and even before that, Hatty will have cast off the burden that made her life so hard (OB, p. 182). She continues,

‘Do you recollect what Bunyan said about Much-Afraid? “She went through the river singing”; that was because she had left all her fears and troubles on the bank.’55

Such consolation is likely to have been aimed at readers who have lost loved ones as well as those who know (or fear) they are dying. Whether facing death or coping with life, religion is both a consolation and a modus operandi.

Yet the religious consolations per se are different from those supplied to the reader by entry into the pre-death space in which Hatty is a heroine and an important focus of solicitude and attention within the home. Hatty becomes, for a short period, a dispenser of wisdom rather than its recipient. As one who is on the brink of eternity, she provides her family with a direct interface with the divine. Even the more ideal Bessie is made to say to her ‘It does me good to hear you’ (OB, p. 182). Nor does the significance of the role, once attained, ever diminish. Even after Hatty’s death, Bessie frequently refers back to her. One passage in particular indicates that Hatty’s death cancels out the failures of her life:

‘People are very proud when their relatives achieve any worldly honour or attain to any rank, yet no one seems to feel an added dignity when any dear one has finished his or her earthly conflict most gloriously, and has won a heavenly crown. Why is it... ? Somehow, it seems

54 OB p. 181. Much-Afraid is a character in John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress. The analogy between Hatty and Much-Afraid is obvious. Much-Afraid’s father, Mr Despondency, says, towards the end of the narrative,

‘Myself and my daughter, you know what we have been, and how trouble-somely we have behaved in every company. My will and my daughter’s is, that our desponds and slavish fears be by no man ever received...’


55 OB, p. 181. See also Pilgrim’s Progress, p. 357. The river is the final barrier between the pilgrims and the Celestial City. Appropriately, the chapter in which Hatty dies is called ‘Farewell Night’, these being the last words of Mr Despondency before he goes through the river.
such an honour to me to feel that I have a sister as well as a brother in heaven; it makes
one more careful not to do anything unworthy of them.”

Thus the pleasures to be gained from identifying with even such an unpromising character as the
physically and mentally tried Hatty are complex and, if analyzed closely, contradictory. The reader can
at once be bad-tempered and justified in being so; the centre of attention and satisfied in her own
humility; and a thorn in people’s flesh in life but assured of canonization after death. To sum up
Carey’s didactic methods here, it seems as though appeal is made simultaneously to personal vanity and
to its exact opposite.

A character who is portrayed as having more to bear psychologically than Hatty is Belle in Robert
Ord’s Atonement (1873). Never actually described as insane, she attracts the epithets ‘preoccupied’
and ‘failed... in cheerfulness’. She is also unusually secretive, ‘either evading... questions or answering
them with grave reserve’ (ROA, p. 60). In her case, these mental characteristics are established before
there is any indication of her physical decline. However, as with Hatty, the two factors are interactive.
In the second half of the novel, the narrator comments upon ‘the overwrought mind and body, reacting
on each other so lamentably.’ and Belle’s brother-in-law is made to say that “‘her mind is harassing her
body, and both are alike sick’” (ROA, p. 262; p. 379).

The key factors in Belle’s illnesses, mental and physical, are her unhappy engagement, her lack of a
definite role in life and a virulent form of consumption that is eventually fatal. Belle’s history is that of
a woman almost literally killed by inactivity and by the offices of a male tormentor. At the beginning of
the novel she has been engaged to the eponymous hero for four years but, due to lack of means, there is
no immediate prospect of them being married. Belle therefore lives with her sister, Mary, who is
married to Robert’s elder brother, Austin;

for [Robert’s] sake [Belle] had renounced a project she had secretly cherished for securing her
own independence, and, at his expressed wish, consented reluctantly to be a burden on her
brother-in-law. (ROA, p. 79)

Even so, Belle is aware that she would have been mentally healthier had she been permitted to take up
some form of remunerative work (ROA, pp. 413-4). She is treated kindly by the elder Ords but her
position is far from easy. Robert

56 OB, p. 199. Cf also Ethel’s sister Ella in Rosa Carey, Heriot’s Choice, (London: Macmillan and Co.,
Limited, 1899 [1879]), p.131. Ethel, whose baby sister has died many years before explains,
‘...I thought of Ella growing up in heaven... schooled by angels... and so strong was this belief, that when I was naughty or
had given way to temper, I would cry myself to sleep, thinking that Ella would be disappointed in me, and often I did not
dare look up at the stars for fear that her eyes should be sorrowfully looking down at me. ...this childish thought has been
my safeguard in many an hour of temptation.’
would let both Austin and Mary know sometimes how it galled his pride to see his future wife dependent on their hands. He used to tell Belle so over and over again. It did not make her position more comfortable. \( \textit{ROA}, \text{p. 60} \)

The reader may therefore not be surprised to learn that

There were times when Belle could almost have prayed to have loved Robert Ord less, that his troubles should not have so darkened her life to the exclusion of her own, but she never told him so. \( \textit{ROA}, \text{p. 79} \)

The result is that she internalises her own feelings and re-presents them as a series of psychological symptoms such as paranoia and inability to sleep and, implicitly, through progressive physical debilitation. In the creation of Belle, Carey may have had in mind Charlotte Yonge’s expressed thoughts on the pernicious effects of a lack of gainful occupation.

apart from the desire for usefulness, far more happiness is laid up for after years by a person who occupies her mind than by one who merely devotes herself to the pleasures of youth. Distresses, illness, nervous miseries, tedium, all may be mitigated by the power of being interested in some intellectual pursuit. \( \textit{Womankind}, \text{p. 83} \)

It is not that Belle is addicted to pleasure or even that she neglects her duties in her brother-in-law’s parish; rather it is that she has insufficient to occupy her \textit{mind} in order to distract her from an untenable situation.

Belle’s physical illness is interesting. The reader is left in little doubt as to its nature: the breathlessness and the pain; the hectic flush that makes its appearance in the evenings; her vain attempts to disguise her ashen cheeks with rouge at other times; the hard dry cough and the loss of weight; all symptoms indicate an advanced state of consumption rather than mere hysteria. Yet the illness is not \textit{named} until very late in the novel. Until its presence is formally disclosed, the reader must rely on more oblique references. For example, the following passage appears in the eighth of the forty-two chapters:

Lately the shadow of a fresh trouble had oppressed \[\text{Belle}\], and was making her nights dreary... it never occurred to her to seek relief by imparting her fears. And so her burden had grown heavier day by day, and the strain on her harassed nerves had been aggravated by want of sleep and mental distress.

Nor was it a mere shadowy foreboding of evil that was robbing her cheek of its bloom and depriving her of flesh. The thing, whatever it might be, was assuming tangible shape and reality. In the daytime she would rate herself for her cowardice, and would succeed in regarding it as purely imaginary, as altogether baseless and puerile. But at night she had no such relief; she would cower away from it with real terror and a real belief that made her nights dreadful to her. \( \textit{ROA}, \text{pp. 77-8} \)

The formal clinical diagnosis is only given in chapter thirty-three and she dies in chapter thirty-seven.

By describing Belle’s condition in predominantly psychological terms throughout most of the novel,
Carey manages to frame her as a sentimental heroine; one who is pining away under the weight of inner mental conflict rather than through the ravages of physical disease. Whether Carey introduced the physical disease to deflect criticism from her use of the melodramatic device of maidenly decline or whether she actually believed that mental dis-ease could produce or aggravate serious physical disease is a moot point. Certainly when Mary interprets the words of Belle’s doctor, it seems that the latter is the case:

‘all this strain and anxiety has been killing her.... if it had gone on - this concealment and strain, I suppose he meant - she could not have lasted three months’ (ROA, pp. 370-1).

Mary’s artlessness in ‘suppos[ing]’ what the doctor meant by ‘if it had gone on’ opens a space in which the reader can generate her own meaning for the words. Belle has indeed been concealing severe physical pain and a desperate fear of dying. However, as importantly, she has been concealing her purely psychological agonies of humiliating dependency and her feelings of social failure on account of her endless engagement. 57

Of equal interest is the contrast between the portrayal of Belle’s psychological state and that of Robert. For what is explained as illness in her is simply described as frustration with regard to pecuniary circumstances in him. This is even though he attracts some weighty alienist terminology in his own right. Robert has been disinherited by the wealthy aunt who brought him up and so is obliged to take a low-paid clerkship, though this is beneath both his dignity and his original expectations. Equally galling to him is the fact that his aunt’s former paid companion inherits the whole estate with the proviso that she live in the same town as Robert and his family. Yet his obsessive hatred of the heiress, Rotha Maturin, seems to be out of all proportion to her supposed crime of having influenced her employer to make a will in her own favour. Even when other members of the Ord family are convinced of Rotha’s innocence, Robert is not. In his obsession, he even refuses Rotha’s offer to pay for life-saving medical treatment for Belle because he will not tolerate the burden of obligation. Yet, ironically, he alone is made to muse upon the notion that he might be literally going mad:

Sometimes in the dead of night he would start up and ask himself, could he be wrong; was it a mistake - a morbid fancy? He had heard that dwelling on a single thought creates monomania; had his brain become diseased with brooding over his wrongs? 58

57 The journalist W R Greg’s article, entitled ‘Why Are Women Redundant?’, which appeared in the National Review in 1862, embodies the then-widespread belief that unmarried women were somehow failures. He deemed that the woman’s role should be that of ‘spending... the earnings of men’ and opined that those ‘not having the natural duties of wives and mothers,’ had to ‘carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves’ rather than ‘completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others.’ Cited in Mary Poovey, Uneven Developments, (University of Chicago Press, 1988), p1.

58 ROA, pp. 224-5. Clinically speaking, ‘Monomania consists of firmly held but false beliefs. In contemporary terms, they would be called delusions.’ (Skultans 1975, p. 6.) However James Cowell Prichard, writing in 1847, details conflicting beliefs about the condition in the nineteenth century:
However, when most other characters speak to him or of him, they use the alienist idiom metaphorically, thereby negating any suggestion of insanity. For example, Rotha immediately converts a speech by Robert which is disturbing if taken at face value into something more reassuring for all concerned.

Why do you look at me like this, Miss Maturin? Do you think I am mad to-night?’
‘I think you are,’ she returned softly. ‘God help you! Mad with pain and disappointment and remorse...’ (ROA, p. 373)

In other words, Rotha colludes with the man who has been so unkind to her, in order to maintain a fiction of his normality. Meanwhile, later in the novel, Austin generalizes about Robert’s proneness to obsession: ‘You know the tenacity with which Robert clings to one idea.’ (ROA, p. 392). Effectively, the latter is another reference to monomania. Yet Austin is not suggesting that Robert is suffering from a clinically diagnosable condition. In spite of the language used to define him, the nearest Robert gets to a formally diagnosed mental illness is when he exhibits the early symptoms of brain fever.59

Little is said amongst the Ord family about Robert’s hatred of Rotha but, sane or insane, his assumed right to take his ill temper out on Belle does not go completely unchallenged. Mary in particular is made to criticise him for further undermining Belle’s precarious psychological state:

‘I don’t see - I have never seen - that her engagement has brought her any happiness. The fact is this... you do not study her enough. When she wants soothing, you excite her; you try her patience with your ill-humours. When she is at her brightest you depress her; and yet you have no patience with her little moods. In spite of your goodness, Robert, there is something selfish in your love... You talk about her dependent position... while all the time your pride is making her bread so bitter to her, she can hardly endure to swallow it.’ (ROA, p. 175)

Thus, some kind of justice is done to Belle. That is to say, her mental state is not simply written off as due to innate mental weakness and physical ill-health.

‘Monomania is the name by which physicians now designate the disorder which English jurists after Lord Hale termed partial insanity.... Nothing... can be more remote from the truth than the opinion that madmen of this description have their whole disorder centred in, and restricted, to one delusive idea. One illusive notion or set of notions is to be traced in his mind, which for the most part occupies his attention to the exclusion of almost all other subjects, and is ever uppermost in his thoughts; but careful enquiry will generally shew that his whole mind is diseased.’


59 ‘...although at one time Robert had been very near it, he was saved from an attack of brain fever. But for some time his nerves seemed completely shattered.’ (ROA, p. 398.) Robert’s near-attack of brain fever is attributed by Austin to the death of their brother Garton. However, the reader can once again posit an alternative interpretation. It may be seen as the culmination of his irrational hatred of Rotha. This latter interpretation is given some weight in that Robert is saved from full-blown brain fever by a visit from Rotha, who has long ago forgiven him.
It is notable that Belle herself is the only character to suggest that Robert is at all 'warped' without some kind of mitigating phrase or resort to metaphor. However, she is only permitted to speak out about her ill-fated engagement when she is near to death. What she says may be regarded in same light as a death-bed confession; it is the final opportunity to make an honest appraisal of her short but unhappy life:

‘my beauty faded... and he grew warped and weary, and then he began to misunderstand me and doubt my love; and at last it was all doubt and wretchedness...I sometimes think I am not so much to blame after all; for if he had let me do what I wished - earn my own living, I mean - I should not have lived all those years dwelling on one idea, and growing morbid over my very love...' (ROA pp. 413-4)

A number of alienist terms are reiterated here: ‘warped... dwelling on one idea (monomania)... morbid’. Implicitly, Belle is saying that the engagement has made them both mad. Yet, significantly, she does not take most of the blame upon herself. Unfortunately, this positive statement on the part of a hitherto passive character can hardly called a victory for Belle. She cannot utilise the understanding she has gained as she dies within two days of its utterance. Carey thus seems aware of the problems that a young woman in Belle’s position might experience but is unwilling to let her character live on to work out a solution. Yet perhaps death is the most eloquent statement of all; perhaps observation without didactic or even feminist comment is more powerful than any overt protest. Carey’s portrayal of the fictitious Belle constitutes in itself a powerful social commentary on the negative authority of the male and the stultifying effect of Mrs Grundy.

However, as Jane Crisp points out, it is Mrs Haldane, the mother in But Men Must Work (1892), who takes the internalised notion of helplessness to its absolute limit. This woman

retreats from a suspected murder within the family and the attendant disgrace into a death-like semi-comatose state from which she never emerges, thus taking as it were woman’s forced inaction to its logical extreme - significantly, it is not her daughters but the two men who love them who take the action necessary to solve the case and release them from their self-enforced seclusion. (RNC Biography, p. 21)

For the mother, the eventual happy reversal of circumstances comes too late. Her consolation must be other than of this world and her ‘recovery’ is couched in the biblical terms of her being, after death ‘sitting, clothed and in her right mind, at her Master’s feet’.

---

60 Rosa Carey, But Men Must Work, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892) p. 182. (Hereafter, BMMW.) The allusion is to Luke 8:35: ‘they ...found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind....’
The short novel, *But Men Must Work* has in common with Robert Ord's *Atonement* that it is not amongst the most overtly didactic of Carey's writings. Likewise, the two works operate on a basis of narratorial description and direct speech rather than being heavily reliant upon narratorial comment and interpretation. Though possessed of a single sensational plot and devoid of the attention to detail to be found in Carey's other novels, *But Men Must Work* foregrounds the domestic circumstances of its main female characters. It is a sympathetic portrayal of an entire family under stress. The text emphasises the fact that all of the main protagonists have their burdens to bear, not just the invalid herself. Hence, the elder daughter has

the hushed footstep and subdued voice of one who has long ministered to a nervous invalid...

look[s]...wan and delicate...her eyes somewhat sunken; and...there [a]re dark lines under them... (*BMMW*, pp. 45-6)

Meanwhile, the younger daughter is made to say that 'It is a very distressing form of illness...for it affects other people's lives so much.', fretting that her sister is '...growing gray at six-and-twenty... All this nursing and shut-up life is killing her... ' (*Ibid.*, p. 43; p. 47)

Jane Crisp, writing of mentally unbalanced characters in Carey's novels suggests that they can be interpreted from a modern perspective as

the casualties of middle-class Victorian patriarchal values- values that their author may not question, but the cost of subscribing to which she frequently seems all too well aware of. (*RNC, Bibliography*, p. 20)

To this we might add that not all victims are on the casualty list.

Fiction in which mental illness of the kind discussed in this last section points to something beyond mere verisimilitude is not the exclusive preserve of Rosa Carey. Indeed, Gilbert and Gubar posit the existence of a whole 'distinctively female tradition' in which are found

Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles [function] as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort [manifest] in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors- such patterns [recur] throughout this tradition, along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia. 61

Having sought, through study of women writers, 'to understand the anxieties out of which this tradition must have grown,' they conclude that the underlying impetus for the perpetual reproduction of such images is 'the female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art, and society.' (*Ibid.*, pp. xii).

---

Rosa Carey may be deemed to participate in such a ‘female tradition’ through the use of some of these motifs but she cannot be rigidly tied to it. Nor do all her novels easily lend themselves to such an interpretation. In Our Bessie, the main motivation for the construction of the sickly Hatty is to promote religious conformity rather than ‘strategic redefinition’. Though physically and mentally ill, Hatty becomes a conventional success rather than an asocial failure. The multiply-marginalised woman - more dependent than the average child, with no prospects of marriage, independence or even social usefulness, is given a space in which her status is high. Robert Ord’s Atonement fits the paradigm of the protest novel somewhat better. Though explicitly killed by a named physical complaint, Belle is, implicitly, crushed by her circumstances and by the offices of her miserable and unbalanced fiancé. Certainly, the novel portrays the claustrophobic wretchedness of the hopeless engagement between Belle and Robert; and certainly this is the novel in which Carey most openly criticizes both social mores and Patriarchy. The only problem with interpreting the novel purely in terms of ‘struggle’ is that the patriarchal oppressor, Robert, somehow becomes transformed into a hero. Five years after Belle’s death, he marries the real heroine of the story, Rotha, thereby regaining the fortune he has earlier forfeited and more or less losing any narratorial censure. Even the paranoid and agoraphobic Mrs Haldane in But Men Must Work is retreating as much from the deaths of her husband and son as from the social disgrace surrounding the death of the latter.

Nevertheless, it is may be said that Carey conforms to the spirit rather than the letter of Gilbert and Gubar’s ‘female tradition’. The novels incorporate protest at the female condition even if this is not substantiated throughout. They therefore create discursive spaces; spaces within which the reader can write her own version of the story. The novels also work on the principle of doubles, though they are not ‘fantasies in which maddened doubles [function] as asocial surrogates for docile selves.’ One half of the duality is the morbid, entrapped invalid; the other is the reader, who looks in the mirror and hopes - or fears - to see herself.

Conclusion

The only two characters who appear to be certifiable in Carey’s novels are Mrs Haldane in But Men Must Work and Cousin Everhard in Cousin Mona; and only the latter has a physiologically delimited condition: ‘softening of the brain’. However, the entire range of non-certifiable mental illnesses seems

---

62 This is not to say that Carey did not use a creative combination of religious and alienist ideas in order to make her point. See Conclusion to chapter, below.

63 The novel was first published in 1873, long before the Married Women’s Property Act. Thus the fictional Robert would have gained total control over his wife’s fortune.

to be covered in the course of Carey’s writing. That in several instances more than one victim of mental illness is found in a text is especially interesting. *Wee Wifie* contains a victim of hereditary insanity, a woman whose uncontrollable temper leads her to blind a man, and a man who suffers from acute brain-fever on account of his wilfulness and lack of Christian resignation. Similarly, *Our Bessie* contains one character who lacks sanity due to her poor up-bringing and another whose mental imbalance is due to ill-health. In *Robert Ord’s Atonement* a woman is driven into a morbid condition by a man whose own behaviour is far from normal; whilst in *Uncle Max* the warped Etta persecutes the already mentally frail Gladys and they have an equally unbalanced poorer neighbour. It seems possible that Carey was simply reflecting and endorsing the opinion of Andrew Wynter regarding the prevalence of poor mental health. The latter argues that,

> When we remember the number of persons in the country whose insanity is undoubted...there must be a very large number of individuals who inherit either the disease direct, or are saturated with the seeds of nervous disorders, which only require some exciting cause to force them into vigorous growth....

It might also be conjectured that Carey shared something of Maudsley’s pessimism about how little of this misery could be remedied, or even prevented. In *Responsibility in Mental Disease*, Maudsley depressingly states that, in most cases, neither prophylaxis nor cure is possible for those ‘saturated with the seeds of nervous disorders’. For one who fears her/himself to be bordering on insanity it is already too late:

> His character, developed as it has been, will not assimilate advice that is counter to its affinities. We cannot efface the work of years of growth, cannot undo his mental organisation, and it is borne in upon us that advice, if it was to do any good, should have guided the direction of education. (Maudsley 1874, p. 275)

Yet even for one who has not arrived at this stage, education is no panacea;

> no mortal can transcend his nature; and it will ever be impossible to raise a stable superstructure of intellect and character on bad natural foundations. Education can plainly act only... within the conditions imposed by the species, and within the conditions imposed by the individual organization: can only... determine what is predetermined in the organization of the nervous system and of the bodily machinery in connexion with it... [and] can only... make actual the potentialities of the individual nature... (Ibid., p. 20.)

Nevertheless, Maudsley leaves a small amount of hope for the afflicted and their carers. By painful and relentless effort, character can change:

> No one can resolve successfully by a mere effort of will to think in a certain way, or to feel in a certain way, or even, which is easier, to act in accordance with certain rules; but he can... imperceptibly modify his character: he can... by calling external circumstances to his aid, learn to withdraw his mind from one train of thought and feeling, the activity of which will

---

then subside, and can direct it to another train of thought and feeling, which will thereupon become active, and so by constant watchfulness over himself and by habitual exercise of will in the required direction, bring about insensibly the formation of such a habit of thought, feeling and action as he may wish to attain unto. He can make his character grow by degrees to the ideal which he sets before himself.

In her novels, Carey appears to have enthusiastically embraced this slight concession to the power of the human will and to have made attention to good mental health part of her didactic teaching. Yet there seems to be an inherent contradiction in the way Carey approaches her unbalanced characters. On the one hand, the teaching which the novels are trying to inculcate is that all conduct should be pursued with a view to creating and maintaining sanity through self-control; on the other, with two exceptions, the ill-advised, the faithless and the maladjusted are dealt with sympathetically.

Nor does Carey use the alienist discourse consistently either literally or metaphorically. Rather, it seems, she appropriates the specialized vocabulary of the alienists in order to furnish herself with a conceptual framework that she could not find elsewhere. It seems that, interesting though diagnoses of abnormal mental conditions could be, her interest was in sketching the diverse behaviours and motivations of all character types, both normal and abnormal, as they functioned within society. In that the Victorian realist novel, with its analytical and reliable narrator and its informative dialogue between characters, dealt with character and motivation, Carey was simply building on this tradition, delving further into the fictional psyche than her peers and adding a stratum of allusion to a degree that was unusual in fiction of its type.

Carey articulated an interest in matters of the mind during an interview with Helen Black in 1893, though she did not explicitly link it to her own writing.

'Some of my favourite books are Amiel's Journal, Currer Bell's works, George Eliot's, and biographies; also psychological works, the study of mind and character'

---

66 Maudsley 1874, p. 273. In this, Maudsley once again sounds suspiciously like John Abercrombie, whose book, *Culture and Discipline of the Mind* was published in 1837:

We cannot determine...what degree of inattention to the diligent culture of the powers within, may be fatal to the best interests of the man, both as an intellectual and a moral being. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating in early life the mastery of the mind, and of watching with earnest attention the trains of thought which we encourage there, as we cannot determine at what period a habit may be formed, the influence of which shall be permanent and irremediable.

Cited in Skultans 1975, p. 159.


Until the 1880s, when the debate on realism and naturalism was imported from France, [English] critics and novelists tended to talk... of the novel's duty to be true to 'life'. The central concern in this injunction was not the representation of material reality... but the investigation of the moral behaviour of man in society... [T]he concern for truth, for morality, and for an accurate and unromanticized description of contemporary society, defined an unmistakably realist concept of the novel.

There are easily-discovered links between these texts. Both the specified fictional works and the unnamed biographies indicate an interest in personal motivation whilst *Amiel’s Journal* is, quite literally, a man’s diary. It, too, focuses upon its author’s mental, as opposed to physical, life. Likewise, the ‘psychological works’ are explained in terms of ‘the study of mind and character’. However, this last group of texts is more difficult for the late-twentieth century reader to identify. Carey does not explicitly mention medical/alienist works and yet the discourses in her novels suggest precisely these.

The main reason for doubt as to her meaning lies in her use of the word ‘psychological’ to describe such works even though the word ‘psychiatry,’ was to be found in ordinary dictionaries at the time. For example, both terms are to be found in the *Nuttall’s Pronouncing English Dictionary* [1879]. However, ‘psychology’ is listed as having a broader range of meanings than most people would understand today: ‘The doctrine of the soul or mind; a treatise on the soul; mental philosophy; metaphysics’. Yet the term ‘psychology’, as defined here, appears to fit better with what is known about Rosa Carey than would a purely medical term. Biographical evidence suggests that she was personally committed to her religion. Thus her interest is likely to have been that of one who viewed people as Christian souls first and only afterwards as cases who may require treatment.

However, she appears to do something novel with this religious framework, allying religious practice to notions of moral management. In two books at least, *Wee Wifie* and *Our Bessie*, the pursuit of good health and sanity are inextricably linked with notions of Christian duty. Perhaps this was Carey’s ultimate reply to Maudsley’s pessimism: effort of will alone could not secure sanity; however individual effort enhanced by Divine help was sure to bring about mental and spiritual peace on earth as well as salvation for eternity.

Yet it must be remembered that Carey was a product of her own age and class. She inevitably reproduced the current anxieties about insanity and about lack of self-control. Thus her didactic teaching may be regarded as part of an extensive, if ultimately impersonal, mechanism of social control. Skultans notes that the advocates of ‘moral management’ had another agenda besides that of kindly treatment of the insane:

> moral management can also be seen as one among a number of attempts to combat the forces of disorder so threatening to the Victorians. In abandoning the methods of the eighteenth century, nineteenth century physicians were not abandoning their role as guardians of the moral order and agents of social control. Physical restraint, coercion and exile are replaced by

---

a philosophy which emphasizes the dual nature of man, the power of the will to prevent and control insanity and which elaborated the arts of self-government. (Skultans 1975, p. 9)

It is evident that Carey was attuned to this discourse of social order and self-regulation, even to the extent of popularizing approved modes of behaviour and of fashioning a *modus operandi* embracing equal parts of Christian and Alienist thought. Yet it is equally evident that Carey had some compassion for sinners against the proffered paradigm, representing them in all but two cases as attractive miscreants, authors of their own painful dilemmas, potential heroines or wretched victims. It is thus possible to conclude that Carey deemed living up to the dictates of the normal to be far from easy.
i. Introduction: Spinster of This Parish

[Tina’s mother] wondered a little in her timid and hesitating mind whether the invitation was the outcome of politeness or whether it meant- Tina. But Tina, alas, was not as young as she had been once. She was getting perilously near to that age when a feminine creature who has been called a girl by courtesy for a long time suddenly develops into a woman of a certain age.... It was borne in upon her reluctant mind, as she looked round upon the girls of the rising generation, that it was useless to speculate any longer about Tina’s future. Tina’s future was fairly well assured, or, at least settled. It would be a future with a modest income, a house shared with her elder sister; she knew positively for the first time that Tina had overshot her mark, a fatal impediment to what may be called the turn-over of business. Poor Mrs. Mornington-Brown! ...There must come moments in such lives when the chief thought is the wild wish that they had brought up their daughters to some other profession than that of marrying. Everybody cannot marry, and marriage is a great lottery at best. (John Strange Winter, *A Magnificent Young Man*, 1896)

The fictional Tina Mordington-Brown is a woman with many problems. Not least amongst these are the depressing facts that she has failed to ensnare a husband and that she has reached the age at which she is unlikely to attract one. As a result, mother is unhappy. But then, as the passage concludes, ‘Everyone cannot marry.’ However, her final humiliation is that her story is told by a smug narrator whose apparent sympathy for her plight is more than a little tinged with spiteful amusement.

Tina’s fictional experience of single blessedness reflects the real-life experience of many Victorian and Edwardian women: like her, many were obliged to survive in a society where ‘[e]veryone c[ould] not marry’ and like her they were the object of embarrassment or amusement because of a situation over which they had little control. To quote Pat Jalland, ‘the Victorian spinster was judged by her contemporaries to be a human failure, condemned to a lonely life of futility, ridicule or humiliation.’

Throughout the Victorian era (and, indeed, beyond it), there was a significant population imbalance in respect of numbers of men and women, an imbalance which became more marked as the century progressed. Given that the numerical excess was in terms of women, this meant that between an eighth and a quarter of all women would never marry. However, unlike the fictional Tina, few of these

---


Married life is a woman’s profession; and to this life her training... is modelled. Of course by not getting a husband, or losing him, she may find that she is without resources. All that can be said of her is, she has failed in business; and no social reform can prevent such failures. (Cited in Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public: The Women’s Movement 1850-1900*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1979), p. 11. Hereafter, Hollis 1979.)


unmarried women could count upon 'a future with a modest income.' Nor was it always economically viable for them to remain remuneratively unproductive within a family home, even if one was open to them.

The demographic phenomenon of significantly more females than males was over two centuries old by the time the Victorians began to designate these supposedly 'redundant' women a problem. However, the censuses dating from 1851 made the imbalance strikingly quantifiable.\(^4\) With or without statistics, the phenomenon was indeed a problem to all concerned, though not all viewed it from the same perspective. For many of the single women themselves, the anxiety rested in questions of survival.

Even amongst the few who managed to obtain professional status in their employment, life was hard. A governess might earn as little as £20.00 per year and be forcibly retired at any age from 35 to 55, with nothing to look forward to but years of penury.\(^5\) However, for those who were not part of the 'problem', the perplexity was in how to deal with an embarrassing surplus of non-wives who did not fit into a society that almost exclusively valued marriage and maternity. As the popular author Dinah Mullock Craik saw it, the married woman had 'realised to a greater or lesser degree the natural destiny of our sex' but the confirmed spinster necessarily lived in 'an unnatural condition of being.'\(^6\) Other writers defined the problem and then moved on to suggest radical solutions.

In a blatantly androcentric article bearing the proleptic title, 'Why Are Women Redundant?' W. R. Greg condemned single women who were obliged to 'earn their own living instead of spending... the earnings of men,' suggesting that those 'not having the natural duties of wives and mothers,' had an unbearable vacancy in their lives. Greg assumed that such women were obliged to 'carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations for themselves' rather than 'completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others.' Thus, in his view the 'redundant' woman was an unhappy creature, one who was 'compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence.'\(^7\) His solution was to 'remove five

---

\(^4\) Jalland 1986, p. 254


\(^6\) *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* [1858], entire text published in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *Christina Rossetti: Maude, Dinah Mulock Craik: On Sisterhoods and A Woman's Thoughts About Women* (London: Pickering Women's Classics, Pickering and Chatto (Publishers) Limited, 1993). (Hereafter, *WTAW*). Quotations from p.63. Craik's words are addressed to 'the single women, belonging to those supernumerary ranks, which, political economists tell us, are yearly increasing' (Ibid.). First partially serialized in *Chambers Journal*, the book was frequently re-issued throughout the nineteenth century.

\(^7\) Cited in Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, p. 1. Cf. also Beatrice Potter's diary for 5 November 1883: 'It is almost necessary to the health of a woman, physical and mental, to have definite home duties to fulfil... above all things, someone dependent on her love and tender care.' (Jalland 1986, p. 258)
hundred thousand women from the mother country... to the colonies,' in order to provide wives for male emigrants.8

Yet Greg was not merely viewing the 'problem' from an egotistical and non-participatory point of view. He was also making a statement about the mechanisms of society as a whole. As Mary Poovey observes,

When Greg argues that unmarried women constitute the problem to be solved, he not only mobilises assumptions about women; he also alludes to an entire social organisation that depends upon naturalising monogamous marriage, a sexual division of labour, and a specific economic relation between the sexes in which men earn and women "spend"... the earnings of men.' (Poovey 1989, p. 2)

That exponents of the 'social organisation' in question were prepared to go to extraordinary lengths in order to maintain the status quo is strikingly illustrated by the historically-authenticated case of Edith Lanchester. When, in 1895, she opted to live unmarried with a man from a lower social grouping than her own, her father and brothers kidnapped her and placed her in a lunatic asylum. Though released by the Lunacy Commissioners five days later, she had been formally certified, the cause of her insanity being diagnosed as 'over-education.' The physician who signed the certificate, G. Fielding Blandford, later explained that he judged her insane because 'he believed that her opposition to conventional matrimony made her unfit to care for herself.' 9

Yet even such visual evidence of the power of patriarchy was insufficient to prevent middle-class women from seeking alternatives to the proffered (and proscribed) paradigms of normative wifehood or less well-defined though emphatically marginalized spinsterhood. Any attempt at redefinition was a hazardous undertaking. From any perspective, the single state was far from enviable: marriage and maternity were 'natural'; the spinster life 'unnatural.' Paid employment was difficult to gain and easily lost; and women who stepped outside the dominant social mores for the time ran the risk of being categorized as insane. Nevertheless, for some women, eschewing matrimony became a conscious choice.

---

8 Poovey 1989, p. 5; his suggestion as to how this might be achieved is reprinted in Hollis, pp. 37-8. However, not everyone was impressed by the logic of such solutions. Dinah Mullock Craik, writing about five years earlier writes,

- what is a woman to do?

A question more easily asked than answered; and the numerous replies to which, now current in book, pamphlet, newspaper, and review, suggesting everything... from compulsory wifehood in Australia to voluntary watchmaking at home, do at present rather confuse the matter than otherwise (WTAW, p. 80).

The preoccupation of society with the redundant women ‘problem,’ the desire of single women to gain an authentic existence, and the response of an existent patriarchal establishment to these perceived challenges are concerns expressed at length in the literature of the day. Etiquette books, medical treatises, devotional hand-books and the periodical press are full of conflicting views about what was regarded as a crisis situation. However, the complexity of the debate about the position of single women within society is also accessible through the medium of fiction and few novelists of the period position themselves within the debate without reproducing viable alternatives to their own point of view.

Yet in spite of this spirit of open discussion, one factor remained more or less unexamined: that of class. Thus, to focus upon the novels of Rosa Carey in particular, the domestic servants and deserving poor who fill her pages do not function significantly as individuals and the author seldom discusses their duties or their conditions of work. They are, on the whole, either plot-functional in terms of verisimilitude or illustrative of the quasi-maternal or philanthropic ‘instincts’ of their ‘betters’. For example a character called Rotha, in Carey’s novel *Robert Ord’s Atonement* [1873], works with her under-employed maids to make clothes for the poor; whilst Ellison, eponymous heroine of *The Mistress of Brae Farm* [1896], supervises her maids’ morals, marriages and free time.

Indeed, in certain respects it seems that Carey’s female servants are not even regarded as ‘working women.’ Conservative in their behaviour and, most often, devout in their religious practice, they are also entirely incorporated into domestic establishments; they are the fabric rather than the ethos of the domestic sphere. More completely than any other characters from the ‘lower orders,’ they take upon themselves the middle-class ideal of the domestic whilst at the same time knowing their place and earning their keep. Thus they are omnipresent but comfortably invisible. However, many members of the Victorian middle classes appear to have viewed (or ignored) domestic servants in this way. For example, W. R. Greg, in the article cited above, both praises and dismisses them simply because they fulfil their ‘natural’ female functions:

> they are fully and usefully employed; they discharge a most important and indispensable function in social life; they do not follow an obligatory independent, and therefore for their sex an unnatural, career:- on the contrary, they.... fulfil both essentials of a woman’s being: they are supported by, and they administer to, men.... Nature has not provided one too many.... and scarcely any portion of their sex is more useful or more worthy. (Emphasis original)

Nor was Carey at all unusual in focusing upon the concerns of the middle classes in her novels. With some justice, the novel per se has been perceived as

---

10 Hollis 1979, pp. 11-12. See also Vicinus 1985, pp. 3-4.
the 'burgher epic'; identified with the social eminence of its main reading public, the bourgeoisie; seen as a manifestation of its perception of reality, the secular, material but moralized reality of a particular class; linked with its view of the rounded, individuated human character in sequential moral growth....

This middle-class focus being the case, the matter of remunerative employment, or even gainful occupation, takes on a rather different complexion than it would otherwise. For the majority of working-class women, remunerative work and the obligation to be self-reliant were burdens to be lived with rather than privileges to be fought for. To quote a Fabian tract published in 1914, the working-class woman demanded 'not independence and the right to work, but rather protection against the unending toil which ha[d] been laid upon her.' Conversely, the dominant middle-class ideal, for the nineteenth century and beyond, was that women should not undertake any form of remunerative work or any kind of employment that removed them from the domestic sphere unless absolutely necessary. In keeping with the latter ideal, Carey often portrays the impecunious 'lady' wage-earner as unfortunate rather than as independent.

---

11 Malcolm Bradbury, 'Novel', in *A Dictionary of Critical Terms*, ed. R. Fowler, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 163. (Hereafter, Fowler 1991.) However, he continues, 'Such criticism tends to assume that Modernism constitutes a crisis of the species; hence it often concludes in prophecies of the imminent death of the novel. This helps demonstrate that versions of reality change over time...'. In other words, this definition is apt for the nineteenth century realist novel but problematic thereafter.


13 The boundary between the domestic or home sphere and the public sphere of remunerative work and politics is difficult to locate as many activities within the remit of the former, for example philanthropy and Sunday School teaching, necessarily took place outside the home. Similarly, professional nursing became acceptable in the late nineteenth century because it was regarded as both a vocation and suited to the 'natural' qualities of women. Ruskin comments on the extent of the domestic sphere in *Sesame and Lilies*, (London: George Allen, 1906 [1865]) [hereafter, SL.]: 'a woman has a personal work or duty, relating to her home, and a public work or duty, which is the expansion of that.' (SL, p. 130.) This ambiguity is noted with greater anxiety in Joseph Johnson's book, *Noble Women of Our Time*, (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1886) [Hereafter, NWT.]

14 Some would have women confined to home and home duties, to stand at a distance and survey with admiration and respect the labours of thought and mental creation in which the opposite sex are engaged; others, perhaps even more unreasonably, demand for women employment in labours which command the absorption of the keenest masculine intellects... and that no labour which is done by men should be shut out or closed from women.... (NWT, p. 9.)

As to whether any other kind of paid employment was acceptable, as early as 1877, Charlotte Yonge was writing on the subject without enthusiasm but apparently without condemnation either.

And for the young who need support, it would be well, if they have no special talent, to try to learn to be telegraph clerks, or even dress-making, or whatever is possible in their station and respect the labours of thought and mental creation in which the opposite sex are engaged; others, perhaps even more unreasonably, demand for women employment in labours which command the absorption of the keenest masculine intellects... and that no labour which is done by men should be shut out or closed from women.... (NWT, p. 9.)

However, the qualifications, 'in their station' with regard to the type of employment and 'much less', added to the phrase 'fear of losing caste' indicate her ambivalence towards remunerative work. In addition, considering that *Womankind* is supposed to be about 'the duties and opportunities placed in the hands of her sex' (p. 1), Yonge allocates very little space to paid employment. The matter of women having fulfilling lives outside the domestic sphere on account of their employment, however, was certainly condemned by her. See below.

For example, the widowed Nea Trafford in *Wee Wifie* [1869] is deemed worthy of sympathy even though she and her daughter manage to earn enough as daily governesses to maintain a
Yet Carey was more sympathetic than many of her contemporaries towards more prosperous middle-class women who sought remunerative employment or other kinds of extra-domestic stimulus. From a late twentieth century perspective at least, she certainly compares favourably with Charlotte Yonge. Yonge’s novel, *The Clever Woman of the Family* [1865], begins promisingly enough with the heroine, Rachel, openly rebelling against the behavioural restrictions and limited expectations inherent in being a young lady:

‘And here am I, able and willing, only longing to task myself to the uttermost, yet tethered down to the merest mockery of usefulness by conventionalities. I am a young lady forsooth! - I must not be out late; I must not put forth my views; I must not choose my acquaintance; I must be a mere helpless, useless being, growing old in a ridiculous fiction of prolonged childhood... why? Is it for no better reason than because no mother can bear to believe her daughter no longer on the lists for matrimony?’

However, Rachel’s point of view is in turn undermined, ridiculed and censured before she is rehabilitated through marriage. Yet Yonge did not object to the single state per se - she herself remained single - rather, she was strongly opposed to notions of female autonomy and sex-equality. Her views are expressed plainly as the hapless Rachel’s faults of character are analyzed.

Many of her errors had... arisen from want of some one whose superiority she could feel, and her old presumptions withered up to nothing when she measured her own powers with those of a highly educated man.... Rachel having been more than usually removed from the influence of superior man, had been affected by the more feeble and distant power, a leading that appeared to her the light of her independent mind...

Initially, this passage appears simply to be a comment on Rachel’s lack of educational opportunity, ‘error’ implying poor teaching and ‘superiority’ being genderless. However, further into the passage, the reader learns that Rachel is innately deficient; that women need ‘the influence of superior man’.

Implicitly, an independent woman is a danger to herself and to others, or else she is simply ridiculous. Yet the most powerfully rendered expression of Yonge’s belief in female inferiority is to be found in the novel’s almost confessional conclusion. Rachel herself is made to acknowledge the cardinal errors of her youth.

---

**Footnotes:**

15 Carey’s novel-writing career spanned from 1868 to 1909; Yonge’s from 1844 to 1901. They were therefore contemporaries for over thirty years.


17 Other rehabilitated subjects in Yonge’s writing include Ethel May in *The Daisy Chain* [1856] who, with much self-denial, becomes a useful daughter and the self-styled Sister Mena in *Modern Broods* [1900], who submits herself to the discipline of a regular sisterhood and abandons the one she herself started.

18 At its plainest, this belief is communicated in her non-fictional work, *Womankind*, p. 2: ‘I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of woman, nor that she brought it upon herself.’
‘I really do not think I was ever such a Clever Woman... I should have been much better if I had had a father or brother to keep me in order.’ (CWF, p. 367)

Many of Carey’s heroines share with the fictional Rachel yearnings for other than the prescribed/proscribed life of a ‘young lady’ but they are not held up to such ridicule for their pains. Indeed, Cathy, in Carey’s novel, Queenie’s Whim [1881], even articulates her dissatisfaction with life in terms analogous to those of Rachel:

‘this little corner of the world stifles me; I get so tired of it all, the trying to be good and keep down my restlessness... I do so object to be tamed down, and be made submissive to mere conventionality.... I want... to have a life of my own to live, not tagged on to other people.’

However, there are notable differences between the two characters as they are subsequently developed. Most importantly, Carey’s Cathy makes a great success of the nursing work for which she leaves home, even though she does not have the wholehearted approval of the brother who stands in loco parentis. Another difference is that, when Cathy finally opts for marriage to the middle-aged vicar of her home village, it is out of self-knowledge and love for her future husband rather than from any experience of humiliation or failure. As she tells her friend Queenie on the last page of the novel,

‘we poor women cannot escape our fate after all. I am tired of running away from myself and him, and pretending not to care for his liking me; so I just told him he must put up with me, faults and all, for I won’t promise to mend; but if I am not the better for being with him—’

(QW, p. 477)

The end of the clause is left for the reader to fill in for herself. Thus, Cathy’s ‘confession’ differs greatly from that of Rachel. Her only disclosure is that she loves her man too much to be apart from him. However, she has not only made her own decision, independently of external circumstances; she has also laid down the parameters of her expectations within the marriage. She has not promised to conform to the stereotype of the submissive wife but she does expect to grow within her marriage and to become a better person. In Carey’s novel, one of the most powerless of women, a spinster with limited private means, is invested with not only success in her chosen work but also a real choice between a career and matrimony.

The corpus of Rosa Carey’s fiction reflects society’s preoccupation with the disproportionate number of single women in a number of ways. However, her novels seldom give the impression that there is such a person as a truly redundant woman. It is significant that not all of her eligible heroines marry. For example, the beautiful, rich and intelligent Ellison in The Mistress of Brae Farm does not consider

matrimony until she is in her late twenties and ultimately never marries. Some single female characters, for example Frances in *No Friend Like a Sister* [1906], actively seek career alternatives; others, such as Elizabeth and Dinah in *Herb of Grace* [1901] enjoy their non-marital domestic circumstances. All of these characters provide positive role models for the reader. In addition, whilst Carey nominally adheres to the notion that women are better off if they have menfolk to keep, advise and protect them, the reader is not told that all other modes of life are 'incomplete.' Nor does she consistently represent marriage as an ideal state; indeed, many of her fictional marriages are far from successful. The ideal of 'completing, sweetening and embellishing' the lives of others may well be important to the characters in Carey’s novels but she permits the reader to see that this work is not always successful or even possible.20

Carey appears to enter into dialogue with the male dominated ideologies of the day, in part, at least, condoning the actions of the rebellious and deconstructing the myth of the domestic. There is no evidence to suggest that she was consciously writing feminist fiction or even consciously writing about the plight of women, single or otherwise. No biographical material currently available on Carey suggests that she was involved in any overt or organised feminist activities. However, it is possible that she felt obliged to valorise the spinster existence - even spinster existence outside the government of 'superior man' - for she, like Charlotte Yonge, never married.

ii. Part of a Domestic Establishment

In much Victorian and Edwardian fiction, representation of the ideal woman, whether single or married, is premised upon the twin notions of middle class social mores and total identification with the domestic or private sphere. If a fictional woman is intended to be middle-class, she fits into this mould; if she is not, then she is compared with the ideal and approved of or condemned according to the success of her attempts to emulate it. Thus, to take two examples from Carey’s novels, the gauche ‘lower-class’ Australian, Nell, in *At The Moorings* [1904], not only fails to achieve acceptance but also causes her middle-class husband to lose caste. Conversely, in *The Household of Peter* [1905], the pleasant-mannered and restful ex-companion, Hannah Burke, who is the daughter of a ‘factory girl’ and a carpenter, both marries well and mixes freely with members of her newly-acquired higher social class.21

---

20 However, she is under no illusions about the single state either. The eponymous heroine of *Averil* [1890-1] both finances and services her step-mother’s family but they are neither grateful nor cooperative.

21 Similarly, in the popular nineteenth-century comedy of manners, *The Binks Family* [c. 1880], the two daughters of a milkman who makes his fortune are judged according to their responses to their new-found wealth. The natural and friendly Anna is portrayed far more sympathetically and is permitted to gain greater social success than her snobbish and affected sister, Polly. (John Strange Winter [Mrs Arthur Stannard, 1856-1911], *The Binks Family*, (London: F.V. White and Co., Ltd., [c. 1880]).
Middle-class single women, both in fiction and in reality, were expected to live in the parental home or, if this were not possible, in the home of a close relation such as brother or married sister. However, due to the demographic imbalance between men and women, it was inevitable that the heads of many households would be female. This was usually deemed respectable, especially where an older woman provided chaperonage to any younger females or where a lone householder was deemed to be beyond marriageable age. However, as will be demonstrated, even in the novels of the pro-woman Rosa Carey, there seems to have been an ambivalence towards households without adult men.

Wherever they lived, single women were not expected to spend their time in remunerative work but they were expected to be 'useful' to both their families and their parishes. Carey's own life provides a concrete example of someone who, at least nominally, acted according to societal expectation. As Jane Crisp points out, such biographical details as are available 'present a fairly familiar picture for the times... one that would not be out of place in her own novels.'22 Carey always lived with close relatives: with her parents until their deaths when she was in her late twenties, then with a brother, bringing up his motherless children; after his death and when the children had left home, she moved in with a married sister. When she finally set up her own establishment at around the age of fifty, another sister, recently widowed, came to live with her.

In addition, in spite of undertaking the work of a professional writer, Carey still performed the requisite duties of a leisured single woman. For many years she was a Sunday School teacher. However, even this important work was secondary to the needs of her large family. An article from about 1891 indicates how Carey was viewed by her friend of many years, Helen Marion Burnside:

'She has so consistently lived her religion... that family duty and devotion to its many members have always come first. She never hesitates for a moment to give up the most important professional work if she can do anything in the way of nursing or comforting any of them...' 23

Whether or not Burnside was telling the literal truth, the appropriate sentiments for the age were expressed. Nor did Carey contradict her. Indeed, this ideal of womanly service for single women seems to have been endorsed by Carey in her fiction if we take into account the number of instances where a sister or a daughter's entire life's work, certainly during the years when she might have been expected to

Consider marriage, is the maintenance of her family's comfort. For example, the not particularly likable Dora in Queenie's Whim, for all her faults,

fulfilled all her duties admirably. She married both her sisters, becoming the most inveterate matchmaker for their sakes; and she soothed her father's declining years with the utmost dutifulness... When he was dead and she was no longer young... she married a wealthy widower....

However, in real life, large numbers of bereaved women were compelled to leave the parental home without moving on to the comparative security and status of marriage. Seeking a home with more distant kin was one option for the very young or those left in poor financial circumstances. Yet even if a family could both afford and tolerate the presence of an extra individual in the household, it was inevitable that relations were sometimes somewhat strained. For example, a young women who wrote to the Girl's Own Paper in 1896 evidently found herself at odds with her benefactor on the grounds of religious observance. It was the policy of the Girl's Own Paper not to publish letters from correspondents but much may be deduced from the reply she received:

We feel sorry for your present position, as your relative is endeavouring to upset your deceased parents' teaching and wishes. But you are still very young, and you are under her care; and it is your duty to conduct yourself humbly, and show respect for her, and endeavour not to aggravate her by saying all you think and acting as you feel.... True religion bears fruit in obedience, humility, respect to those who (in the Providence of God) are placed over you....

Such circumstances in real life were paralleled by the many depictions in literature of a 'poor relation', whose fictional dependence means frequent humiliation if not actual ill-treatment. Classic examples of such characters are to be found in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, and in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park.

However, in Carey's novels, a new home with relatives is generally a haven of rest after an encounter with the hostile world. For example, in Averil [1890-1], two young women who are destitute find shelter in the household of the eponymous heroine. Though it costs some effort for the frail Averil to prevent her step-mother from exploiting the first to arrive, Lottie, both are considerably better provided for than previously. The prior circumstances of the second arrival, nineteen-year-old Annette, are

---

24 QW, p. 475. Cf. also Aunt Milly in Heriot's Choice [1877-9]; Lettice in Mary St John [1882]; and the eponymous heroine of Cousin Mona [1895].
25 'Answers to Correspondents', Girl's Own Paper, November 7 1896, Vol. XVIII [October 3 1896-September 25 1897], p. 96. (Hereafter, title abbreviated to GOP.)
26 One major exception is Christian in A Passage Perilous [1903]. However, the bulk of the book is about her life subsequent to her marriage.
27 Legally, Lottie is Averil's step-mother's ward but Averil, as mistress of the household and major financial provider, shelters Lottie from much of the stigma and work attached to being a poor relation. (Where two dates are given for a text, as with Averil [1890-1], this indicates that the novel was first issued in serial form between these dates. Details of first publication in novel form are supplied in the bibliography.)
given in some detail and, in the process, the motivations behind Averil’s offer to her of a home are made clear.

Annette has been supporting herself by mending lace but it is a subsistence income at best and the work does not permit her to fulfil the duties of her gender and class. At the outset of the novel, she is living unchaperoned in a French lodging house after the death of her mother. In spite of her poverty and her long residence in a foreign land, Annette knows what is appropriate to her English birth and breeding.

‘it is dreary to walk in the dusk; besides, there are les convenances - what you would call the propriety - one would not willingly offend against that.’

But this is the only overt reference to the subject of morality. Averil couches her reasons for taking Annette into her home in quite different terms.

‘Tell her...that my home is hers - that I am ready to welcome her as a sister... it is my duty to befriend my cousin. What does it matter what she is like? It is enough for me that she is unhappy and desolate.’

However, implicitly, there are three determining factors in Averil’s decision: gentility (what is appropriate to class); philanthropy (what is owing to duty on the part of the benefactor); and respectability (considerations of youth and gender). In all, Averil’s good will extends well beyond the dispassionate advice to householders in Everybody’s Book of Correct Conduct [1893], that ‘It is the correct thing... To be invariably civil to all dependents and servants.’

Yet, in Cousin Mona [1897], Carey also represents sympathetically the problems which may be encountered by the well-meaning benefactor who, whilst aware of her/his duty and philanthropic enough to perform it, is not able to provide a suitable home for a destitute relative. The eponymous heroine of Cousin Mona provides eighteen-year old Rufa, with a home that is both genteel and respectable but she can neither afford it financially nor provide a comfortable atmosphere in which to live.

Mona works hard to conceal from Rufa the real problem: that the brother, who lives with her and who requires her constant attention, is slowly losing his mind. Thus, not understanding the real situation, the youthful Rufa decides that ‘Cousin Everhard [is] a selfish, hypochondriacal bookworm; and Cousin

Mona... only his pale shadow.' She resentfully thinks, at this point, 'Neither of them wanted me,' and she asks herself, 'What distorted sense of duty had induced them to offer me this meagre and grudging hospitality?'

However, Carey permits her fictional benefactors the right of reply. Cousin Everhard does indeed appear to resent Rufa's presence at times. Yet a sense of duty remains even within his clouded mind. Amidst his often-unintelligible ramblings, Rufa hears him say,

'What do we want with the chit?... We are far more comfortable as we are; young people are so disturbing; tut, what do you say? Francis's child? I suppose that makes a difference; but anyhow, it is very disagreeable.' (CM, p. 100)

It is only towards the end of the book that Rufa finds out the truth about Cousin Everhard and, in the process, the reader gains a new perspective on Cousin Mona's feelings and motivations. The latter confesses to Rufa,

'More than once I sat down in my room and had a good cry about you. "How is that child ever to love me?" I would say to myself, "and how am I to look after Everhard and make her happy?"...it is a dreary life for you to lead; I knew that when you came; but how was I to shut my door upon a homeless orphan? I said to myself that Providence had sent you here, and that it was one more duty.... ' (CM, p. 192)

To the fictional Mona, the necessity for sheltering the orphaned Rufa in a family home by far outweighs the unsuitability of the environment for a young woman of eighteen.

Throughout Carey's novels, middle-class notions of propriety and duty are presented as a transparent discourse. But if the twin ideals of single womanhood - accommodation in a suitable domestic establishment and adherence to middle-class social mores - remain applicable throughout, it in no way means that all female characters are made by Carey to respond to these ideals in a uniform way. As has already been stated, a large number of women, whether by fictional accident or design, live in all-female households. Their material circumstances vary too: some are wealthy whilst others live in penury; some women choose the single life, others do not have the personal attractions or the opportunities to attract a

---


32 In The Old, Old Story [1894], the penniless upper-middle-class orphans, twenty-year old Gloden and her brother, Harvey, aged thirteen, are offered an 'unsuitable' home of a different kind. They are taken in by their aunt and uncle, the 'lower-class' shopkeepers Reuben and Clemency Carrick. Whilst the reader is led to sympathise with both parties, most pity is given to the two young people who have come down in the world.

33 That is, as something that is self-evident or unmediated; as if no discourse, meaning a register of language emanating from an institution, were present at all. Cf., for example, 'linguistic transparency,' or 'a flawless mirror to the world' as a description of the realist novel. See Peter Mercer, 'Realism' in Fowler 1991, pp. 201-2.
partner. Carey's forty-one novels have a similar proportion of spinsters to the non-fictional world so there is room for a great deal of variety.

The popular stereotype of the fussy or embittered 'old maid' without male belongings or children to bring up is certainly present in Carey's writings but she is nearly always a minor character and nearly always has a foil in another single woman who has no such characteristics. The lonely Miss Bretherton in *The Mistress of Brae Farm* is in many ways a typical portrayal. Eccentric due to 'brain fever', occasioned by the death of her fiancé, her 'queer' temper leads to a second great disappointment in her life - that of failing to secure the affection of her young nephew, whom she wishes to adopt. She cannot forgive his childish rebellion and thus, by cutting off his entire family, spends her old age alone. She has as her foil the energetic and intelligent Ellison who carries no grudges even though the poor relation to whom she gives a home wins the love of the man Ellison had hoped to marry.

However, both Miss Bretherton and Ellison are assertive in their manner and comfortably provided for in terms of this world's goods. The same cannot be said of the 'cardinal virtues', four unmarried sisters to be found in *Queenie's Whim* (*QW*, p. 127). (The Misses Palmer are called by this soubriquet because they bear the names Hope, Prudence, Charity and Faith.) The eponymous Queenie, who is visiting their home village, initially receives the following tart explanation as to why none of the sisters has married:

> They have lived in Hepshaw all their lives; they could not possibly have met any gentlemen except the Vicar, and I daresay he was married. You would not have a lawyer's daughter commit the unpardonable crime of entering into a *mesalliance* with the innkeeper or the chemist... and so the poor cardinal virtues have wasted all their sweetness on the desert air....

However, when Queenie ventures to say 'How very sad', her companion even more sharply replies 'Not at all... people are just as well without marrying. For my part, I think men are a mistake' (Ibid.). The two speakers come to no synthesis of their points of view, they simply change the subject. Thus, the conversation is one of many in this particular text that the reader can interpret in her own way.

---

34 *TMOBF*, p. 109. Brain fever is discussed in Chapter I.ii of this thesis. Oddly enough, many of Carey's elderly female characters who attempt to adopt children but who end up alienating their families and spending their last years alone are the long-widowed and childless, for example Mrs Hazeldean in *Nellie's Memories* [1868]; Mrs Ord in *Robert Ord's Atonement* [1873]; and Mrs Hartree in *At The Moorings* [1904]. However, they are represented in much the same way as unmarried women. Peevish older spinsters who antagonize others include Miss Faith in *Life's Trivial Round* [1899-1900], Miss Brookes in *Robert Ord's Atonement* and Prudence Palmer in *Queenie's Whim*.  

35 *QW* p. 115. The allusion is to Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, v. 14: 'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen/ And waste its sweetness on the desert air.' For the full text, see Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch (ed.), *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, (St Albans: Granada Publishing Limited, 1980), pp. 531-536.
Strictly speaking, the conversation is no advertisement for the single state. The first speaker, Cathy, is constructed as young, impetuous and impatient with convention (she also eventually marries). This would enable an older woman reader to disregard Cathy’s speeches on account of her youth and lack of experience. However, Queenie’s words may be equally easily disregarded as they are spoken with ‘a girl’s involuntary pity for the monotonous existence of single blessedness’ (Ibid.). Once again, a ‘girl’s’ point of view may be seen as uninformed. Yet the two speakers embody two popular views of the single state and, indeed, they provide the starting point for a much longer textual dialogue on the subject.  

Against this background of impeccable, if dull, gentility, the four sisters’ lack of both pecuniary means and gainful occupation is very visibly drawn. Of the four, the aptly named Prudence has the unenviable task of ‘[holding] the purse-strings of the little household, and... guarding] the proprieties’ (QW p. 145).

Poor Miss Prudence! there was still a warm woman’s heart beating under the harsh, unloving exterior, though it seldom found utterance. Her one object in life had been to eke out a narrow income, and bring down her own and her sisters’ wants to the limits of penury... the low standard had dwarfed her moral stature; petty cares had narrowed and contracted her... yet... Miss Prudence’s faults were only caricatures of virtues. She was miserly, but it was for her sisters’ sakes more than her own. To keep the little house bright and respectable she toiled from morning till night; but I do not know that any of them loved her better for it. (QW p. 345)

Poor ‘grim’ Miss Prudence! The narrator also enlightens the reader as to Miss Prudence’s thoughts on the single state per se;

[she] was much given to expatiate in the domestic circle on the evils of matrimony, and to thank heaven that she and her three sisters had not fallen into the hands of the Philistines; a peculiarly happy state of resignation for an unattractive woman, with a cast-iron exterior; and endowed besides with a masculine appendage of the upper lip.

This portrait tends towards cruel caricature but it invites the reader to sympathise with Prudence rather than to ridicule her. Moreover, her sisters are equally savagely portrayed. The crippled Charity is a ‘talkative little woman’ who wears out her sister Faith with her incessant demands for ‘improving

---

36 Though Craik regarded spinsterhood as ‘an unnatural condition,’ even the conservative writer, Charlotte Yonge, noted that there was useful work for single women to do. According to Yonge, after the advent of Christianity, Maidenhood acquired a glory it had never had before, and which taught the unmarried to regard themselves, not as beings who had failed in the purpose of their existence, but as pure creatures, free to devote themselves to the service of their Lord... (Womankind, p. 5)

37 QW, p. 272.

38 QW, p. 278. There is more than a tinge of irony in the suggestion that Miss Prudence lives in ‘a peculiarly happy state of resignation’; and her point of view is certainly not constructed as the preferred position for the reader. However, her fictional voice adds weight to the notion that spinsterhood is not the worst condition for a woman. The story of Charity’s sometime fiance endorse Prudence’s point of view. See below.
reading' \( (QW, \text{p. 147}) \). By comparison, Hope is ‘vigorous and loud-voiced’ as well as ‘cosmopolitan in her charities’ and ‘a little shaky in her church principles’ \( (QW, \text{p. 271}; \text{p. 127}) \). Meanwhile even Faith’s ‘sweet lovable face’ is coloured only by ‘pallid neutral tints’ and there is a ‘certain sadness of repression on it- the shadowing of an over quiet life’ \( (QW, \text{p. 126}) \).

However, Faith possesses redeeming qualities that are absent in some of the more lively characters in the novel. In many ways she compares favourably with the eponymous heroine, who has been alone in the world since the age of seventeen and who has hitherto been exploited by her employer:

Queenie fell in love with [Faith] on the spot.... Young as she was, she knew more of the world than this woman of thirty-five. The unsophisticated freshness of the simple woman, her tender voice, her old-fashioned ways, and the little quaint pedantries, charmed the young governess, grown bitter with the hard edge of life. \( (QW, \text{p. 127}) \)

Certainly the fictional Faith appears to be more capable of ‘completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others’ than her counterpart, Queenie. W. R. Greg would no doubt have approved of Faith even though she has no man to administer to for most of the novel. An anonymous writer for the \textit{Saturday Review} in 1865 is also likely to have admired Faith’s feminine qualities. S/he asserts that,

\begin{quote}
No woman can or ought to know very much of the meanness and wickedness and misery that is loose in the wide world. She could not learn about it without loosing the bloom and freshness which it is her mission in life to preserve.\footnote{39}
\end{quote}

But although Carey’s narrator similarly considers lack of sophistication attractive, Queenie is not censured for her cynicism. Any bitterness on her part is merely attributed to unavoidable circumstances. The Misses Palmer have been provided for (albeit not luxuriously) by their deceased father; Queenie must work or want;

‘Other women had a strong arm to lean upon, other women had fathers and brothers or husbands to work for them, and shield them in the battle of life; she had to work for herself and her helpless little sister, that was all.’ And so she took up her burthen bravely, neither repining that such things were, nor wasting her best energies with fruitless regrets for impossibilities.\footnote{40}

Once again Carey enters into dialogue with the invisible but pervasive imperative that women should be provided for by men. The result is that the reader is permitted to admire both women: the one for

\footnote{39} \textit{Saturday Review}, 9 December 1865, p. 723, cited in Poovey, p. 155. See also \textit{Womankind}, pp. 153-4 (on mixed schooling); p. 233 (‘bloom’ a fleeting thing).

\footnote{40} \textit{QW}, p. 191. Cf. J. Boyd-Kinnear, ‘The Social Position of Women’ in Josephine Butler (ed.), \textit{Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture} [1869], cited in Hollis 1979, p. 54: ‘Many women have fathers, brothers, or husbands, who provide for them. But... there are many women who... have not only to work for themselves, but have to work for the maintenance of others dependent on them....’}
having retained her ‘bloom’ and the other for her bravery in dealing with a basically hostile world.
Nor does this end the dialogue about the supposed emptiness of the single state.

Faith is eventually made by Carey to marry the lover that she had to leave ten years previously. Her doctor husband then regulates the domestic arrangements of the remaining sisters from the home he shares with Faith, which happens to be next door. This improvement due to male intervention appears to be a comment on the disadvantages of all-female households and a partial vindication of Yonge's theory that women need to be managed by 'superior man'. However, Carey never explicitly gives credence to the notion in this or any other novel. Many all-female households may be found in her fiction where there is neither need nor place for male authority. The reader is also frequently warned that, although single blessedness can be stultifying, matrimony can be far worse.

An interesting discussion of the latter theme is to be found following the retrospectively related history of another Palmer sister, Charity. In spite of the assertion that Charity ‘could not... have met any gentlemen except the Vicar’, she was, at one time, to have been married to a local farmer. However, after the accident which made her a confirmed invalid, she ‘was obliged to give him up’ (QW, p.149).
Thus, ostensibly, Charity is debarred from both the best and the second best in life: she enjoys neither marriage and maternity nor active spinsterhood. However, the fact that her fiancé was, at the time, ‘strongly suspected’ to be ‘addicted to intemperance’ problematizes this assumption of loss (QW, p. 150). The conclusion reached by the two young women discussing Charity’s single state is that, even though she cannot walk, she is better off than she would have been as an unhappily married woman. As the more outspoken of the two speakers, Cathy, concludes,

"Of course... the poor thing has suffered a good deal one way and another, but how do you know that it was not all for the best?... Think if that accident had never happened, and she had married him.... To be tied for life to a man, and then to see him sink lower and lower, to despise one’s own husband! Could you imagine any greater torment than that? If it were I, I know I should get to hate him. Nothing should make me live with such a man; I would beg my bread first...” (Ibid.)

As might be expected for unsensational fiction of the period, the passage is limited to an articulation of the psychological aspects of despising a husband who is a drunkard. Yet subjects such as poverty and physical violence remain implicit, mainly through Cathy’s assertion that it would be better to beg for bread than to live with such a man. Cathy’s comments are also likely to have highlighted for the reader the difficulties inherent in abandoning such a marriage. Even if divorce or separation had been practicable, a woman would have had difficulty in gaining permanent custody of any children and would

---

41 For example, the Challoner sisters in Not Like Other Girls [1884] start up the dress-making business that will provide an income and keep the family together whilst all their male advisor can do is to lament that their father died penniless.
have had no legal right to her own previous earnings or property.\textsuperscript{42} The low social status accorded to separated and divorced women would have provided an additional deterrent. In the circumstances, Carey can hardly be viewed as an advocate of marriage at any price.

Most of Carey's novels contain the past history of at least one 'old maid' and these histories frequently conclude with a homily on the subject of not judging such women from outward appearances. Thus, in \textit{The Mistress of Brae Farm}, the story of Miss Bretherton's bereavement is glossed with the words,

'\begin{quote}
There are lots of such stories, I fancy.... Many a dried-up old bachelor or weazened old maid has a sensational story in the background; we most of us keep our private skeleton under lock and key. Happy those who have no such records in their past.' \textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

In such passages, Carey appears to suggest that the old maid in the real world may also have had her story.\textsuperscript{44}

The eccentric Miss Bretherton and three of the Misses Palmer are 'spare women' indeed from a popular point of view. Yet Carey manages to redeem them from a charge of innate superfluity. She does this by representing them, not merely as old maids, but as people; not as innate failures but as casualties of external circumstances. Miss Prudence has the warm heart that would make her an ideal aunt, if not a wife, though poverty has soured her; Miss Charity has been marriageable, even though fate has subsequently debarred her from being a wife. Similarly, Miss Bretherton is represented as having been an amiable and attractive woman until cheated by death of her happiness. In other words, these characters are represented as being of the same flesh and blood, the same feelings, and the same potentials as their supposedly more fortunate married peers.

\textbf{iii Domestic and Quasi-Domestic Employment}

As has been noted, Miss Bretherton and the Misses Palmer do not need to seek remunerative employment. However, Carey indicates an awareness that not all women had the option of being stay-at-home spinsters, however desirable this might have been to the arbiters of middle-class taste, or indeed to the women themselves. Her forty-one novels all contain sympathetically-portrayed working

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{QW} was first serialised between 1880 and 1881, before the Married Women's Property Act; and only since 1873 had it been legally possible for a mother to retain custody of her children until the age of sixteen.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{TMOBF}, p. 109. Cf. also R. N. Carey, \textit{Only The Governess}, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917 [1888]) p. 121: "Often and often behind these dull tedious lives, as you call them, lie hidden tragedies - conflicts which leave their scars for ever...."

\textsuperscript{44} Other abortive love stories of 'old maids' in Carey's novels include those of Berrie in \textit{Life's Trivial Round}, Molly in \textit{Queenie's Whim}, Miss Gillian in \textit{At The Moorings}, and that of the eponymous Cousin Mona.
middle-class women, the vast majority of whom are located in some kind of domestic or quasi-domestic employment.45

For middle-class women, remunerative domestic work generally entailed the performance of duties which would otherwise have fallen to the leisureed female occupants of a household. Such employments might have included those of companion and governess and, latterly, those of child’s nurse and social secretary. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, other employment opportunities became available that were distinguishable from domestic work, in degree if not in type. Such posts seem to have developed from trained or otherwise directed specialisms within the range of domestic duties and by the orientation of such specialisms towards both professional status and employment beyond the immediate boundaries of the home. The work of teachers, nurses and philanthropists or mission-workers may be described as quasi-domestic in this sense.

Carey does not appear to use her novels in order to question the supposed natural aptitudes of women for domestic and quasi-domestic work but this is hardly surprising.46 There were plenty of commentators to make the myth of female domesticity appear to Carey as an unimpeachable fact of existence. The enormously influential John Ruskin, though careful not to imprison women in their own homes, certainly rhetoricized them into a sphere of activity which did not compete with that of men:

Now the man’s work for his own home is... to secure its maintenance, progress and defence; the woman’s to secure its order, comfort, and loveliness.

Expand both these functions. The man’s duty as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the maintenance, in the advance, in the defence of the State. The woman’s duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adorning of the State....

what the woman is to be within her gates, as the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty: that she is also to be without her gates, where order is more difficult, distress more imminent, and loveliness more rare.47

However, Ruskin’s view is by no means a mid-century abberation. Joseph Johnson, writing some twenty years later, if anything expands upon the theme. In his book, Noble Women Of Our Time [1886], he prescribes and, by implication, proscribes particular areas for women’s employment in terms very similar to those of Ruskin. Whilst conceding that ‘There is scarcely a walk in life, however

45 In the first novel, Nellie’s Memories [1868], Lucy Graham works as a seamstress; in the last, The Key of the Unknown [1909], Rose Osborne is a nursing sister.
46 Carey practically ignores other kinds of work, for example the public sector clerical work, which was available by competitive examination to the fortunate few from the late nineteenth century. The Girl’s Own Paper frequently answered correspondents’ queries about clerical work and it appears to have been greatly sought after. See, for example, the ‘Answers to Correspondents’ in the issue for October 3, 1896, and ‘Questions and Answers’ for May 29, 1897, GOP Vol. XVIII, p. 15; p. 559.
abstruse and absorbing, that has not been adorned by a woman," his main theme may be found in the following direct appeal to his readership:

‘All ... will admit that woman is in her true sphere, about her own work, when administering to the sorrowing and ameliorating suffering....’ (NWT, pp. 10-11.)

Ultimately, his notion of what constitutes women’s work does not extend beyond the domestic and the quasi-domestic. Johnson’s book, framed by its preface and introductory chapter as a book about working women, is notably about famous and saintly women employed in the fields of nursing, teaching, charity and mission work.

In the view of Ruskin and Johnson, therefore, it is most fitting that women should become homemakers, educators, philanthropists and almoners. The ideal people upon whom to practice these ‘natural’ talents are a woman’s own family or the poor at her gate. However, it would seem to be respectable, if slightly less desirable, to use these talents in the service of others. Notably, neither writer mentions pecuniary matters.

In Carey’s novels, as with those of most of her contemporaries, the majority of middle-class women in remunerative employment conform with this domestic/ quasi-domestic ideal. In addition, many of these characters are conventional both in the work that they do and in their approach to it. However, Carey also focuses upon the problem of women who are obliged to undertake remunerative employment of a domestic or quasi-domestic nature even though they have neither the temperament nor the aptitude. For example, in Aunt Diana [1885] the thin-skinned and aging Patience Leigh means well and knows her place. However, she cannot cope with the boisterousness and newly- emerging assertiveness of her eldest pupil, Missie. By contrast, Dympha, in Wooed and Married [1875] is too young and too inexperienced to cope with a subordinate position in a household and the constant necessity for curbing her tongue in the presence of an employer.

Carey also seems to have understood that the quest for employment was far from being an easy one. The fictional Dympha, first thrown onto the employment market at the age of seventeen, is introduced to the reader only after she has gained, and lost, several posts. In describing her plight, Carey uses the occasion to enlarge upon the crisis in the women’s employment market generally:

48 For example, the genteel and tactful Miss Mewlstone in R. N. Carey, Not Like Other Girls (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1905 [1884]), is the perfect companion:

‘Oh, yes, she can talk, and very well too... but she knows that I do not care about it; her silence is her great virtue in my eyes. And then she has tact, and knows when to keep out of the way... ’ (p. 152)

Eunice in The Highway of Fate [1902] is another ideal companion.
Dym tried Haverstock Hill and even Hampstead, but the market seemed overstocked. A great commercial panic had taken place in the City a few months previously, and scores of girls, younger and less well educated than Dym, had been thrown upon their own resources: girls luxuriously brought up, and taught everything but to govern themselves and teach others, were driven from the fastnesses of happy homes and launched suddenly upon the world. Incompetence seeking competence; youth and helplessness going hand-in-hand to find a stewardship, where they could starve themselves and bring others to beggary... Dym’s neat little figure traversed miles of pavement in answer to countless advertisements, but she never found anything to suit; her youth was against her.

This particular ‘great commercial panic’ may well have been fictitious (if credible) but the overcrowding of the teaching profession was an actual fact of life.

Carey articulates a genuine concern for the plight of women who are obliged to compete for work whether or not they have the requisite qualities. However, in Queenie’s Whim, she appears to take her concern further. She puts into the mind of her irrepressible character, Cathy, the notion that all women, regardless of their background or expectations, should be trained for some kind of remunerative work. Significantly, she has the fictional doctor in Queenie’s Whim agree with her:

‘I like your idea of every woman trained to a definite employment; I never could understand the enforced helplessness of the sex. I have known pitiable examples of women being left dependent on overtaxed brothers, or turned upon the world absolutely without resources.’

(QW, p. 264)

Cathy’s original argument is not stated at this point in the text; the reader only knows of her beliefs by virtue of the doctor’s reply. However, in this way, the notion of training for all women is given a more emphatic endorsement: that of the approval of a professional male. Yet even this endorsement is not represented as being free from debate; even the quasi-domestic is disputed territory. Mr Logan, the gentle clergyman who opposes Cathy’s ambition to train as a nurse, and who is possessed of the ‘old-fashioned notion that woman’s mission, in its perfectness, very rarely lies beyond the threshold of the home,’ is politely decried by everyone present. Yet he continues to put across the alternative view-point (QW, pp. 265-6):

‘How about Florence Nightingale?’ interrupted Cathy.

‘Or Sarah Judson?’ from Langley.

‘Or Mrs Fry? or Joan of Arc?’ commented Dr. Stewart.

‘Or we might add Grace Darling, and a score of others,’ put in Garth.

‘All typical women, raised up in their generation to perform a certain work, and performing it right nobly. The world calls them heroines, and with reason. They are heroines in the true sense of the word, for they have discovered the needs of the world, and,

---

49 R. N. Carey, *Wee Wifie*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1894 [1869]), pp. 76-7. See also *Not Like Other Girls*, p. 65. There are, of course, many competent governesses, for example Eden in *My Lady Frivol* [1899]; the eponymous heroine of *Only the Governess* [1888]; and Miss Osbourne in *But Men Must Work* [1892].

recognising their own power to remedy them, have fearlessly dared to cross the threshold of home duty for the larger arena, where only the strong prevail and the weak go to the wall.'

'Cathy does not pretend to be Florence Nightingale,' put in Langley quietly.

'I thought you always told us to elevate our standard?' a little defiantly, from Cathy.

'The higher the better,' with a benign glance at her; 'but it must be a true standard, unselfishness and self-sacrifice for its base, and built up of pure motives. If it be one-sided it will topple over.' (QW, p. 266)

Thus the vicar neutralizes the examples given to him, of women who have worked outside the home, by categorizing them as self-sacrificing, exceptional and heroic, and by divorcing their motives from those of the unexceptional Cathy. Effectively, Cathy’s motives, whether those of self-development or pecuniary advantage are rendered unacceptable.

Once again, opposing points of view expressed by two of Carey’s characters are akin to opposing schools of thought in the real world. Dr Stewart’s perspective is to be found not only in the writings of the feminists of the day but also in relatively conservative periodicals such as the Girl’s Own Paper, a Religious Tract Society publication, and The Woman At Home which had as its editor the Evangelical writer, Annie S Swan. By comparison, the views of Carey’s fictional vicar are more akin to those expressed in the spate of articles by self-interested male writers such as W. R. Greg, which had found their way into mainstream journals in the eighteen-fifties and sixties. The vicar does not insist that marriage is the only career for a woman but he as surely interdicts any means by which a woman can earn a living wage. Effectively, his position is little different from that of the writer for the Saturday Review in 1859, who posits that, if women become economically independent, men might be reduced to doing their own housework.

Men do not like, and would not seek, to mate with an independent factor, who at any time could quit - or who at all times would be tempted to neglect - the tedious duties of training and bringing up children, ...keeping ...tradesmen’s bills, and mending... linen, for the more lucrative returns of the desk or counter....

Married life is a woman’s profession; and to this life her training - that of dependence - is modelled. Of course by not getting a husband, or losing him, she may find that she is without resources. All that can be said of her is, she has failed in business; and no social reform can prevent such failures.

According to such rhetoric, Cathy should stay at home with her domestic duties and pray that her brother will be able to keep her until she can capture a husband. Alas, this kind of thinking had clearly not disappeared by the end of the century if a letter to The Woman At Home in 1895 is to be believed.


52 ‘Queen bees or working bees,’ Saturday Review, 12 November 1859, cited in Hollis 1979, p. 11.
Whilst training is not the issue in this case, the same kind of insistence upon female dependence is evident. Annie S Swan sums up her correspondent's dilemma thus:

It is, I think, most unjust and unfair for a man to shadow a girl with his attentions for such a period of years and... become engaged to her... without giving any satisfaction regarding the future home.... [T]he young lady is in poor circumstances, and unless something is settled soon she must seek some way of helping the family funds.... The position is intolerably hard, my correspondent being deterred from seeking employment, lest it should offend the pride of her lover's family....

To return to the home-versus-work debate in Queenie's Whim, once again, Carey declines to provide a definitive pronouncement on a matter which might have been of great female concern. The fictional Cathy defiantly ignores the emotive appeal for her to take up woman's perfect mission in the home but the scene does not have a comfortable conclusion. In the following passage, the vicar, Mr Logan, is the first speaker:

'...About your plan [to become a nurse], now?'
'I will not hear a word against it,' she returned wilfully.... 'It is bad enough having to argue with all one's home people; but to be lectured in public, and before Dr. Stewart - no, indeed, Mr Logan.'
'Very well, I will reserve what I have to say in private,' he returned, looking [at] her with a sort of indulgent tenderness.... The circle broke up after this.... (QW, p. 266)

Cathy is ultimately vindicated in her choice of a career: she inconveniences no-one when she leaves home; and her professional nursing skills are put to good use when her beloved sister is taken ill. Yet, at this early point in the narrative, the silencing of Mr Logan is no victory. It seems that, even whilst Carey advocates training and employment opportunities for women, such advocacy is still in tension with the culturally-prescribed wholly domestic ideal.

The problems faced by middle-class women seeking remunerative employment were manifold. They were hampered in their selection of work by appeals to their femininity and by threats to their marriage prospects if they worked at all. By no means all applicants were suited to domestic employments and relatively few had the education or training required for quasi-domestic posts. At the same time, long before the end of the nineteenth century, even some of these latter were massively over-subscribed. Yet, as authors such as Martha Vicinus indicate, the importunity of the impecunious and the determination of the unwillingly leisured resulted in both greater employment opportunities for women and a greater general acceptance of the validity of remunerative women's work.

---

53 WAHV Vol III, 1895, p. 155.
54 See, for example, 'Women's Employments' in WAH Vol III 1895, pp. 156-7; 'Questions and Answers' (reply to Elspeth), GOP Vol. XVIII, p. 256.
iv. Nurses Homes and Homes From Home

One of the first occupations for ladies to gain general acceptance was that of nursing. In spite of its remunerative potential, it began to capture the public imagination when stories about Florence Nightingale and her hospital work were relayed back from the Crimea. Nightingale was an ideal advocate for the work. Born a ‘lady’, she was a public figure who embodied for many the ideals of selflessness and pious womanhood. Writers such as Ruskin and Johnson would have been unable to find fault with her, at least in terms of her public image. She thus set an example which it was possible for other middle-class single women to follow, though the respectability of the calling was not allowed by all quarters overnight. By the end of the nineteenth century, nurses (though not necessarily ‘lady’ nurses) became one of the largest occupational groups of women.\(^5\) An almost accidental result, arising from the formalisation of training for nurses, was that some women had access to affordable and respectable living accommodation.\(^6\) Yet nursing only gained acceptance by emulating in a number of ways the very situation that many women were trying to break with.

As Poovey has argued, the development of the nursing profession was based on a contradictory role for many of the women concerned:

A calling or a profession? This was the pertinent question for those who advocated that women nurse. Those feminists who supported opening nursing to women of all classes argued that nursing should be a profession, with some form of regular training, adequate wages and sufficient provisions for retirement. Other commentators, however, advocated conceptualizing nursing as a vocation. (Poovey 1989, p. 176)

In designating nursing as a calling or vocation, as indeed did Nightingale herself, commentators appealed to middle-class social mores (the insistence upon feminine piety, selflessness and modesty) and located the work, at least nominally, within the domestic sphere (through the notion that it should not compete with male occupations and that it should be unwaged). However, too few idealistic women of the right calibre were available to work on a purely voluntary basis. As a result, a hybrid system of training evolved in which the requirements of both middle-class ideology and hard economics were taken into account. As Vicinus notes,

Although some of the new training schools... had begun with a single course for everybody, they all soon had a two-tier system .... Lady probationers paid £1 per week for up to one year’s training, while regular probationers were paid £12 to £20 per year during their three years’ training. (Vicinus 1985, p. 97)

\(^5\) Vicinus 1985, p. 96-7.
\(^6\) According to Vicinus, this accommodation was not often comfortable. See Vicinus 1985, p. 109. However, Carey seems to have approved of the idea of nurses homes. See below.
Thus, nursing was theoretically open to all and at least some impecunious women had access to a living wage in a relatively high status job. Moreover, all those who had undergone training could use their skills in a variety of posts other than those offered by the big teaching hospitals.

It would seem, from her novels, that Carey was interested in both the vocational and the practical opportunities afforded by nursing work, her commitment to the notion of vocation being most strongly represented in *Our Bessie* [1888-9]. This being one of her novels directed at younger readers, she makes the heavily didactic point that training must be undertaken in a spirit of humility and self-sacrifice. Thus, when the fictional Edna wishes to train as a nurse following her broken engagement, she is gently and earnestly admonished for selfishness by the eponymous heroine.

> 'If it were not for Mama, I would go to some hospital and learn nursing; it is too dreadful living like this just to amuse oneself, and try to forget. I must do something, something for the good of myself, if not for my fellow creatures.'
>
> 'Oh, my dear, I have learnt that we must not run away from our trouble; girls often talk like that...about going into a hospital, but they do not know what they want. Nursing is too sacred a work to be done from such a motive. What good would such a work, undertaken in a selfish, self-seeking spirit do them?'

Nevertheless, four of Carey's novels feature nurses as major characters and none of these appear undertake the work from purely idealistic motives. Ursula in *Uncle Max* certainly seems to have a vocation. However, as she reflects upon her career to date, the reader discovers that she prefers hard-working independence to the more conventional behaviour for her age and class, that of living with her wealthy aunt:

> I remembered the dear old rectory life, where every one was in earnest, and contrasted it with the trifling pursuits that my aunt and cousin called duties... And then came emancipation in the shape of hard hospital work... when under the stimulus of useful employment and constant exercise of body and mind, I slept better, fretted less, and looked less mournfully out on the world.

Clearly, nursing is also an antidote for boredom and lack of purpose. In addition, Ursula can afford her idealism; she has a private income and her ultimate occupation, nursing the sick poor in an uncle's country parish rather than in a hospital, is reassuringly similar to that of district visiting. It also seems that she has completed her training as a 'Lady probationer'. At the beginning of the novel, she has

---

58 *Queenie's Whim* [1881], *Uncle Max* [1887], *Other People's Lives* [1897] and *No Friend Like A Sister* [1906]; *The Key of the Unknown* [1909] has a nurse as a minor character.
'spent the past year in the wards of St Thomas' but '[Her] work [i]s over... and [she] ha[s] come home again' (*UM*, p. 3; p. 2).\(^{60}\)

Similarly, Cathy and Faith, the nurses in *Queenie's Whim*, can afford to be idealistic. Though regarded as relatively poor, the former has a brother to support her and the latter has a small income inherited from her father. Cathy’s motives for training - in order to see life outside her own small village and in order to be able to keep herself if the need should arise - have already been stated. Meanwhile, Frances in *No Friend Like A Sister* [1906] has even less need for a wage. After taking up nursing as a means of moving out of the home she shares with her overbearing sister, Augusta, she opens a private nursing home. Yet, even in running a profit-making concern, her gains are not essentially financial: she already has ‘seven hundred a year of her own’.\(^{61}\) Rather, she gains both emancipation from family ties and the social sanction to live in her own establishment. In all, it seems that, if Carey was trying to popularise nursing as a career, she was advocating it as an occupation for the middle-class woman of slender means rather than for the working-class woman of no means at all.

The only description of hospital-type accommodation for nurses to be found in Carey’s novels is of that provided by Frances at her nursing home in *No Friend Like A Sister*. However, it is very much idealised and its salient features appear to have been lifted straight out of Florence Nightingale’s paper, *Suggestions on the Subject of Providing, Training, and Organising Nurses for the Sick Poor in Workhouse Infirmaries* [1867]. In this paper, Nightingale argues that hard-working nurses deserve not only a home but a life-style in keeping with their calling:

- a home which gives what real family homes are supposed to give - materially, a bedroom for each, dining and sitting-rooms in common, all meals prepared and eaten in the home; morally, direction, support, sympathy in a common work; further training and instruction in it; proper rest and recreation; and a head of the home, who is also and pre-eminently trained and skilled head of the nursing; in short, a home where any good mother, of whatever class, would be willing to let her daughter, however attractive or highly educated, live.\(^{62}\)

Carey’s fictional Frances runs her nurses’ home on exactly these principles. With regard to the sleeping accommodation,

---

\(^{60}\) Most of Carey’s trained nurses appear to have been lady probationers. Frances in *No Friend Like A Sister* clearly has the correct social background as well as the finances. The nursing characters in *Queenie’s Whim* appear to regard their time at the hospital as temporary (neither trains for three years) and Nurse Clare in *Other People’s Lives* has a private income. Sister Rose in *The Key of the Unknown*, though of the right class, is a poor and childless widow and hence the only one of Carey’s nurses who may be constructed as having earned a wage whilst training.


\(^{62}\) Cited in Poovey 1989, p. 190
Each cubicle has its window, and beside the bed, chest of drawers, and washstand there [is also room for an easy-chair and small writing-table and bookcase. (NFLAS, p. 3)

There is also 'the nurses' sitting room, with its Chesterfield couch and deep easy-chairs and well-filled bookcase'; and the meals supplied are 'good and well cooked, [with] plenty of vegetables and fruit' (Ibid., pp. 3-4). Frances herself is the 'head of the home'. Like the wise surrogate mother figure obliquely suggested by Nightingale, Frances 'never begrudges anything to her nurses', so it is 'No wonder [they love] and appreciate her'. However, like any other kind of approved parent figure, 'with all her indulgence, Sister Gresham [is] a strict disciplinarian'; she provides the moral direction and support required by Nightingale's model. She also protects her staff from overwork; her district nurses are 'in such request that [she] has some difficulty in securing them needful rest' (NFLAS, p. 5). In addition, Frances' establishment, which consists of in-patients, 'house' nurses and domestic servants, as well as boarding district nurses, is explicitly run along domestic lines. As she tells a friend from her training days at Guy's Hospital, 'I prefer to take fewer patients and fewer nurses, and make it practically a Home' (NFLAS, p. 3).

In adding imaginative depth to Nightingale's bare outline, Carey emphasises the fact that few such comfortable homes from home were available to women working away from their families. Frances is made to state that her nursing home is intended to be 'a sort of pattern and object-lesson for other Homes,' this implying that other nursing homes were not run on these lines, if indeed such small organizations existed at all (NFLAS, p. 3). The narrator then adds that 'Young nurses were almost piteous in their appeals to be taken in; for their very soul was sick with envy' (Ibid.).

Carey was evidently interested in the respectable and affordable accommodation that hospitals and other nursing establishments could provide for the single woman. However, she may well have been attempting to popularise independent living for single working women per se. Two of her other nursing characters, Ursula in *Uncle Max* and Clare in *Other People's Lives*, live in comfortable and well-serviced lodgings, as do two of her fictional governesses. Whilst the loneliness of living apart from members of their own class is not ignored, the advantages of the single life are also ungrudgingly emphasised. Miss Osbourne, the governess in *But Men Must Work* [1892] is delighted that she is in a position to keep her pet dog, Mousquetaire, something that would have been impossible had her post been residential; and Eden, the governess in *My Lady Frivol*, is equally well pleased. The latter happily tells her brother that, 'It will be so delightful to be free and to have my evenings to myself'.

---

63 NFLAS, p. 4. Frances is also 'very anxious to start a Pension Fund for superannuated or sick nurses whose health is broken down, and it is the general belief that every penny of profit [from nurses home and the paying patients] goes towards that fund.' (Ibid.).

Even in the earlier novels, Carey furnishes her single female characters with alternatives to traditional family homes or domestic employments. For example, in *Robert Ord’s Atonement* [1873], Meg Carruthers lives for some time with her friend and benefactor, Rotha. However, when the latter marries, Meg moves ‘by her own desire’ into the Children’s Home where she has hitherto worked on a daily basis. By comparison, Margaret in *Wee Wifie* [1869] becomes a Sister of Charity following her brother’s marriage.

For each of these women, the individual nurturing role that they have hitherto undertaken is at an end and they need to seek fresh work in order to avoid redundancy. Each thus exchanges family life for community life. However, the need for change extends beyond the simple need to find fresh interests for themselves. In accordance with the social mores of the time, the marriages also signal a considerable loss of status for the women within their respective households. Before her brother’s marriage, Margaret is the mistress of his home; afterwards, that status automatically transfers to his wife. For Meg Carruthers, friendship must give way to the societally prescribed exclusivity of the relationship between man and wife. Moving out of someone else’s marital home is thus an altogether more comfortable option. The discussion of female hierarchies within the middle-class household is such an important feature of Carey’s novels that the subject is taken up at greater length in the chapter entitled ‘Hearth and Home’.

v. Conclusion

Discussion has centred on the variety of images of single womanhood to be found in Carey’s novels: daughters joyfully wearing out their youth in the service of their families, fussy or acid old maids, ‘ladies’ employed in a wholly domestic establishments and nurses and others who pursue careers away from family homes. Carey thus represents a variety of responses to the demographic phenomenon of more women than men. Within the novels, residual notions of women remaining in family homes under all circumstances are found alongside dominant notions about women in domestic or quasi-domestic work, though only when financially necessary or until marriage; and both coexist with emergent notions of women in careers, this work being undertaken for its own sake, or even as a positive alternative to marriage. Nor does Carey ignore the voice of the financially solvent woman who enjoys a life at home and who has no desire to undertake remunerative work.

---

65 R. N. Carey, *Robert Ord’s Atonement*, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1898 [1873]), p. 464. Meg is, by this stage a widow rather than a single woman. However, throughout the novel she is a deserted wife with no family and thus is in the position of a single woman.

66 Cf. *A Woman’s Thoughts About Women*, p. 140: ‘After marriage, for either party to have or to desire a dearer or closer friend than the other, is a state so inconceivably deplorable... that it will not bear discussion.’
Put another way, the crystallized boundaries of the domestic exist alongside the real stakes in the
game, public sphere employments for women. In the main, Carey appears to wholeheartedly accept the
images of womanhood provided by the dominant (male powered and empowered) discourses of the day.

However, even from within the bounds of the dominant, its prescriptions and proscriptions are
interrogated. Carey does more than to advocate paid employment and decent living accommodation for
lone women and to condone remunerative employment for the more prosperous. She also appears to
rebel against the notion that women can be redundant.

Even where Carey portrays what appear to be less positive characters, those who, through no fault of
their own, are denied both home duties and gainful occupations, she utilizes their plight to articulate
protests against the enforced isolation of women within the domestic sphere. Thus, it is explicit that
Agnes, in *No Friend Like A Sister* [1906], would gladly change places with the busy farmer's widow,
Mrs Keith, because the latter is happy in her work. By comparison, Violet in *The Old, Old Story*
[1894] is permitted a veritable tirade in protest against her enforced, rather than innate, redundancy. As
she tells a sympathetic friend, a single woman who is forced into idleness and who is only permitted to
invest her hopes in a future married state which may never come to pass, effectively has no life to call
her own:

'But what if [a suitable man] fail to put in an appearance? Is there to be no life for a single
woman? I am seven and twenty... the best and sweetest part of my life is over, the bloom of
youth gone, and I am necessary to no one. Yes, that is the sting, the hateful secret sting - that
I am not necessary to a single human being!'

These characters, Violet and Agnes, do not attempt to liberate themselves from the restrictions imposed
upon them by society but they suffer because it is impossible for them to conform to the prescribed
behaviour. Implicitly, Carey, too, is railing against the impossibility of the standard. Nor was she
alone in doing so. In this protest, Carey reflects the non-fictional words of Frances Power Cobbe from
a few decades earlier in the century:

The private and home duties of such women as have them are, beyond all doubt, their first
concern, and one which, when fully met must often engross all their time and energies. But it
is an absurdity, peculiar to the treatment of women, to go on assuming that all of them have
home duties, and tacitly treating those who have none as if they were wrongly placed on
God's earth.... (Cited in Vicinus 1985, pp. 15-16)

Cobbe's paper was published several years before any of Carey's novels found their way into print and
there is no evidence that Carey ever read it. However, her novels seem to be a vindication of the single
state based upon precisely this contested premise.

119. Cf. also *No Friend Like A Sister*, p. 178.
Part of this vindication lies in the fact that very few of Carey’s characters without home duties are left wanting. Both Violet and Agnes marry, though not until around the age of thirty, and a number of other heroines marry even later in life. For example, in The Key Of The Unknown [1909], Aunt Felicia becomes second wife to the sweetheart of her youth at the age of fifty-eight. (Faith Palmer’s marriage at the age of thirty-five has already been mentioned.) Carey also allows the most unlikely of characters to marry. For example, Mattie in Not Like Other Girls [1884], who is not only thirty but also plain, garrulous and ill-dressed, ends up marrying a millionaire whilst the slightly deformed Nest in Barbara Heathcote’s Trial [1871] marries a baronet. Thus, in Carey’s novels, with the exception of career women and severely physically disabled characters such as the eponymous heroine of Averil, few women are represented as incorrigibly unmarriageable. Romance does not remain the prerogative of the young and no woman is confirmed in her (societally determined) redundancy. This concept of late blessing may well have boosted the morale of older and encumbered readers and it is possible that Carey herself hoped for such a reward.68

However, Carey was also a practical working woman, though it is difficult to tell from the biographical evidence available whether she wrote purely for pleasure or out of stern necessity. It seems that, besides writing romance, she wished to popularise, in her novels, ideas with regard to the autonomy of single women.69 This she did by providing positive role models for women of all ages, whether they lived entirely within the home or whether they followed an occupation elsewhere.

Generally Carey gives high status to a group of characters, single women, who are given low status in other fiction. If she does not appear very radical by today’s standards, it was because her beliefs in the capabilities and natural aptitudes of women differed greatly from those of feminists today. As Vicinus observes,

Very few feminists fought for women as human beings who were potentially equal to men in intellect, instincts, and morals - a radical message unacceptable until the early years of the twentieth century. (Vicinus 1985, p. 16)

Carey was not, in any case, explicitly a feminist. She was also trapped within her own class bias. As a social construction, she was bound, to an extent, to reproduce the society that had made her.70

---

68 Her own older sister married for the first time in her late thirties.
69 Nursing appeared to interest Carey but she was markedly less interested in settlements or Sisterhoods. Education and vocational training are commented upon; but even though the prestigious North London Collegiate was founded in her lifetime and women had started to attend university, none of Carey’s heroines are seen to attend either.
However, her achievement was in her subversive questionings of that society. She did not argue for sex-equality; her agenda was rather more modest in its scope. Rather, she posited that some kind of permanent space should be permitted to single women, who were, at that time, especially short of space to call their own.
Chapter III: Women and Children Second

Introduction: Gentlemen may be rude to their sisters or, 'so like a girl'

The Enlightenment left as its legacy to the Western world a theory of gender difference based upon the perceived ability or inability to reason. Rationality, with its concomitant facility for making moral judgements, was deemed to be characteristic of men; a diametrically opposing state of 'nature' and thus amorality to epitomize the disposition of women, children and animals. Such ascriptions, occasionally based upon questionable empirical evidence, may be observed in the works of philosophers as disparate as Rousseau, Kant and Swedenborg.

However, times do not seem to have changed very much by the late-nineteenth century. Carey's novels do not lack characters who, broadly speaking, conform to these powerful gender stereotypes. Victor Seidler's late-twentieth century analysis of the masculine power-base suggests, by analogy, something of the impact that this institutionalized sexual inequality may have had upon both the men of Carey's day and upon Carey's own construction as a subject and a writer. Taking a specifically Kantian perspective, Seidler begins by analysing Kant's construction of the subject and suggests that this construction leads to the normalization of a 'universalized' kind of male experience:

[Men] have inherited a historical identification of masculinity with reason and morality. This identification was central to Kant's moral and political philosophy; it is an identification with which it is crucial to come to terms, if [one is] to grasp what it means to grow up as a man in modern western culture. Kant's philosophy offers... an account of the human subject as split irrevocably between reason and desire, in which it is ...reason, and not... [inclination]... that guarantees [a man's] capacity for morality. It is... reason that allows [men] to calculate the rightness of action, through a process of abstracting from particular situations and working out whether an action is in principle universalizable. Yet the claim to objective rightness, as well as the fragmentation of the self on which it is built, and the shifting of questions of morality into the realm of abstraction, can be argued to be itself a normalization of a particular kind of masculine experience.

---

1 See Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1963), p. 323: 'though swayed by [his] passions man is endowed with reason to control them. Woman is also endowed with boundless passions; God has given her modesty to restrain them.' See also Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, cited in E. Kennedy and S. Mendus, eds., *Women in Western Political Philosophy*, (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd (John Spiers), 1987) p. 35: 'the woman should reign and the man should rule; because inclination reigns and reason rules.' See also Emanuel Swedenborg [trans. Rev. S. M. Warren], *Compendium of Swedenborg's Theological Writings*, (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1909), p. 446: 'For the man is born to be intellectual, thus to think from the understanding, and the woman is born to be voluntary, and thus to think from the will... From disposition ...the man acts from reason, and the woman from affection.' (Italics original.)

2 Victor Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 2-3. (Hereafter, Seidler 1989.) It is going too far to say that the identification of masculinity with reason was central to Kant's moral and political philosophy. Whilst Kant does indeed appear to have been the first to posit a schism in the subject between nature and reason, with the exception of one line in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, his attribution of rationality to males and 'naturalness' to females is impressionistic rather than explicit. A reading of the entire corpus of Kant's writing is needed in order to come up with Seidler's version of Kant's view of femininity. Seidler appears to have taken the view of Susan Mendus in her essay, 'Kant: An Honest but Narrow-Minded Bourgeois?' in E. Kennedy and S. Mendus eds., *Women in Western Political Philosophy*, (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd (John Spiers), 1987), pp. 21-43. (He cites her in his bibliography.) However, even she says that the view is not easy to pin down (see especially p. 39 of her argument.) Nevertheless, Seidler appears to be correct.
In short, if the only admissible kind of reason is a universalized masculine reason, then collective male experience becomes ‘a norm against which others are to be judged and found wanting’ (Seidler 1989, p.3). Seidler moves on to outline the far-reaching consequences of this enforced dichotomy within the male self:

Ever since the Enlightenment, men have sought to silence the voices of others in the name reason. Men have taken control of the public world and sought to define the very meaning of humanity in terms of the possession of reason. The experiences of women, children and animals have been closely identified as lacking reason, and being closer to nature. Women were forced to subordinate themselves to men to anchor themselves in the new world of reason and science. (Seidler 1989, p. 14)

By the late-nineteenth century, this normative male rationality had become clothed in a number of conventional psychological and behavioural guises. A significant cluster of these conventions crystallized into a system which produced an almost standardized end-product, the English gentleman. However, this notion of a standard product needs to be heavily qualified. Whilst, theoretically, certain aspects of the gentlemanly construction were deemed desirable in men of all classes, the expectation of its realization was in reality fixed upon the middle and upper classes. Leaving aside vernacular, complimentary and professional meanings, the word ‘gentleman’ is glossed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as,

A man of gentle birth; prop., one entitled to bear arms, though not noble, but also applied to any person of distinction…. A man of chivalrous instincts and fine feelings…. A man of superior position in society; often, a man of money and leisure.3

In this cluster of definitions, notions of privilege and exclusion (heredity, money and leisure) are promiscuously mixed with what are theoretically more universal psychological factors (distinction, chivalrous instincts and fine feelings). Yet even the latter imply a heritage of ‘gentle’ blood and access to education and opportunity. Thus, the attribution of morality (via reason) to all men becomes transmuted into the notion that morality is the exclusive preserve of men in the middle and upper classes. In effect, ‘silencing’ the voices of others in the name of reason becomes not just a silencing of women but the silencing of large numbers of supposedly ‘ungentlemanly’ men.

---

3 In drawing attention to the Enlightenment legacy of the investment of rationality primarily in the male. Similar claims are to be found in both Rousseau and Swedenborg. See note 1 above.

Seidler uses Kant as a basis for deconstructing Enlightenment notions of male and female rather as a basis for structuring his own more open notion of a plurality of masculinities. To avoid the kind of universalization which he considers to be so damaging to both men and women, he goes so far as to write much of the book in the first person. However, as the address of the book is exclusively male, he also occasionally uses the term ‘we’ in order to ‘encourage some form of mutual recognition and identification’ amongst the male readership. Because this kind of address makes certain passages difficult to read when they are taken out of their greater context, I have altered all quotations from Seidler 1989 to read in the third person.

It must also be born in mind that, however standardized the procedure for constructing the gentleman-product, there is no guarantee that he will conform to type in all respects. It is possible to abstract from the entry in the dictionary a recognizable notion of ‘gentleman’ based solely upon the external factors of opportunity and life-style. The vast majority of Carey’s male protagonists are gentlemen in this latter respect. However, she continually interrogates the psychological and thus moral aspects of the ideal. This chapter will therefore explore the tension between the codified behaviour of gentlemen and the actual behaviour of men as represented in Carey’s novels.

Though not so blatant as many of her contemporaries in her expression of sexual difference, Carey typically portrays men and boys dictating to, and disparaging the experience of, women and girls. For example, in *Lover Or Friend?* [1890], sixteen-year old Kester scathingly dismisses his younger sister Molly’s experience of their meeting with a hitherto unknown man:

‘I was so afraid of him at first; his eyes seem to look one through and through, even when he says nothing. But he is kind - very kind.’

‘Is that all you found out about him?’, returned her brother contemptuously. ‘That is so like a girl! Who cares about his eyes? Do you know what he is? He is a hero - he has the Victoria Cross....’

The disparity in their responses indicates that the speakers dwell in separate worlds, worlds hierarchically placed with regard to one another, in which the inhabitants necessarily have different preoccupations. The girl is initially frightened of the unknown man - she is portrayed as one who has already learnt to fear the capriciousness of the opposite sex - but is finally convinced that he is kind. Her brother does not even entertain this point of view; Molly is ‘so like a girl’ and thus her opinion may be dismissed. Kester’s interest in their visitor centres on the latter’s status as a soldier and a holder of the Victoria Cross (masculine/universal [pre]occupations) rather than on any individual traits or characteristics.

However, the outcome of the conversation is that the two young people ‘[elect] Captain Burnett to the position of their favourite hero’ (*LoF*? p. 62). Thus, their points of view are reconciled and Carey’s narrator questions neither Molly’s initial timidity towards Captain Burnett nor Kester’s ungentlemanly speech towards his sister. This would seem to imply that, for Carey, there was nothing noteworthy in either character’s response. Nor was she alone in accepting that such taunts were the prerogative of brothers. Molly Hughes, in her autobiographical book, *A London Girl of the 1880s*, notes that, during her girlhood, such snubs from her brothers were a way of life:

---

after venturing, ‘I did well in French today,’ I had the chilling reminder from Charles, ‘Self-praise is no recommendation’. If I related a joke, ‘We’ve heard that before’ would come as a chorus. Once when I confided to Dym that we had begun America, he called out, ‘I say boys, at Molly’s school they’ve just discovered America’. In short, I was wisely neglected.5

However, Victorian and Edwardian brothers appear to have arrogated to themselves more than the right to censor/censure what their sisters said. Carey’s contemporary, Charlotte Yonge, sums up the relative positions of brothers and sisters thus:

Boys are apt to be jealous of anything that engrosses their sisters to the exclusion of their lordly selves, and to have a strong love of teasing, which inspires banter after they have grown to old for the bodily tortures to which they put their little sisters... [A boy insists] on his sister’s coming up to his idea of the perfect lady... He wants to be proud of his sister... and is determined to have her refined and well dressed.6

And, indeed, a brother who fits this paradigm very closely is to be found in Carey’s novel, Not Like Other Girls [1884]. One of the major protagonists, twenty-eight year old Archie, finds it beyond his capacity to even ‘take a proper amount of interest’ in six of his seven sisters:7

He tried to ...be serenely unconscious of their want of grace and polish; but the effort was too manifest.... Isabel and [D]ottie might be tolerated, but he could easily have dispensed with Susie and Laura and Clara; he had the happy knack of forgetting their existence when he was absent from them, and when he was at home he did not always care to be reminded of their presence. He was one of those men who are very exacting to their woman-kind, who resent it as a personal injury if they fail in good looks or are not pleasant on the eye. He did not go as far as to say to himself that he could dispense with poor Mattie too, but he certainly acted on most occasions as though he thought so.8

Plainly, the fictional Archie does not feel obliged to inhabit his sisters’ world; he tries to ignore its existence. Nor, indeed, does he feel constrained to give them more than the most perfunctory attention. Thirty-year-old Mattie, the sister who keeps house for Archie, bears the brunt of his ill-humour. She is made to suffer for simply not being his only favoured sister, Grace, who cannot be spared from the family home. Many of Archie’s most scathing remarks to Mattie relate to her poor dress sense, though his motives are far from aesthetic or altruistic.

‘Oh Mattie! what a figure you look! I am positively ashamed that anyone should see you. That hat is only fit to frighten the birds.... If you have no proper pride, you might at least consider

---

5 Molly Hughes, A London Girl of the 1880s, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 [1946]), p. 3. Note how she still accepted the validity of her brothers’ behaviour when the book was published in 1946.

6 C. M. Yonge, Womankind, (London: Mozley and Smith, 1877), pp. 138-9. (Hereafter, Womankind) Though first published in 1877, it was republished throughout the remainder of the century.


8 NLOG, p. 118; p. 231. Given that she uses the word ‘woman-kind,’ it is possible that Carey was unconsciously paraphrasing Yonge.
my feelings. Do you think a man in my position likes his sister to go about like an old beggar-woman?’ (NLOG, p. 140)

Archie also takes Mattie to task for other forms of unladylike behaviour, though his priggish self-righteousness does not always go unchallenged. His condemnatory assertion, ‘I am not a gossip like you, Mattie,’ is rapidly undermined (NLOG, p. 140). His rapt attention when Mattie nevertheless proceeds to talk about their new neighbours is followed, some pages later, by the narratorial comment that ‘gossip was to [Archie] as the sin of witchcraft, unless he stooped to it himself, and then it was amiable sociability’. Thus, Carey both reproduces the institutionalized power relationship, whereby men have the right to freely criticize their sisters, and subverts it by adding that men are guilty of precisely those faults they condemn in women.

In the manner of romantic fiction, Carey’s Mattie ultimately gains some respect from Archie but even this approval remains within the bounds of the power relationship already outlined. Mattie’s initial success is due to her discovery of a good dress-maker. Though qualified, Archie’s praise of her new dress contrasts noticeably with his earlier speeches:

‘I like it excessively,’ was Archie’s comment; and then he added, with the delicious frankness common to brothers, ‘It makes you look quite a different person, Mattie; you are almost nice-looking tonight.’ (NLOG, p. 247)

However, Mattie’s crowning achievement is her engagement to a millionaire who is also a baronet. Archie’s reaction to her news is a triumph for her:

‘what will mother say?’ finished Mattie...

‘Good heavens, Mattie!’ gasped Archie... ‘I tell you what, ...I will take you down myself to Lowder Street, and see what she says... upon my word, Mattie, I was never so pleased about any-thing in my life. He is a straight-forward good fellow, I am sure of that; and you are not such a bad little thing yourself, Mattie. There!’ (NLOG, p. 470)

Yet this is clearly fantasy rather than mimesis. For Mattie, the outward trappings change: new clothes and the prospect of a titled husband turn the supposed old maid of the family into a person of consequence. Archie, her sternest critic, does not have to change his perspective or repent his previous behaviour at all. She has become what he has demanded from the first: well-dressed and worth knowing.11

---

9 See NLOG, p. 141 ‘Another time, Archie would have rebuked her for her unladylike attitude and told her... that Grace never did such things.’

10 NLOG, p. 183. See also p. 289.

11 Many unlikely female characters attain unexpected consequence by marriage in Carey’s novels, for example the slightly malformed Nest in Barbara Heathcote’s Trial [1871]. Olive in Heriot’s Choice, [1877-9], like Mattie, gains the approval of a previously cold and critical brother.
Moreover, Carey appears to have thoroughly internalized the intense androcentrism of the day and, at times, to have reproduced it without question. For example, in *At the Moorings* [1904], the heroine is made to express pity for her brother even though she shares his disadvantages:

'It must be deadly dull for a man of his intellect never to mix with his equals. And all these years he has been so patient. A woman can inure herself to monotony far more easily..."\(^{12}\)

Yet portrayals of self-depreciating women who give priority to their brothers' concerns are not always simple. Mattie in *Not Like Other Girls* infers from her brother's perpetual snubs that somehow the fault is always her own. However, in the following passage, narratorial rhetoric obliquely suggests that Mattie is accusing herself excessively, if not needlessly:

Mattie was of the opinion that - well, to put a mild term - irritability was a necessary adjunct to manhood. All men were cross sometimes. It behoved their womankind, then, ...to speak peaceably, and to refrain from sour looks, or even the shadow of a frown. Archie was never cross with Grace, therefore it must be she, Mattie, on whom the blame lay. She was such a silly little thing, and so on. There is no need to follow the self-accusation of one of the kindest hearts that ever beat. *(NLOG, p. 185)*

To summarise, Carey depicts a difficult world for women: a world which men control but decline to share; a world in which men purport to live up to a gentlemanly code but in which reality is shaped by a self-referential group which uses, adapts or abandons this code according to its requirements of the moment. However, Carey also introduces into her novels therapeutic and compensatory strategies in order to boost the self-esteem of an implicitly female reader: strategies such as subversion of male speech, inflected narratorial comment and vicarious fulfilment of fantasies. Having stated that the comfort of women living in a male-constructed world is contingent upon a code which may or may not be kept, it is necessary to examine what it meant to be a man and a gentleman in the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries.

### i. The English Gentleman

From the middle of the nineteenth century, a major component in the construction of the gentleman was the assurance and prestige to be gained from having attended a public school. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the middle-class gentleman, unlike the aristocrat, was obliged to rely upon such abstract indicators of status in lieu of more tangible kinds of inheritance:

Unlike title, wealth, or land, the terms that defined the gentleman [as opposed to the aristocrat] were not clearly and simply hereditary but had somehow to be earned by being a particular kind of person who spent time and money in particular ways. But the early prerequisites for membership in this powerful but nebulous class - to speak with a certain accent, to spend years translating Latin and Greek, to leave family and the society of women -

all made one unfit for any other form of work, long before they entitled one to chance one’s fortune actively in the ruling class.  

That is to say, the gentleman-product was obliged to produce as his ‘pedigree’ an extended and economically unproductive ‘childhood’ and the inability to engage in any work outside the parameters of the class for which he had been educated. This view of a public school education makes intelligible a remark made by Tom O’Brien, the retired shop-keeper in Carey’s novel Lover or Friend? Humbly and without irony, the financially secure though unwillingly-leisured Mr O’Brien tells his friend, Audrey,

‘I was fond of the shop - its no use denying it - and it takes a special sort of education to fit one for idleness. Even now - would you believe it, ma’am? - I have a sort of longing to finger the oats and peas again.’ (LoF?, p. 81).

Tom O’Brien thereby defines himself as a member of a respectable - and respectful - working class. However, in the real world, not all working-people-made-good were satisfied with their place. Many wanted their children to have the ‘education to fit one for idleness’ even if they could not themselves wholly acquire the concomitant status.

For at least the first half of the nineteenth century, public schools were unwholesome places, major defects being ‘the prevalence of killer epidemic diseases, the schools’ own admissions concerning the probability of ‘moral’ contamination, and... the cruelty involved in public-school life.’ Nevertheless, many parents were undaunted; there was more to be gained than lost, especially by families with social pretensions. The opportunity to board sons at suitable establishments away from home was in itself a major consideration:

Where families were using these schools as part of a process of upward social mobility, a measure of discontinuity between home and school was essential: claustration of their sons in institutions which must be as near ‘total’ as possible was a necessary guarantee of their losing the values, manners and speech-patterns of their home background and taking on those of the classes they were entering. (Honey 1977, p. 208)

The impact of such an education upon an aspiring family is dramatized in Carey’s novel, Not Like Other Girls. The fictional Dick Mayne, with his standard English accent and his excellent though unforced company manners, represents a sharp contrast to his wealthy-manufacturer father. Dick is on far better terms with his middle-class neighbours than either of his less-educated parents and, in spite of affectionate family relationships, his father freely admits to his mother that ‘[t]he lad’s a cut above us both, though he has the good taste to try and hide it’ (NLOG, p. 14). Family or social awkwardness

aside, this discontinuity with his home background, allied to his father’s wealth, ultimately gains for Dick the opportunity to marry into a family that has never been in ‘trade.’

Yet not all families sent their sons to public school wholly for the purpose of social advancement. A letter written in the early eighteen-seventies by Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham between 1853 and 1887, suggests that parents had a broad range of motivations:¹⁵

I think that it is the fixed idea of every Englishman, in the lump, that it is the thing to send a boy to a public school, and the ordinary English gentleman would think he had lost caste by not doing so. (Letter, c.1873, cited in Honey 1977, p. 146.)

Thring’s first assertion, about every English man, certainly suggests that fathers outside the gentlemanly class had aspirations for their sons, which may or may not have been related to advancement for the family as a whole. However, his second assertion, that the established English gentleman ‘would think he had lost caste’ by not sending his sons to public school, carries completely different connotations. Thring appears to suggest that, for the latter, the proper education of sons is both a matter of maintaining his family’s status and fulfilling his duty to his class.

However, as the nineteenth century progressed, the public school became valued as something more than a vehicle through which social status was acquired or retained. According to Honey, there emerged ‘a powerful new value in Victorian society which the family... was powerless to generate: manliness.’¹⁶ This new value required the development of a specific range of male behaviours. To use Honey’s somewhat quirky terminology,

The machismo which gripped the later Victorians embraced three interwoven strains: ‘anti-effeminacy, stiff-upper-lippery, and physical hardness.’ (Honey 1977, p. 209)

It was deemed that these desirable attributes could only be instilled into a boy in a setting both devoid of women-folk and away from the supposed excess of affection to be found in the home. The presence of all-male teaching-staffs and the inherent austerity and brutality of the public school system, made the public schools the ideal venue for such work (Honey 1977, p. 222). Edward Thring certainly endorsed both the asset of manliness and the notion that the public school was the appropriate location for its inculcation. He is on record as saying that, ‘[t]he whole effort of a school... ought to be directed to

¹⁵ Thring was himself educated at Eton. Of course, he cannot be uncritically viewed as representative of the entirety of Victorian thought on the public schools. However, as a product of the public school system, as one who spoke to his own pupils and their parents, and as a Victorian, his perceptions embody some of the thought in circulation for his time.

¹⁶ Honey 1977, p. 209. For discussion about the various nineteenth-century versions of ‘manliness,’ see David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning, (London: John Murray, 1961), especially pp. 195-200. (Hereafter referred to as Newsome 1961.) In the same long chapter, Newsome attempts to chart the reasons behind the emergence of this new priority in education. See pp. 216-227.
making boys manly, earnest and true.”17 In the letter previously cited, he emphasises ‘manliness’ more strongly than social considerations, arguing that the recipient of a ‘manly’ education has a much-respected and universally applicable training for later life:

There is a very strong feeling growing up among the merchant class in England in favour of the public schools; and hundreds go to schools now who thirty years ago would not have thought of doing so. The learning to be responsible, and independent, to bear pain, to drop rank, and wealth, and home luxury, is a priceless boon. I think myself that it is this which has made the English such an adventurous race; and that with all their faults... the public schools are the cause of this manliness.18

Thus, a young gentlemen’s education had social implications for the family as a whole. However, for the boy himself, a sojourn at public school was far from simply being an indulgence that rich parents bestowed upon their sons. Rather, it was an essential education in the foremost values of the age.19

By implication, the man who did not undergo this lengthy and expensive training somehow lacked not only a vital ingredient in the making of a gentleman but also a vital ingredient in the making of a man. Another great advocate of ‘manliness,’ Charles Kingsley, certainly felt that, in being deprived of a public school education, he had lost a great deal. His biographer relates that,

Dr Hawtrey, head-master of Eton, who had heard of the boy’s talent, was anxious to have him at Eton; and Dr Arnold would have welcomed him at Rugby; but his parents decided otherwise. Charles deeply regretted this decision in after life, as it was his own conviction that nothing but a public school education would have overcome his constitutional shyness.20

On a similar though fictional note, Rosa Carey’s early novel, Barbara Heathcote’s Trial [1871], contains the very pointed moral that a less ‘manly’ education leaves its subject dangerously unsophisticated and insular. When the eponymous heroine’s favourite brother, Leigh, is rusticated (sent down) from his university for a year on account of a drunken brawl, the local squire notes that Leigh’s innocence rather than his innate wickedness has been his downfall:

---

18 Letter, c.1873, cited in Honey 1977, p. 146. This passage also cited in Newsome 1961, p. 222. Thring and Sedgwick are probably not as far apart in their views about the usefulness of a public school education as initially seems to be the case. Undoubtedly public school boys were still at their lesson-books at the age when working-class boys took up apprenticeships. However, the former would have been employable from about the same age in any work that required a relatively high level of literacy or physical strength. Whether public school boys would have deigned to take the work is another matter.
19 What Seidler says of men in the late twentieth century is likely to have been true in the nineteenth:
If we live in a ‘man’s world’, it is not a world that has been built upon the needs and nourishment of men. Rather, it is a social world of power and subordination in which men have been forced to compete if they are to benefit from their inherited masculinity. (Seidler 1989, p. 21)
20 See F. E. Kingsley, Charles Kingsley: His letters and Memories of his Life, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890 [1883]), pp. 6-7. The biographer notes that, ‘[i]n 1831, Charles went to school at Clifton.’ However, the public school of that name was not founded until 1862.
the lad had a sort of old woman's education; he never went to school, never mixed much with other fellows; learnt from his sister's governess, or what [his father] and the vicar - an old woman himself - could teach him.... to turn a fellow like that, with all his ignorance of the world, into the midst of a gay university! - well, if he hadn't gone to the wrong... it would have been a miracle....  

By not attending public school, the fictional Leigh has lost something in terms of character development which would have permitted him to pass through university creditably.

It seems that the savoir-faire to be gained by sending a boy to public school had very little to do with academic achievement. Possibly the most famous fictional passage concerning the purpose of a public school education is to be found in *Tom Brown's School Days* [1857]. The father of the eponymous hero meditates thus:

"Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn't sent to school for that - at any rate, not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma, no more does his mother.... If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want."  

The attributes that the fictional Squire Brown hopes will be acquired by his son appear innocuous enough. However, they imply the cultivation of a whole range of concomitant attitudes and behaviours. Bravery suggests the need for confronting danger, possibly culminating in fighting for one's country; helpfulness and truth-telling suggest the ideals of chivalry; Englishness implies racial awareness and patriotism, and Christianity a type of diffused moral and social conduct. Thomas Hughes enumerates many of the most positive elements of mid-nineteenth century manhood for his ideal English gentleman. Yet, in spite of the strong rational/moral tone running through the passage, the quality of cultivated intelligence is notably absent from the final list. It seems that reason, far from being a deductive process based upon formally learnt principles, is largely represented as the will to conform to certain modes of 'moral' conduct.

Many of Carey's public school products appear to fulfil the requirements of the fictional Squire Brown, even to the extent of not betraying an excessive amount of intellect. Twenty year old Dick in, *Not Like Other Girls*,

---


22 'An Old Boy' [i.e., Thomas Hughes], *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1898 [1857]), pp. 60-1. Hughes' tale was based upon the system of education at Rugby. However, according to Honey, Hughes' view of the school was both personal and idiosyncratic (see Honey 1977, pp. 1-2). The reason for quoting Hughes' classic here is that it gained great popularity and came to represent the public school discourse in itself.
was quite of his mother's opinion, that an honest, God-fearing young fellow, who spoke
the truth and shamed the devil; who had no special vices but a dislike for early rising; who
had tolerable brains, and more than his share of muscle; who was in the Oxford eleven, and
who had earned his blue ribbon - that such a one might be considered to set an example to his
generation. (NLOG, p. 28)

Far from disputing the rationality of the public school style of education, Carey uses its peculiar canons
of achievement, taste and precept as an indicator of class between men and of learned sexual difference
in mixed company. Nor was she alone in viewing public school education in this way. A later
publication than either Barbara Heathcote's Trial or Not Like Other Girls, The Book of the Home
[1901], suggests that the beauty of a public school education lies in precisely its tangibility in the
possessor.

One of the most conspicuous positive characteristics of the public school is its high social rank. This,
combined with the organization and regime characteristic of boarding schools in this country, but most
thoroughly developed in the public schools, has given education there a peculiar and special character
which leaves its stamp on most of those who are brought under its influence.23

In other words, when a boy has been to public school, everyone knows he has been to public school. It
seems that the converse is also true, though far less creditable.24

The fictional Leigh may have been rusticated from his university for his involvement in a brawl but
fighting per se was an accepted part of public school life. At best, it rested easily amidst notions of
sporting fairness and gentlemanly honour as well as having affinities with the perpetual wars and
challenges to single combat to be found in Latin text-books. In addition, the notion that fighting was
‘natural’ in men had a powerful advocate in Thomas Carlyle::

Man is created to fight; he is perhaps best of all definable as a born soldier; his life ‘a battle and a
march’, under the right General. It is for ever indispensable for a man to fight: now with Necessity...
Scarcity... Bogs, tangled Forests...:- now also with the hallucinations of his poor fellow men.
Hallucinatory visions... in the head of my poor fellow man... make him claim over me rights which are

24 Not all of Carey’s heroes have been to public school and sometimes she appears to take issue with the
notion that a public school education is essential. Nevertheless, she is at best ambivalent about, and
sometimes critical of, those who have not been so educated. The struggling young architect in No
Friend Like a Sister, who was a ‘day-boarder at a private school,’ marries well. However, his mother
was the cast-off daughter of an earl and his uncle, who has succeeded to the title, is to ‘give him a
helping hand’ in the near future (p. 381). Ned in At The Moorings initially teaches at a grammar-
school, though public school educated. However, this is to support his mother and siblings rather than
from choice. Harvey in The Old, Old Story does not want to go to grammar school when his father
dies penniless and there is no money to send him back to Repton. Before he even meets his new class-
mates, he decides that they will be ‘cads... and not a gentleman amongst them,’ though his sister tells him ‘not
everyone of our rank in life can afford to send their sons to public school’ (p. 43). Evidence suggests that, for Carey, any
other school than public school was second best. (One of her own nephews became a master at
Uppingham.)
not his. All Fighting... is the dusty conflict of strengths, each thinking itself the strongest, or, in other words, the justest.\textsuperscript{25}

Nor did Carey fail to portray this supposedly innate bellicosity in her male characters, whether children or adults. In \textit{Lover or Friend?}, the war hero Michael Burnett is made to discuss the theory and practice of fighting with the baby-faced school-boy victor of one such altercation. The boy tells him "Jefferson minor fought me, and I licked him. You may ask the other fellows, and they would tell you it was all fair. He is a head taller than me." Michael Burnett's reply condones the fight, rewards the victor and embodies the conventions of such a contest:

'I hope you shook hands afterwards; fair fight and no malice, Willie. There's a shilling for you because you did not show the white feather in the face of the enemy.' (LoF, P. 314)

It is the presence of set rules and the act of shaking hands afterwards that makes fighting acceptable rather than disgraceful.\textsuperscript{26}

However, Michael Burnett's final remark to Willie is of the greatest interest here, for it links the boy of the present with the man of the future, and the bravery shown in the playground with the prospect of a military career once school-days are over: "You will be at the head of a brigade yet, my boy." (Ibid.). If the Duke of Wellington did not literally make the famous remark, that 'The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton,' it must have at least sounded plausible to Carey's generation.\textsuperscript{27}

Yet, by late-twentieth century standards, the narratorial comment that follows Michael's remark is somewhat chilling, even allowing for the untried enthusiasm of young boys:

all Dr Ross's lads were bitten with the military fever... each boy nourished a secret passion and desire to follow the Captain's foot-steps, [all] were ready to be hewed and slashed into small pieces if only the Victoria Cross might be their reward. (LoF?, p. 314)

Nowhere in her writing does Carey refute the logic or the fitness of this enthusiasm. However, in her 1903 novel, \textit{A Passage Perilous}, which is set in the Boer War, she has the heroine, Christian, make a

\textsuperscript{25} Thomas Carlyle, \textit{Past and Present}, ed. A.M.D. Hughes, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927 [1843]), p. 172. (Hereafter, \textit{Past and Present}.) It is possible to dispute Carlyle's notion that might is right. However, here it is only pertinent to note that the correlation between believing oneself to be right and attempting to enforce this view on another concurs with Seidler's notion of 'silenc[ing] others in the name of reason. See above.

\textsuperscript{26} It is also the placing of it within the chivalric discourse of fighting for what is 'right': see above on reason and morality and below on Carlyle's version of chivalry.

flippant speech on this very subject. Newly engaged to a soldier about to go on active service, Christian articulates her anxiety in a piece of savage humour:

"I have a friend... and I shall ask her to keep me company until... until" - here Christian’s eyes gleamed rather dangerously through her glasses - "Jack has fought all his battles, and come back minus an arm or a leg, and with the Victoria Cross." 28

The fictional Christian does not question the premises underlying such ‘bravery’. Rather, she struggles to accommodate them.

The factor that makes Christian’s outburst more emotive than the narratorial comment about ‘military fever’ in Lover Or Friend? is that Christian is speaking from a specifically female point of view; she is displaying personal emotions instead of reproducing the appropriate patriotic/patriarchal and thus universalized discourse. Her speech when someone ventures to criticise her fiancé is quite a different matter; she leaps to his defence and justifies his actions according to the dominant ideal: ‘A soldier must do his duty’ (p. 53).

In A Passage Perilous, there is a clear disparity between the emotive feminine response and the articulation of the dominant, even though both are expressed by the same person. This is contradictory but it is also identifiably human. A great deal of Carey’s appeal as a writer lies in her ability to give voice to this kind of ambivalence. She writes the text of pleasure - containing that which is constructed by men but familiar to, and popular with, women - whilst simultaneously making visible, in fictional terms, the psychological cost to women of adherence to such masculinist ideals. Carey’s valorization of a specifically feminine form of knowledge and experience in spite of its divergence from the dominant is taken up at greater length below.

In spite of the advantages of a public school career, a man’s education in the nicer points of combat, as well as upon a host of other essential gentlemanly refinements, was not gained merely by drawing analogies with sporting events and reading Latin-books. Nor did the would-be gentleman wholly take as his paradigm the modern war-hero, whether alive or recently dead. The early nineteenth century saw the re-emergence and restoration to favour of the mediaeval ideal of chivalry, a phenomenon which was initially a means of conspicuous consumption for the rich but which became a diffused mode of thought and conduct which permeated a much larger proportion of society as the century progressed.29 Mark Girouard summarises the diffused phenomenon thus:

29 There is a role for women in the chivalric discourse (albeit a passive one). However, the current discussion is confined to men. See Girouard 1981, Chapter 2, passim., for details of the early part of the revival. Key nineteenth century manifestations included the mass publication of Scott’s novels and,
[H]ow gentlemen lived and died was partly determined by the way in which they believed knights had lived and died. All gentlemen knew that they must be brave, show no sign of panic or cowardice, be courteous and protective to women and children, be loyal to their comrades and meet death without flinching. They knew because they had learnt the code of the gentleman... through advice, through example, through what they had been taught at school or by their parents, and through endless stories of chivalry, daring, knights, gentlemen and gallantry... told by way of history books, ballads, poems, plays, pictures and novels. (Girouard 1981, p. 7)

Carlyle was one of the many nineteenth-century writers who helped to create an intellectual environment in which the chivalric ideal could flourish as practice. Having encouraged men to believe that it was in their nature to fight, he also gave them a rationale for viewing their bloodletting in positive terms:

Under the sky is no uglier spectacle than two men with clenched teeth, and hellfire eyes, hacking one another's flesh; converting precious living bodies, and priceless living souls, into nameless masses of putrescence... How did a chivalry ever come out of that; how anything that was not hideous, scandalous, infernal?

...let us remark ...how, in these baleful operations, a noble devout-hearted Chevalier will comfort himself, and an ignoble godless Bucanier and Chactaw Indian. Victory is the aim of each. But deep in the heart of the noble man it lies forever legible, that, as an invisible Just God made him, so will and must God's Justice... ultimately prosper in all controversies and enterprises and battles whatsoever. Blessed divine Influence, traceable even in the horror of Battlefields and garments rolled in blood: how it ennobles even the Battlefield; and, in place of a Chactaw Massacre, makes it a Field of Honour!30

Thus, according to Carlyle, the chevalier or knight may assure himself that victory is assigned to the righteous by a beneficent God. This conviction of 'God's Justice', to be found 'deep in the heart of the noble man' transforms any battle, brawl or skirmish into a Christianized version of the Jihad.31

Carlyle's *Past and Present*, written in 1843, was immensely popular throughout the nineteenth century. However, he was not the only person to write about chivalry; nor, indeed, was he the first. Kenelm Digby's influential attempt at codifying chivalric behaviour, *The Broads tone of Honour*, had been published in 1822 and continued in print in various editions until at least 1877.32 In the course of the century, this predominantly anecdotal book was praised by such diversely motivated men as William Wordsworth, John Ruskin, William Morris and Sir Robert Baden-Powell.33 The early part of the

---

30 Carlyle makes the assumption that knights always fight from 'right' motives. However, once again, a notion of male rationality may be seen to 'silence others in the name of reason.'


century had also brought forth the poetry and novels of Sir Walter Scott and Tennyson’s mediaeval romances.34

It was therefore virtually impossible for Carey to avoid allusion to the chivalric discourse when she created her male characters. Indeed, the plots of at least two novels are partially framed by Arthurian legends, probably as mediated by Tennyson. However, in neither case does Carey simply lift an entire plot or character and re-present a mediaeval drama in Victorian dress. Michael Burnett, hero of Lover or Friend?, appears to have been founded on some lines from Tennyson’s Guinevere though not from the re-writing of a named knight. Rather, he embodies the knightly attitudes and behaviours required by the oath of fealty to King Arthur.

To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her.... 35

Indeed, each of the requisite virtues of a knight is indicated in his character even if it only finds expression in a minor way. Michael’s reverence towards his monarch is proven by his military service; he upholds Christianity (albeit viewed as protestantism) against the irreligion (which ultimately develops into Roman Catholicism) in another character, Mrs Blake; and yet he will not permit his fictional cousin Geraldine to slander Mrs Blake merely upon hearsay. Redressing human wrongs takes the form of confronting Mrs Blake about the husband she has deserted and the deceit she is practising upon her three children.

Perhaps of most importance to the female reader, Michael is constructed as chaste and as having ‘love[d] one maiden only’, worshipping her from afar for many years and desiring not so much fame as

34 Scott was in print from 1804; Digby from 1822. Carey had certainly read Scott if the quotations from his novels that she uses as chapter headings are any kind of guide. For example, chapter LI of The Old, Old Story [1894] is headed by the lines ‘I cannot tell how the truth may be;/I say the tale as ’twas told to me.’ She attributes the lines to Scott but does not give the precise source.

the means with which to marry her. From very early on in the novel his knightly devotion to his lady is made explicit:

Michael was her ally - her faithful, trusty ally. No knight sworn to serve his liege lady had ever been more zealous in his fealty. (LoF?, pp 47-8)

Throughout Lover or Friend?, Michael consistently embodies the fictional King Arthur’s undifferentiated ideal. However, the strikingly-named Launcelot Chudleigh, a central character in Only the Governess [1888], is constructed from two discrete, named characters: his namesake, the knight Sir Lancelot, and the more historically authenticated figure of the Chevalier de Bayard. Each of these earlier sources is utilized in a single phase of the novel.

In the first stages of the narrative, Carey’s Launcelot makes advances towards a married woman. However, unlike Tennyson’s adulterous couple, this Lancelot and his lady are innocent. Mrs Thorpe, alias Miss Rossiter, has reasons for wishing to represent herself as a single woman but these do not include the desire to be unfaithful or bigamously married. She has given Launcelot no encouragement and confesses her married state at the earliest opportunity. The unfortunate Launcelot Chudleigh is even less to blame; he believes that he is paying his addresses to a woman who is free to hear them.

It is at this pivotal point in the narrative that the governing paradigm changes. When Carey’s Launcelot discovers his (pardonable) mistake, he determines to restore Mrs Thorpe to her husband. Thus, the metaphorical adulterer, Sir Lancelot, becomes King Arthur’s ideal knight in his efforts to ‘ride abroad addressing human wrongs.’ However, because he is both noble-minded and innocent, he can also be ascribed the qualities of the Chevalier de Bayard, who was sans peur et sans reproche. Indeed, the chapter in which Launcelot makes his resolve is entitled ‘A Modern Bayard’.

It is notable that, whilst Carey draws upon literary texts about mediaeval chivalry, the aspects she chooses for repetition are partial and carefully chosen. There are two likely reasons for this selectivity. One is that, although knights in the abstract were brave and courteous and, above all, popular with audiences, knights in the specific tended to be sexually promiscuous, violent and petty. Even Tennyson’s ameliorated Geraint is extremely discourteous to his Enid; even Tennyson’s Lancelot is guilty of

\[\text{Footnotes:}
36\text{ For details of the original Chevalier de Bayard, see, for example, Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, Tenth revised edition, (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 81. Several other historical figures have been alluded to by the name, for example, Sir James Outram (1807-70) was known as the Bayard of the Indian Army.}

37\text{ R.N. Carey, Only the Governess (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917 [1888]), Chapter XXIV, is entitled ‘A Modern Bayard’. (Hereafter, OTG.)} \]
adultery. In short, Carey bowdlerized mediaeval chivalric stories in order to make them suitable for representation in a context of virtuous domesticity.

A second likely reason for Carey’s selectivity is that she wished to create individualized male characters who were recognizably living in the nineteenth or early-twentieth century. It was not sufficient for such characters to be brave, courtly and errant; they were also required to conform to a host of contemporary customs and minor morals. In particular they were required to be domesticated, though this did not involve servicing the household in any way. Rather, it entailed playing various affectional and hierarchical roles within the family. Above all, Carey’s fictional males were obliged to be explicitly modern lovers, and to be seen negotiating the social mores surrounding the courtship rituals of their fictional and non-fictional peers.

In the fullness of time, the chivalric ethos within nineteenth-century society gave rise to modern chivalric myths, these gaining wide currency and popularity via media coverage. Such media reports functioned as more than tales of heroic deeds to be read about; they also embodied both desirable and possible behaviours for emulation if the need arose. Few men amongst the general readership could turn their homes into baronial halls or host mock-mediaeval jousts; even fewer could boast noble blood or superior position in society. However, chivalric ideals such as defending the weak and showing deference to women were available to all men.

One of the best-known media myths during Carey’s lifetime was that of the wreck of the Birkenhead, a troop ship which sank off the coast of West Africa in 1852. According to one account, after the women and children were put into the lifeboats,

The roll of the drum called the soldiers to arms on the upper deck. The call was promptly obeyed, though every man knew it was his death summons. There they stood, as if on parade, no man showing restlessness or fear, though the ship was every moment going down, down.

This is not to say that incidents detailed in newspapers, periodicals, school-books and so on were untrue, merely that they were constructed within a mythic paradigm. The term ‘myth’ is used here much according to Ninian Smart’s definition, though without the overtly religious overtones:

[It is convenient to ... include not merely stories about... the gods... etc., but also the historical events of a religious significance in a tradition... without prejudice [as] to whether the stories accurately describe what actually occurred in history. [Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, (Glasgow: Collins, Font Paperbacks, Ninth Impression, May 1979), pp. 18-19.]

Thus, the modern chivalric myth may be seen as a story neutral as to truth or falsity, which is based upon an historical event and which is believed to be significant in terms of the (new) chivalric tradition. Barthes’ semiological and psychological approach to myth is less useful than Smart’s sociological approach in the present context.

A similar version of the story is cited in Samuel Smiles’ popular work, *Self Help* [1859]. Smiles’ version concluding, somewhat sententiously,

> not a heart quailed; no one flinched from his duty in that trying moment... Down went the ship, and down went the heroic band... Glory and honour to the gentle and the brave! The examples of such men never die, but, like their memories, are immortal.  

The accounts are almost formulaic in both content and vocabulary, or, at the very least, reminiscent of a host of similar myths put into straight-forward literary form. However, they are represented as unmediated fact.

Carey makes interesting use of both the myth of the Birkenhead and a similar modern myth of her own devising when illustrating the behaviour of Michael Burnett, the soldier-hero of *Lover Or Friend?* She appears to have in mind the wreck of the Birkenhead when she makes him ponder over ‘a story he had once read. Was it the wreck of the Royal George, he wondered?’ She has him both assert the non-fictional status of the story, ‘The name of the vessel escaped him, but he knew the story was a true one; it had really happened.’ and phrase his recollection in language remarkably similar to that of Smiles:

> She was a troop ship, and there were hundreds of brave soldiers on board; and when they knew there was no hope, the officers drew up their men on the deck, just as though they were on parade; and the gallant fellows stood there, in rank and file, as they went down to their watery grave.
>  
> ‘And not a man flinched, you may depend on that’, he said, half aloud; ‘for they were Englishmen, and Englishmen know how to die.’ (*LoF?,* p. 254)

Michael’s recollection of the story immediately follows his discovery that the woman he loves is about to marry someone else. Thus, his opportunity for emulation of the myth comes, not in this instance because he must face imminent death with equanimity, but because he is in a situation in which he must be gallant and not flinch. The moral he preaches to himself via this story is that he must face the future as those other soldiers faced death: as a man and as a gentleman. The final line of this interpolated story, ‘for they were all Englishmen, and Englishmen know how to die,’ is a reiteration of its purpose,

---


41 Tennyson’s *The Charge of the Light Brigade* expresses similar sentiments about those who go to their deaths honourably, as does Cowper’s *Loss of the Royal George*. For Tennyson, see *Poetical Works*, p. 277. For Cowper, see note 42. The sinking of the Birkenhead was not the only famous media account of bravery and disaster to be written within this paradigm. Accounts of Scott’s expedition to the South Pole and the sinking of the Titanic are similarly stylised. See Girouard 1981, pp. 2-6.

42 A troop-ship called the Royal George was indeed wrecked in 1782, with the loss of eight hundred lives. William Cowper commemorated the event in a poem in the same year. However, Cowper’s *Loss of the Royal George* does not state that the soldiers lined up on deck as the ship went down. See F. T. Palgrave, *The Golden Treasury*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), pp. 148-9.
which is to remind Michael of the behaviour and sentiments appropriate to the occasion; *en passant*, it reminds the reader that Michael, too, is an Englishman.

Shortly afterwards, Michael repeats the story of the wreck to sixteen year old Kester, the narrator subsequently adding that 'he told it very well, too' (*LoF?*, p. 254). From this latter cue, the reader may assume that Michael has already assimilated the prescribed qualities of mind. However, his victory over himself is further endorsed by Kester. Recalling Michael's words the following day, Kester works out the contemporary significance of the story, and to the words 'for they were Englishmen, and Englishmen know how to die,' adds the mental rejoinder, 'Ah, and to live, too.' (*LoF?*, p. 256). At this point, the reader is called upon to judge Michael's reaction to his painful situation against the standard of the English soldiers in the story and to decide that he meets the challenge in all respects.

However, this situation, in which continuing to live requires as much courage as facing death, merely parallels an earlier challenge against which Michael has already triumphed. Michael has gained his Victoria Cross for protecting wounded colleagues against enemy attack during the Zulu wars, this distinction being achieved at the expense of permanent disability and the loss of his career. Carey confines the precise details of the skirmish to a single emotive paragraph which fulfils all the requirements of a modern chivalric myth but she devotes considerably more space to Michael's courage in dealing with the physical and emotional cost of his heroism.43

Carey thus extrapolates from within these modern myths a brand of 'domestic' courage which is comprehensible to the female reader and which fits plausibly into the female sphere of the home. Facing death by drowning [the example provided in the myth of the Birkenhead] translates into facing a life of shattered hopes. Similarly, facing the enemy in the course of a battle [an albeit fictional account of winning the Victoria Cross] is transmuted into heroically facing the enemies of disability and despair.44

---

43 [In the dim light of the flickering watch-fires, he saw dusky figures moving in the direction of a hut where a few sick and wounded men had been placed. There was not a second to lose; in a moment the poor fellows would have been butchered. Calling out to some of his men to follow him, and not perceiving that he was alone, he tore through the scrub, and entered the hut by a hole that served as a window. The thought of the few helpless wretches writhing in terror on their pallet beds behind him seemed to give him the force of ten men. 'They shall pass only over my body! God save my poor fellows!' was his inward cry, as he blocked up the narrow doorway and struck at his dusky foes like a madman. (*LoF?*, p. 31)]

44 The allusion to Tennyson's Sir Galahad, 'My strength is as the strength of ten Because my heart is pure,' is unlikely to have been missed by nineteenth century readers. See *Poetical Works*, p. 126.

Evidently, in his fight with disability, Michael is emulating his own earlier heroism. However, the principle remains the same. An example of 'domestic' courage analogous to the more traditional chivalric myth is to be found in R. N. Carey, *Sir Godfrey's Granddaughters*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1899 [1892]), p. 393. (Hereafter *SGG.*) In this episode, Alick Lyall delays his forthcoming marriage indefinitely so that he can use his entire stock of savings to pay off his brother-in-law's debts. The 'lady' in question is his fiancee:

No lady of olden times felt her heart swell more proudly, as she watched her knight ride forth to tilt or tourney with her colours floating from his lance, than Gerda felt as she stood there looking at Alick Lyall. Was ever a knight more valiant? she thought. Had he not triumphed over the hydra-headed monster of selfishness? Was he not going forth to ransom the weak and helpless? Would she not wait gladly, thankfully, for half a lifetime for one so sead and faithful?
Michael may thus be viewed as the perfect gentleman, one who is brave under all circumstances, on and off the literal battlefield; one who conforms to the ideal, as Carlyle would have it, ‘thou shalt be strong, and not in muscle only, if thou wouldst prevail!’

ii. The Community of the Male

In summary, Carey’s fictional gentleman bears the ‘stamp’ of a public school education though he is unlikely to be especially erudite. He is almost certain to have been inculcated with notions of sportsmanship and proper fighting spirit; and he will be well-versed in myths of chivalry, both ancient and modern. However, in line with the non-fictional world of Carey’s time, even when the appropriate compound of knowledge and experience has been imbibed by the fictional male, this is no guarantee of consequent gentlemanly behaviour and attitudes.

The reason for any apparent disparity between education and subsequent conduct is that the human subject is open to influences other than the formative power of concrete institutions such as formal schooling. The subject is influenced by messages (referents) from individuals and also by less visible institutional forces such as peer-group pressure. In Lyotardian terms, one referent or institution may cut across another, thereby interrupting the possible connexions between the theoretical deployment of a learnt code and the subject’s actual response to it.

Put more plainly, the most efficient mechanism in society for the dissemination of chivalric referents, the public school, was also responsible for undermining a central tenet of chivalry per se. For, from the late nineteenth century, the public school provided, for those associated with it, an on-going sense of community and affiliation which had the power to cut across both family ties and alternative value systems:

In... being a community which could exercise an emotional hold not only during schooldays but for life, the public school became an alternative to the Victorian family as a reference group - “an

---

45 Past and Present, p. 173.
46 ‘No one... is entirely powerless over the messages that... position [them] at the post of sender, addressee or referent.’ Yet language-game ‘partners’ are also displaced by the messages that traverse them, in perpetual motion. Each language partner, when a move pertaining to [them] is made, undergoes a ‘displacement,’ an alteration of some kind that not only affects [them] in [their] capacity as addressee and referent but also as sender. (J. F. Lyotard, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, The Postmodern Condition, Theory and History of Literature, Vol.10, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p 16).

Thus, a premise formulated from one conversation (act of communication between individuals) may be modified by another, the effect being to modify an existing state of mind and, by extension, modes of behaviour. However, powerful institutions are also modifiers of the individual.

an institution differs from a conversation in that it always requires supplementary constraints for statements to be declared admissible within its bounds. The constraints function to filter discursive potentials, interrupting possible connections in the communication networks; there are certain things that should not be said. (Ibid., p. 17, My emphasis.)

In that there is frequently a gap between theoretically desirable modes of male behaviour and their realization, Carey’s fictional version of the male subject is as fragmented as his non-fictional counterpart. This is not to say that she perceived a fragmented subject, merely that she attempted to portray what she saw.
expression of shared perspectives, value systems, group norms etc.” used by those members who identified themselves with it “as a standard for self-evaluation and as a source for [their] own personal values and goals”. (Honey 1977, p 157; punctuation original.)

However, the localized matrix of traditions and relationships that made up the public school had a consequence beyond that of equipping individual boys with a life-long ‘standard for self-evaluation.’ As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, public school was ‘a crucial link in ruling-class male homosocial formation.’ Indeed, the ‘shared... value systems’ of the public school promoted a certain freemasonry amongst public-school products once they had become full members of the ruling class, and resulted in instances of collusion and exclusion. In particular, women were marginalized for, although the chivalric ideal posited a particular notion of reverence towards women, it had a much stronger orientation towards the cultivation of manly qualities such as toughness and anti-effeminacy. In short, chivalric ideas and practices encouraged those who possessed them to identify with each other in a community of the male.

The aspect of the chivalric code relating to women was therefore undermined from within the very structure that cultivated it. Chivalric behaviour towards women might have made a man into a gentleman but ultimately a gentleman was responsible to his peers and not to the object of his chivalry. Carey observes this latter phenomenon throughout her novels but perhaps most perceptively in *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters* [1892]. When the fictional Alick Lyall discovers that his beloved sister Hester has been brought to financial ruin by the debts of her gentlemanly loafer of a husband, he initially judges the miscreant in terms of chivalry and manliness, the values of his education and class: “...to call yourself a man, and to bring the woman you swore to protect to this bitter disgrace!” However, this denunciation is followed by one even more damning, one in which he directly invokes the self-referential community of the male: “‘Every honest man will cry shame on you!’” At this point in the narrative, Hester herself is virtually forgotten.

In this fictional episode, recourse to the community of the male is benign in its effect upon a woman. The active man in the case draws upon values that not only condemn the unworthy but also aid the victim. However, this is not an invariable outcome in Carey’s novels. Nor have such positive outcomes

---

47 Sedgwick 1985, p. 176. Sedgwick defines the word ‘homosocial’ as ‘social bonds between persons of the same sex’ (Sedgwick 1985, p. 1). In her theoretical first chapter, she writes more extensively about the implications for women of homosociality in general:

[The] status of women, and the whole question of arrangements between genders, is deeply and inescapably inscribed in the structure even of relationships that seem to exclude women - even in male homosocial/homosexual relationships... [In] any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power.... (Ibid., p. 25)

She explains her use of the word ‘desire’ in the following terms:

For the most part, I will be using “desire” in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of “libido” - not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship. (Ibid., p. 2.)

been frequently met with by theorists of homosociality or patriarchy per se. Citing the work of Rene Girard, Sedgwick notes that a motif frequently encountered within the European novel-writing tradition is that of the ‘erotic triangle,’ a social grouping consisting of two male ‘rivals’ and a ‘beloved’ female, in which the most powerful of the three relational bonds is the one obtaining between the two men. The male-male relationship is ‘even stronger, more heavily determined of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved.’ This perception would, in itself, be useful as a critical tool for analysing homosocial relationships in literature and, by implication, for understanding a crucial aspect of society. Plainly, the desires of the woman in such a situation are subordinated to those of both men; her value is that of an object rather than a subject. However, Sedgwick goes on to broaden the usefulness of the tool by retaining Girard’s paradigm of the male-male-female triangle and overlaying it with his more general theory that ‘any relation of rivalry is structured by the same play of emulation and identification’ (emphasis original). In aligning the parties involved in the erotic triangle with a broader range of ‘desire’-based relationships, Sedgwick provides a tool by which it is possible to analyse the power-relationships underlying all male-male-female triangles whether or not they have a basis in conventional eroticism.49

Sedgwick’s version of Girard’s triangle may be profitably used in order to place small sections of the community of the male under the microscope. To do so is valuable because it puts individualized, ‘local’ power-relationships in to sharp focus and thus highlights the androcentrism of commonly-met-with social transactions.50 For the critic to utilize the concept of the triangle is for her to confront, at

49 Citing Rene Girard, Sedgwick identifies the motif in European literature of an ‘erotic triangle’ between two male ‘rivals’ and a ‘beloved’ female:

Girard seems to see the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle as being even stronger, more heavily determined of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved. And within the male-centred novelistic tradition of European high culture, the triangles Girard traces are most often those in which two males are rivals for a female; it is the bond between men that he most assiduously uncovers. (Sedgwick 1985, p. 21)

Sedgwick appears to be using the terms ‘erotic’ and ‘rivals’ in a sense beyond their dictionary definitions. ‘Desire,’ as defined in her introduction, appears to be applicable to both terms:

For the most part, I will be using “desire” in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of “libido” - not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship. (Ibid., p. 2.)

That neither she nor Girard views these triangles as consistently and conventionally sexual is made clear on p. 23:

although the triangles that most shape his view tend, in the European tradition, to involve bonds of “rivalry” between males “over” a woman, in his view any relation of rivalry is structured by the same play of emulation and identification, whether the entities occupying the corners of the triangle be heroines, gods, books, or whatever. (Ibid., p. 23).

50 As a theory of ‘local’ (individual; ‘one-off’) groups of relationships, there is inherent within it an acknowledgement that society is fragmented and plural. Generalizations, for example assumptions about class are thus avoided. However, the notion of the community of the male is not intended to be a generalization either. It is a term used to refer to ex-public-school products in particular, not man-kind in general. Sedgwick herself builds these ‘local’ triangles into a workable model for understanding the greater forces of patriarchy in claiming that ‘large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangles’ (Sedgwick 1985, p. 25). For discussion of this latter quotation, see below. Sedgwick builds into Between Men a dialectic between sex and history (see ‘Introduction iii’). However, discussion along these lines is outside the scope of this thesis. A kind of compromise is attempted here in that, although it might appear that ahistorical aspects of theory have been quoted, wherever possible, historical contexts are supplied upon its direct application.
close quarters, a scenario in which two named, or at least individualized, men engage in an exclusionary language-game that relegates a named/individualized woman from the position of interlocutor to that of a parenthetical remark; it is to view this woman, not as a fully participant sender-addressee-referent, but as a cipher, a referent only.

It is pertinent, at this point to return to Carey’s novel, *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters* and to the triangle existing between the fictional Alick Lyall, his sister and his brother-in-law. Fortunately for the woman in this particular triangle, the relationship between the two men is, on the whole, supported by mutual contempt bordering on indifference rather than by a stronger emotion such as affection or hatred. It is even more fortunate for her that her brother’s beliefs on the subject of debt coincide with her own. For, when Alick asserts the values of the community of the male against his brother-in-law (gentlemen do not behave in this way), the result is that meets the latter’s liabilities (on the grounds that these values must be upheld). That is, he quite accidentally engineers the best possible outcome for Hester. In an alternative scenario, she might have emerged as the victim for a second time as the two closest males in her life made her wretched over either their collusion or their acrimony.

The relationships between Philip Worsley, Lord Joslyn and Bonnie Redford in Carey’s novel, *My Lady Frivol* [1899] may also be illuminated by reference to this concept of the male-male-female triangle. In one episode in particular Carey ably illustrates that, even if rival males are acknowledged to be gentlemen, a woman’s safety and comfort are not guaranteed. At a quiet evening party arranged by Bonnie’s uncle, the conceited Philip Worsley is permitted to tease Bonnie with attentions that are manifestly unwelcome whilst Lord Joslyn apparently allows his sporting instincts to overcome the chivalric ideal of protecting a woman from annoyance.

Bonnie was... telegraphing for assistance; but he did not appear to understand her signals. Joslyn could be dense when he chose. ‘Noblesse Oblige,’ he muttered to himself; ‘one can’t interfere with another fellow’s innings, even if he be a cad; Bonnie must get out of the hole as best she can....’

It is possible to discern two competing motivations behind Lord Joslyn’s use of the term, *noblesse oblige*, both of which would be justifiable to his peers in the community of the male though dubious from other perspectives. Either he is privileging the feelings of one of his peers over the feelings of a lady or he is punishing the lady because he feels personally affronted. Perhaps elements of both motivations apply. Joslyn has, on a previous occasion, seen Bonnie flirting with her tormentor. Thus,

---

51 *My Lady Frivol*, (London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1899]), p. 201. Her tormentor should also have taken the hint. It is difficult to find direct allusions to ‘pestering’ in etiquette books. However, rhetoric suggests that women should always have the choice of whether to respond to male overtures. See, for example, Mrs Humphrey, *Manners for Men*, (Exeter: Web and Bower, 1979 [1897]), p. 13.
when he abandons her in her difficulty, he may be seen to be exercising a form of petty revenge on her and rationalizing his behaviour by reference to sporting fairness. Yet even this revenge or punishment is justifiable to the community of the male because Joslyn, as one of their rational/moral number, is accorded the right to judge female behaviour.

However, Lord Joslyn is not the villain of the piece; that role is reserved for the boorish Philip Worsley; and the moral of the story lies not in the conduct of a cad but in the misconduct of a lady. The incident intimates, via Bonnie’s unseemly behaviour and consequent discomfort, that a woman is better protected by her own modesty than by her male friends.

Yet Sedgwick does not confine the application of triangular theory to commentary on groupings of characters within literature, potent though it is for highlighting the subordinate position of fictional women in their most significant relationships. Rather, she uses it to build a more general theory of patriarchal relations. She allies triangular theory to Heidi Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy:

Heidi Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy in terms of “relationships between men[,]”... in making the power relationships between men and women appear to be dependent upon the power relationships between men and men, suggests that the large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangles described most forcefully by Girard and articulated most thoughtfully by others.52

Then from this resultant, more general, proposition Sedgwick moves on to complete her theoretical basis by alluding to Gayle Rubin’s invaluable perception regarding patriarchal heterosexuality and woman-as-commodity:

Gayle Rubin has argued... that patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or other form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men. For example, Levi-Strauss writes, “The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners.” (Sedgwick 1985, pp. 25-6)

Thus, the crucial theoretical insights discussed by Sedgwick, in Between Men, amount to two closely related propositions: that solidarity among men enables the domination of women and that solidarity among men is cemented by the use of women as a means of exchangeable property. The latter transactions seldom become as visible as the workings of a slave-market but they are certainly to be found, even in the pro-woman novels of Rosa Carey. The irate brother in Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters effectively buys the quiescence of a deficient husband and thereby gains the right,
properly a husband's, to regulate the affairs of the entire family. Similarly, regardless of his motivation, when the sporting Joslyn in *My Lady Frivol* refuses to rescue Bonnie, he effectively makes a gift of her to a fellow male, quite ignoring her own best interests.

However, perhaps the most obvious example of 'traffic in women' is to be met with in Carey's novel, *Lover or Friend?* The situation fits well with Levi-Strauss' interpretation of marriage as a transaction in which 'the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners,' though it is about the prevention of a marital alliance rather than its fulfilment. When it is discovered that the personally impeccable and totally unsuspecting Cyril Blake is possessed of a disreputable mother and a criminal father, the males of his fiancée's family deem it necessary for the engagement to be broken. Notably, his fiancée, Audrey, is not enlightened about this change in her circumstances until *three days after* the discovery is made. In the intervening period, a number of momentous transactions by way of fact-finding, negotiation and decision-making are undertaken by her cousin Michael and her father. However, the novel betrays more than a woman's exclusion from the decision-making process. Audrey is sincerely pitied by both her father and Michael but their own vested interests are very much in evidence. When talking to Cyril Blake's mother, Michael, who is, himself, supposed to be in love with Audrey, rushes into an impetuous speech which clearly indicates his priorities:

> you can understand it is not a pleasant business to ask these questions of a lady; but there are many interests involved, and I am like a son to Dr Ross [i.e. Audrey's father]. I am bound to look into this matter more closely for his sake and- ' he paused.... (LoF?, p. 300)

---

53 His conduct is irreproachable. However, Audrey's family are perturbed by some of his 'Irish' character traits and unfavourably disposed towards his eccentric Irish mother even before this catastrophic revelation. For discussion about his Irishness, see below.

54 Day 1
*Day-time:* Michael meets Cyril's criminal father, Mat O'Brien (p. 290).

Day 2
*After luncheon:* Mat O'Brien's identity confirmed by Cyril's mother, 'Mrs Blake'; she confesses that she is Mat O'Brien's wife but has, unknown to her children brought them up under the name of Blake (pp. 299-300).

*Evening, after dinner:* Michael tells Audrey's father the whole story. pp. 314-5

Day 3
*After breakfast:* Michael confirms 'Mrs Blake's' story with Mat O'Brien (pp. 329-30).

*Mid-afternoon:* Michael tells Cyril about his father and his true name.

*Evening, after dinner:* Audrey's father tells her the whole story, pp. 347; tells her that the engagement must be broken, p. 348.

Day 4
*Soon after 10 a.m:* an interview takes place between Cyril and Audrey's father, p. 357. Cyril assures Audrey's father that the engagement is at an end. *Later that morning:* Cyril and Audrey meet for the first time since the revelation, effectively to say good-bye to each other.

The end of the saga is a foregone conclusion in the minds of most of the male protagonists:

Michael: 'They will make her give him up' (p. 307).

Tom O'Brien (Cyril's uncle): 'She must give him up' (p. 325).

Cyril: 'They will make me give her up' (p. 340).

Audrey's father: 'you must give him up' (p. 348);

'If Cyril be the man I think him, he will give you up' (p. 348).
Audrey is relegated to the clause that is never spoken; familial relationships, specifically those involving the interests of male kin, are placed first. However, Audrey’s father is even more outspoken about the embarrassment that he thinks the disclosure will cause him personally:

Surely this hideous thing could not be true! no such disgrace could threaten him and his! ...'Of course I cannot allow this affair to go on: I must see Blake, and tell him so at once.' (Ibid., p. 315)

Thus, when says shortly afterwards, ‘I must think of my child,’ the phrase sounds somewhat hollow. It sounds even more so following his next tirade:

‘Is it likely that a man in my position would allow his family to be allied to a convicted criminal? Would any amount of hushing up render such an alliance tolerable?... I have never cared much for conventionality, or for the mere show of things; but I suppose that, in some sense, the good opinion of my fellow-men is necessary for my comfort.’ (Ibid., pp. 316-7)

Here, any sympathy for his daughter is heavily admixed with family pride and personal indignation. Nevertheless, the unfortunate Audrey is not entirely silenced by the community of the male and its own loudly-voiced priorities. She dutifully gives up all hope of marrying Cyril upon her father’s command. However, when her father attempts to represent the end of the engagement as a natural consequence of Cyril’s fine feelings, she betrays a knowledge of the other kinds of kinds of coercion underlying this appeal to conscience. The discourses appealed to by Audrey and her father are markedly different:

‘If Cyril be the man I think him, he will give you up, Audrey; he will be far too proud and honourable to hold you to your engagement.’

‘That may be,’ she answered a little wearily. ‘I know the strong pressure that will be put on him. You will have no difficulty with him; he will do as you wish. My poor Cyril! how can he do otherwise?’ (Ibid., p. 349)

The father does indeed have the power to put ‘strong pressure’ on the lover. The righteous parent has the overwhelming advantage of being the latter’s employer and as such has the power to subject him to ignominious dismissal if he will not do the honourable thing and resign from his post. Thus, with his livelihood taken away from him, Cyril is not only financially unable to marry Audrey but also reliant upon Dr Ross for references. With the additional prejudices of the middle-class community in which he moves working against him and with the implicit appeal to a shared chivalric code on the part of the males in Audrey’s family, ‘poor Cyril’ is indeed unable to ‘do otherwise.’

However, in addition to being an object of exclusion in terms of the various male-male negotiations, Audrey is also an object of exchange. To recall Gayle Rubin’s words, she is ‘exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men.’ It is only the unpleasant discovery about Cyril Blake’s parentage that arrests the bonding process that has started between Cyril Blake and the males of the Ross family. Initially, the males of Audrey’s family are
willing to acknowledge Cyril Blake as a ‘partner.’ To misquote the old adage, they give away a daughter in order to gain a son. Though disappointed with Cyril’s comparative poverty, they are even willing to mobilize the mechanisms of the greater community of the male in order to place him on a parity with themselves. Speaking retrospectively, Audrey’s father tells Michael of the plans he had made to improve Cyril’s lot:

“You are certainly not in the position in which I would wish to see my son-in-law,” I said to him; “but I will speak to Charrington, and see what is to be done.”

‘Well, I have spoken to him, and Charrington only promised the other day that he would push him on. I have no doubt at all that, with my interest and standing in the place, Cyril would have had a house in time, and Audrey’s position would have been equal to her sister’s.’

However, when Cyril’s undesirable family connexions become known, his status radically changes. Audrey’s male kin no longer wish to ‘[cement]... bonds’ with him. The gift or ‘exchangeable ...property’ of a woman is hastily withdrawn and he is told that partnership with him is no longer desired.

In this novel, Carey portrays the community of the male in its most self-interested mode. The woman is, by definition, excluded from consideration but even one of its own number is made to experience the extremes of its power of self-regulation: on one hand, nurturance of its own; on the other repudiation of the inexpedient.

iii. The Limits of a Gentleman’s Education

As members of Carey’s fictional community of the male appear to enjoy a common status by virtue of their public school education, it might be expected that, provided there is no impediment of the kind afflicting Cyril Blake, they are capable of extensive social mobility. Superficially, this appears to be the case but closer scrutiny reveals few permanent changes in social rank. Carey focuses primarily upon social groupings located safely within the middle classes. Thus, there are few aristocrats and few truly lower-class pretenders. This is not to say that all gentlemanly characters are wealthy, or even in

---

55 LoF?, p. 317. Dr Ross and Charrington are senior masters at a public school; Cyril Blake is a junior master. The ‘house’ that the latter might have expected to gain is a boarding-house for pupils at the school. This would have been a very lucrative concern and likely to have promoted good social standing. See Honey 1977, p. 301.

56 Whilst avoiding a description of the middle class, an impossible task if it is to be useful, it is possible to suggest that, in Carey’s time, its social mores included keeping servants, living at least partially on investment income, non-trade occupations for both genders, public or private education for males and education in ‘accomplishments’ for females. In relational terms, middle class status was acquired from parents or close family connexions who had enjoyed all of the above, or through the pseudo-family of the public school.

57 There are no dukes and no connexions with royalty and the few men with other titles usually fraternize with the middle classes. Sir Harry in Not Like Other Girls is a baronet but he has spent most of his life in the colonies and so is unused to aristocratic society; Sir Heber in The Household of Peter has a suitable country seat but is shy and awkward in company so mixes with few people of any class. One of
possession of a modest competence; many positively rated men live in relative poverty and the vast majority earn their own living. Nor are Carey’s middle-class men bound to specific occupations. As Jane Crisp notes, though the most approved profession is that of clergyman, the next most favoured being that of doctor, other kinds of work are given favourable mention. In *Queenie’s Whim* [1881], the major male protagonist rents and manages a quarry; whilst in *At the Moorings*, the elder sons of a family are an engineer, a solicitor and a student who is to become a schoolmaster.

Indeed, within Carey’s fictional version of society, there seem to be no well-defined rules as to who is *persona grata* and who is not. Sometimes antecedents are overlooked; at other times they are vital. Sometimes a high income is necessary and sometimes it is of no importance. A great deal is seen to depend upon the personal presentation of the contender for social status; and a great deal more on the person who is passing judgement upon him. Carey’s writing appears, in this sense, to reflect the real world, in which the composition of a social grouping varies not only according to geographical location but also according to the formality of the occasion.

However, as a manipulator of fictional plots, Carey limits the potential of an apparently open class structure by introducing plot-specific barriers to social acceptance. Thus, a theoretical social mobility is inhibited in practice. Carey’s main test of a male character’s social worth appears to be that of whether he is permitted to both marry well and gain the acceptance of his wife’s social circle. Engagements between socially unestablished men and socially unexceptionable women do indeed occur but they are rare and, in most cases, the bride more or less takes on the class status of her husband.

---


59 In *Aunt Diana* [1885] the heroine’s father owns a saw-mill; in *Nellie’s Memories* [1868], the family business is a factory; and in *Life’s Trivial Round* [1899-1900], the family have always been ‘city people.’ Clerical work carries less status and is less lucrative than the professions but it is respectable. However, ‘trade,’ meaning shop-work, is looked down upon in *Sir Godfrey’s Grand-daughters.* ‘We are no counter-jumpers, not a Lyall that I remember has ever been in trade.’

60 For example, in mid-nineteenth century Sheffield, links between landed and manufacturing interests were purely financial and formal; in Birmingham gentlemen and tradesmen dined at the same club. See Dennis Smith, *Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 32. In general terms, inviting someone to dinner was deemed more exclusive than inviting them to a garden party; and those at a private ball were likely to form a more homogenous social group than those attending a church bazaar. See *Manners and Rules of Good Society* by ‘A Member of the Aristocracy,’ (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., 1887), p. 95; p. 148; p. 85.

61 In at least two novels, the mothers of heroines are the cast-off daughters of wealthy parents. Nea Huntingdon in *Wee Wifie* marries a junior clerk, son of a curate; in *No Friend Like A Sister*, Janet Vincent, daughter of a baronet, marries a music teacher whose father was a tradesman. Amongst the younger generation, in *No Friend Like A Sister*, Hammond Keith, a farmer, marries Agnes Warburton. They are then totally cut by Agnes’ mother and brother. In *Rue With A Difference*, Pansy Thurston marries the colonial Gurth Fordham, son of a blacksmith. No-one appears to disapprove. However, they are safely disposed of in that they return to Garth’s native Australia.
Of more significance are four novels in which an unsatisfactory male party dies before the wedding can take place. For example, Garton Ord in Robert Ord’s *Atonement* [1873] is permitted to become engaged to a wealthy heiress but he dies before they can even set a wedding date. He may be seen as unsuitable to be a middle-class husband because he has neither a profession nor a private income. Nor is he even in remunerative employment. In social terms, he has the status of a minor: though treated like a gentleman he is not respected as one. Thus, his class dictates a particular set of social expectations but his personal qualities, actual status and lack of means inhibit their realization. The dilemma cannot be credibly resolved so Carey has him die heroically whilst trying to save a child from drowning in a ship-wreck.

In other novels Carey appears to ‘murder’ a major male character because he is *eugenically* unworthy of an English heroine. In such cases the character has the external requisites of a gentleman but there is something lacking: pure English blood. Carey seems to assume that there is something innately positive about being pure-bred English and other nationalities and races suffer in any comparison. She was far from being the only nineteenth-century figure to think in this way. As Terry Lovell observes in her paper, *Gender and Englishness in Villette* (1994), ‘Englishness is closely bound up with British imperialism - with colonialism both internal and external, and with a very long history of racism.’

However, Carey does not merely use the word ‘English’ as an antonym to the word ‘foreign’ either; her version of Englishness implicitly excludes or disregards many people who do not meet the requirements of an unwritten agenda relating to class. Thus, she has Audrey, the heroine of *Lover or Friend?* say that

> ‘a real honest, healthy English boy... is one of the finest things in creation.... If they work hard, they play well; every faculty of mind and body is trained to perfection. (*LoF?*, p. 13)

---

62 Garton, who wishes to be a clergyman, is supposed to be reading for his university examinations. However, he seldom does any studying. The eponymous Robert Ord and his brother Austin keep Garton between them.

63 T. Lovell, *Gender and Englishness in Villette*, in S. Ledger, J. McDonagh and J. Spencer (eds.), *Political Gender: Texts and Contexts*, (New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 37-52, quote from p. 40. (Hereafter, Lovell 1994.) A key issue discussed in the paper is that of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of separating racism from patriotism. Of equal interest in this same article is her discussion of Virginia Woolf’s famous lines, ‘As a woman I have no country.... As a woman my country is the whole world.’ Lovell posits that, Whi[l]e distancing of women from nationalism and national identity has been commonplace within feminism. Woolf’s aphorism is a comforting one for feminists, because it fosters the illusion of (well, relatively) clean hands in relation to the less acceptable facets of radical patriotism, its racism and xenophobia. It has allowed feminists, implicitly or explicitly, to align women of imperialist nations with the victims of nationalism and imperialism. (Ibid, p. 41)

Whilst Victorian and Edwardian women indubitably lacked direct access to political power, Rosa Carey’s novels provide further proof that the assumption of ‘clean hands’ is problematic. Carey was in a position of relative power by virtue of her class and her occupation. She used her status to not only make but publish influential statements, overt and implied, about the superiority of the English and the inferiority of other races/nations. She was therefore in an important way an advocate of imperialism as well as being its potential victim.
In this passage, Carey’s heroine somehow manages to conflate notions of nature (race) and nurture (education) in a way that normalizes only one kind of English boy: the product of a public school. The fictional Audrey is, at the time, observing a group of such boys, pupils at the public school where her father is a senior master. However, even if divorced from its context, this short passage may be seen to encapsulate the public school ethos. The emphasis upon games and gamesmanship and upon training body and mind to perfection implies an expensive and lengthy education in mastery rather than subservience.

Carey is likely to have imbibed this pro-‘English’ prejudice, with its dual emphasis upon race and class, from a variety of sources. Even school-books represented an inherently class-specific English superiority as unmediated fact. For example, in his *Manual of Modern Geography* [1861], the Reverend Alexander Mackay uses rhetoric which is very similar to that of Carey. The former writes,

> The most striking characteristics of an Englishman are his love of liberty, justice and independence, and his high sense of honour and fair-dealing. To think, speak, write, and act as he pleases on all subjects - so long as he keeps within the bounds of truth and charity - he claims as his inalienable right: and to maintain this liberty he evinces indomitable courage, perseverance and self-denial....

Taking into account that ‘Englishness is closely bound up with British imperialism... colonialism... and... a very long history of racism,’ Mackay’s correspondingly antithetical description of the Irish comes as no surprise:

> the brilliancy of their imagination, and their unrivalled wit, are more striking than their depth of thought or power of patient investigation.... Their prevailing vices are rashness, improvidence and a disposition to riotous excitement.... (Mackay 1861, p. 205)

And, indeed, Carey seems to have shared Mackay’s prejudice against the Irish. Her fictional Irish servants are often rough and slatternly and listen at key-holes, whilst her better-educated Irish characters are loquacious and over-emotional. Terry Lovell suggests that this kind of denigration of the Irish in the nineteenth century was ostensibly rooted in religious difference; was rooted in a clash between a politically empowered Protestant England and a colonized Roman Catholic Ireland, that already had a history covering two centuries. She goes on to say that, in the mid-nineteenth century, feeling rose even higher than this general, on-going, level of contempt; ‘[t]he 1850s saw a resurgence of anti-Catholicism and associated anti-Irish sentiment.’ It cannot have been dispelled very quickly.

---


65 Servants: in R. N. Carey, *Mary St John*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909 [1882]), p. 18, Carey finds it necessary to note that in spite of an ‘unmistakable brogue,’ the woman is ‘clean and good-tempered looking’; in *Lover or Friend?* the woman is neither. See pp. 19-20; p. 310. In each case the servant is called Biddy. Educated Irish: *At The Moorings* p. 132-3; *Only The Governess*, p. 75.

66 Lovell 1994, p. 49. See also pp. 40-1: ‘Staunchly Protestant, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century radicalism is a defence of the English revolution and the English Reformation, anti-Catholic and, by extension, all too frequently anti-French and anti-Irish.’
The Protestant-based Religious Tract Society felt confident enough to launch a ‘periodical on the Romish controversy’—called *The True Catholic*—in the late 1860s. In such a climate, it is small wonder that Carey’s antipathy towards the Irish was so entrenched.

In addition, Carey lived and wrote at a time when many believed that the difference between English self-denial and Irish improvidence was the difference between a racially innate power to reason and a racially innate propensity for insanity. An article illustrating the supposed correlation between sanity and race is to be found in *Pearson’s Magazine* in 1897. Entitled ‘Which is the Maddest Part of the Kingdom?’ the article states unequivocally that, proportionally, England and Wales have ‘fewer lunatics than they are entitled to... nearly all England’s deficiency being made up by Ireland’s excess in this matter of madmen.’ Certainly, alienists or ‘mad-doctors’ in the nineteenth century believed that there was a strong correlation between sanity and self-control. For example, Henry Maudsley, was convinced that, ‘in the wise development of the control of the will over the thoughts and feelings there is a power in ourselves which makes strongly for sanity.’ Thus, the Irish would have been viewed as innately disadvantaged. There is no way of knowing whether Carey ever read Maudsley or indeed whether she considered the Irish predisposed to madness. However, self-control and its opposite are recurrent themes in her writing.

The matter of racial difference was particularly important when it came to discussion of marriages between English women and foreign men. For, during most of the nineteenth century, English law deemed married women to be in a position of coverture (that is, they had no legal existence beyond that of their husbands) and this non-existence was largely extended to social relations. Effectively, for an English woman to have married a foreign man would have been for her to forfeit her English identity. Marriage between an English woman and an Irish man would have been especially undesirable as the Irish were not only racially distinct but also religiously unsound and predisposed to insanity. In

---

67 See the minutes of the Religious Tract Society Copyright and Joint Sub-Committees for July 15 1869 and subsequently. (Held with Records of the United Society for Christian Literature at SOAS, London University. (USCL/RTS SUB-CTEE, fiche box no. 1, item 129.) The only sub-committees minute-book from this period still extant is that for 16 Jan. 1868 - 19 Dec. 1872.
71 The problem was deemed to be less serious in the case of a foreign women marrying an English man because, under coverture, she would gain English nationality. Here, any racial deficiencies would only affect any children. See below.
nineteenth-century-fictional terms, marriage with a foreigner, especially if he be an Irishman, is often a portent of tragedy.

Even the positively-rated Cyril Blake in Rosa Carey’s *Lover Or Friend?* is not free from his Irish racial inheritance. Rather, it slowly closes in upon him, destroying his middle-class way of life and darkening the life of the woman he loves. Like Garton Ord, he becomes engaged to the woman of his choice, Audrey, in spite of his lack of both means and antecedents. He is a gentleman by virtue of both his Oxford education and his behaviour. Thus, he gains acceptance from his fiancée’s family. Initially, they overlook his Irish impetuosity and lack of capital and, to some extent, manage to ignore his eccentric and overtly Irish mother. However, they will not condone any more than this. When they discover that his mother, who has represented herself as a middle-class widow, is really the wife of a working-class criminal, their tolerance comes to an end. Thus Cyril Blake, though innocent of all knowledge regarding his mother’s deception, is debarred from marriage with Audrey and at the same time loses his professional occupation, that of schoolmaster. On the perimeter of middle-class society, Cyril fails to consolidate his position. He effectively becomes an outcast. Middle-class in outlook but debarred from his proper sphere, he belongs nowhere. Once again, Carey resolves the dilemma by providing a noble death.

The downfall of the educated and exemplary Cyril Blake is not his own fault but that of his parents. However, Carey suggests to the reader that perhaps his demise is a blessing in disguise. Adverse personality traits rhetorically add weight to his condemnation even if they do not provide the catalyst for his misfortunes. Early in the narrative it is remarked that, in spite of his goodness, he is young and unformed enough to be adversely influenced by his impetuous and overly-eloquent Irish mother (*LoF?*, p. 135). Meanwhile, his own impetuousness in speech gradually becomes apparent, this culminating in an ill-advised emotional declaration of love to his employer’s daughter (Ibid., pp. 194). In the latter respect, Cyril invites unfavourable comparison with the self-denying and heroic Englishman, Michael, who also loves Audrey but who does not declare himself because he is, like Cyril, of limited means. (It is also notable that, when Cyril and Audrey announce their engagement, Michael does not repine, for he is an Englishman ‘and Englishmen know how to die.’) Finally, Cyril needs to be reasoned into giving Audrey her freedom once it becomes apparent that the engagement must be broken. His misery temporarily blinds him to the requirements of the chivalric code, in which the position of the lady must be his first consideration. Thus, his genetic inheritance consists of more than the physical presence of a half-crazy Irish mother and a criminal working-class father. An Oxford education cannot
provide Cyril with certain qualities deemed to be innately English; cannot entirely negate his Irish racial inheritance. Ostensibly, he loses caste on account of his connexions but this is not the entire story.\(^{72}\)

A short discussion about Nigel Strath, a major character in *Barbara Heathcote's Trial* concludes this section on gentlemen and race, not because he is a product of an English public school, but because he has the distinction of being the only established member of the middle-class in Carey's forty-one novels to be an octoroon. His long-deceased father's credentials are impeccable: a career soldier who is awarded a knighthood for his services, he is descended from a family of English gentry. However, Nigel's mother is of mixed race.\(^{73}\) Thus, Carey takes up the nature versus nurture debate with a vengeance. In reading the following passage, one is left wondering how many of these un-English traits could have been counteracted had Nigel been sent to public school:

Poor Nigel, he called himself a man but there was very little of the real manhood in him after all - the real English manhood, of which [his cousin] Norman was so striking a type. The reticence and shy reluctance with which Dr Strath spoke of his feelings were quite unknown to Nigel...; perhaps the fact that there was Southern blood in his veins might offer some excuse for his vehemence and warmth of expression. His mother, despite her fairness, was a quadroon by birth... and though his father had been English, yet Nigel had received a foreign education, and imbibed foreign tastes and prejudices; circumstances had still further developed the warm Southern temperament, passionate, voluptuous, inert, which he had inherited from his mother, so that at all times his vivacity and exuberance of imagination were at striking variance with an Englishman's taciturnity....\(^{74}\)

When the doubly un-English and wealthy Nigel becomes engaged to the eponymous heroine, his suit is deemed by the bride's family to be an act of providence which will save them from financial ruin. They do not forbid the banns. Thus, once again, it seems that a genetically flawed male will be permitted access to a genetically impeccable family. However, the languid, emotional and, in many ways, effeminate, Nigel does not live to marry. Rather, he dies of heart failure and leaves Barbara to marry his robust, taciturn and wholly-English cousin, Norman. Carey's reaction to dark blood is surprisingly lacking in hysteria when one considers the age in which she lived. However, as with the subjects of her other 'racial murders,' she can afford to be tolerant because no situation is permitted to arise that would require any real toleration.

---

\(^{72}\) Another Irishman, Keefe Desmond in *The Highway of Fate* makes a rash marriage in early life. A profligate who ruins his saintly clergyman father, he eventually reforms and proposes to the wealthy Miss Jem who is nearly ten years his senior. The community of the male asserts itself (unsuccesfully) to prevent the engagement. Yet, in spite of his reform, the marriage cannot be allowed to take place; he is too unpredictable. Nor can he, in his reformed guise, jilt Miss Jem. Thus he, too, must die in heroic circumstances in order to resolve the dilemma.

\(^{73}\) No-one in the novel other than the mother, her son and the narrator appears to know this and it does not appear to affect his sister's personality or, indeed, her marriage prospects. Carey avoids the problem of diluted blood in the next generation by making his sister's marriage childless.

\(^{74}\) *BHT*, pp. 350-1. Cf. Mackay 1861, p. 161: "To a stranger [the Englishman] appears cold, reserved, blunt, and haughty; but his candour, probity, and veracity secure him the respect of all."
To summarize, Carey appears to have believed that mere membership of the English race was a positive attribution. However, when she defines her terms, it becomes clear that this membership is not automatic even amongst those with English nationality. For example, by virtue of his father’s ancestry, Nigel Strath in *Barbara Heathcote’s Trial* can be described as English. However, the narrator qualifies any such notion by first claiming that Nigel is not a man, ‘there was very little of the real manhood in him,’ and then alluding to ‘the real English manhood’ evinced by his cousin. If Nigel lacks the manhood then, implicitly, he must lack the Englishness too. Notably, Nigel Strath’s lack of Englishness is only *perhaps* attributable to his ‘Southern blood’ and Carey appears to place as much emphasis upon education as upon heredity. However, the quality of Englishness cannot simply be learnt either. Even with an Oxford education, the in many ways laudable Irishman, Cyril Blake in *Lover or Friend?*, must ever be deficient.

Carey’s use of the word ‘English’ leads to some interesting conclusions about her view of Englishness. More than mere nationality, true Englishness is a matter of both superior nature and specific nurture. That is to say, both English blood and English ‘breeding’ are advocated. For Carey, Englishness appears to be structured on the public school product, this being implicit in her description of the ‘real honest, healthy English boy,’ who is physically fit, trained to be articulate and well-versed in middle-class social mores. Thus it seems that Englishness, like the gentlemanly ideal itself, is vested mainly, if not entirely, within the articulate/powerful/reasonable male of the middle and upper classes. In short, another feature must be appended to the profile of Carey’s fictional gentleman. In addition to being sportsmanlike, chivalric and middle- or upper-class, he must be English.

iv. Men, Marriage and Money

Having looked briefly at the type of man who is (or is not) permitted to marry a middle-class woman, it is pertinent to turn to the subject of marriage and financial means. Although money does not, in itself, have a great deal to do with the construction of Carey’s fictional English gentleman, his reaction to the financial responsibility inherent in marriage provides a powerful indicator of his moral integrity. Many

75 Use of the oppositional groupings of Englishness/calmness/masculinity and foreignness/passion/femininity to portray men in literature is not unique to Carey. Charlotte Brontë had already made effective use of such dichotomies in *Villette* (1853). To quote from Terry Lovell’s *Gender and Englishness in Villette*, Graham Bretton

could feel, and feel vividly in his way, but his heart had no cord for enthusiasm: ...for what belonged to the storm, what was wild and intense, dangerous, sudden, and flaming, he had no sympathy.... Cool young Briton! The pale cliffs of his own England do not look down on the tides of the channel more calmly than he watched the Pythian inspiration of that night....

Paul Emmanuel, by contrast, is fiery and passionate, mercurial and despotic. Associated with children and with childish treats, he has all the volatility of passionate, loving but imperious child: ...in its... [his heart’s] core was a place, tender beyond a man’s tenderness; a place that humbled him to little children, that bound him to girls and women; to whom, rebel as he would, he could not disown his affinity, nor quite deny that, on the whole, he was better with them than with his own sex....

It is, perhaps, his foreignness that allows this often comic diminution of masculinity and adulthood.... (Lovell 1994, p. 45).
of the novels have amongst their great casts of characters positively rated couples who are too prudent to marry because they lack the means or because they have too many dependents. Equally well represented are those who marry without considering financial matters, though the latter are subjected to a great deal of narratorial censure.\footnote{76}

A striking feature of \textit{At the Moorings} is that both prudence and recklessness in matrimonial matters obtain within the same family. The hero, Ned, must postpone his own eagerly-anticipated marriage because his scapegrace, penniless and jobless younger brother, Ivor, brings home not only a wife but two children for him to support. Though prudent and hard-working, Ned must not think of marrying because his resources are insufficient to cover more than his immediate liabilities. The prudent, self-denying, and usually placid Ned rages over a brand of folly he would never commit himself:

\begin{quote}
'A clerk earning his fifty pounds per annum in a store and marrying on this salary - a shop-girl too! And then bringing helpless creatures into a world that has more kicks than halfpence for beggars' brats. When I think of the gross selfishness, the weak, exasperating folly of the whole thing, I feel that I can hardly trust myself to look at him.' (\textit{ATM}, p. 161)
\end{quote}

However, he is even more scathing on the subject of two children born to Ivor and his wife who did not survive their poverty:

\begin{quote}
in a sense [Ivor] is a murderer. He married and brought children into the world, though he knew he could not maintain them. Why, the very birds of the air rebuke him - do they hatch their young until the nest is warmly lined? What did that Sydney doctor say - that better air and food would have saved the boys?' (Ibid., p. 162)
\end{quote}

It is significant that Carey has him describe Ivor's behaviour as below even the 'natural' standard of unreason and amorality. According to this passage, Ivor is less than a man and deviates from even the primal standard of the brute beast.

Yet in spite of his censure, Ned provides food and shelter if not a welcoming feast for the Prodigal. This sane, judicious and charitable approach to his brother's self-induced misery - practical help without condemnation but without any sign that he condones Ivor's behaviour - indicates the stability of Ned's own character and his own suitability as a husband. This sense of both proportion and responsibility is also evident in the careful assessment that he makes of his own financial affairs before belatedly marrying the woman he loves. There will be no committing his wife to fifty pounds a year and the vagaries of chance:

\footnote{76 Some prudent couples are discussed below. To these may be added Hedley and Pauline in \textit{Only The Governess} and Pen and Walter in \textit{A Passage Perilous}. Two imprudent couples are discussed in note 51 above.}
by Easter Ivor could set up in diggings of his own. Of course I shall have to maintain [his family] until he gets into regular work; but with care and economy we might manage for a year or two.... There are still two or three hundred pounds available for any emergency. I could allow Ivor a hundred and fifty a year, or even a little more... I shall make Ivor clearly understand that the allowance is only for a time... and that he must maintain his own family in the future. I shall wish my wife and sister to live in comfort.77

The approved character, Ned, conforms to Carey's ideal of the gentleman, behaving fairly in his dealings with his brother, rationally in his financial undertakings and chivalrously in his consideration for his sister and his future wife. By comparison, Ivor, who has transgressed the gentlemanly code in most respects, is portrayed as deviant; lacking if not mentally abnormal. It is specifically stated that Ivor takes after his father, of whom it is said 'his will-power was weak and his moral sense imperfectly developed.'78 However, under the careful eye of his morally stronger elder brother, the delinquent, Ivor, is reformed, if not cured of his 'weakness.' Ultimately, he is made to conform to the normative role of provider for his family.

Throughout Carey's novels, when a gentleman contracts an imprudent marriage, he alone is accountable; very little criticism is levelled at the female party. Nell, Ivor's wife in At The Moorings, is never criticised for accepting Ivor's thoughtless proposal. Indeed, in spite of the class distinction, both Ned and his sister Sheila make a particular effort to act sympathetically towards their hitherto-unknown sister-in-law. Similarly, Ruth, who marries the irresponsible Leigh in Barbara Heathcote's Trial is treated with genuine courtesy by Leigh's father.

The apportionment of blame to only one party conforms with the notion that the rational male should act for the irrational female; but it also invokes the standard of the chivalric code, in which the welfare of the lady is the primary consideration. The narrator in Wee Wifie [1869] goes so far as to insist that, even when a woman uses every weapon in the feminine armoury, an honourable man should hold to his principles. Temptation is no defence and, if he succumbs, the fault lies with him and not with his temptress. The following passage reflects upon the clandestine marriage between a gentlemanly though impoverished clerk and his wealthy employer's young daughter:

77 Ibid., pp. 363-4. Similarly, Alick in Sir Godfrey's Granddaughters uses all his savings to save his sister from financial ruin. Thus, he prudently postpones his own marriage until he can replace the savings. He already pays life-assurance.

78 ATM, pp. 25-6. Maudsley speaks of those whose 'moral sense' is 'imperfectly developed' as being not so much 'mad' as disposed to criminality, this not being sanity either. See Maudsley 1874, pp. 24. Similarly, in Sir Godfrey's Granddaughters the cautious and economical Alick says of his profligate brother-in-law, 'There are no asylums for moral lunatics... or Julius would be a first rate candidate' (SGG, p. 381). Maudsley and others had written a great deal about a category of mental illness known as moral insanity, entailing behaviour of this type. For a selection of nineteenth century writings on the subject, See Vieda Skultans, Madness and Morals, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), pp. 180-200.
An honourable man would have nerved himself to bear her loving reproaches; would have turned sadly and firmly from her girlish sophistries, and have reproved her with a word. He would have told her that he loved her, but that he loved honour more; that he would neither sin himself nor suffer her to tempt him from his sense of right. But Maurice did none of these things; he was young and weak; the temptation was too powerful; he stayed, listened and was lost. Ah! the angels must have wept that day over Maurice’s fall and Nea’s victory.  

The result of Maurice’s ‘fall’ is the begetting of a middle class family in abject poverty and the premature death of its breadwinner. By comparison, heroes such as Ned in *At The Moorings* are eventually rewarded for their forbearance by prosperity and wedded bliss in the style of the biblical Jacob, or, to cite a different kind of ‘bible’, in the style of Samuel Smiles’ *Self Help*. The older text reflects the romantic aspect of a delayed wedding,

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her’ (Gen XXIX, 20).

However, the newer work provides the strictly rational basis of such a delay:

Economy also means the power of resisting present gratification for the purpose of securing a future good, and in this light it represents the ascendancy of reason over the animal instincts. (*Self Help*, p. 296)

Yet elsewhere in Carey’s novels, the reader finds that this rational view is questioned if not overturned. The eponymous hero of *Robert Ord’s Atonement* has been engaged for six years when he makes the following protest:

’Why will people always quote Jacob as an example?... Did Rachel’s beauty fade, I wonder? Did Jacob eat his heart out with that long waiting? Do you think it well that all freshness should wear off? Do Belle and I love each other better for knowing each other’s faults and learning painful lessons of forbearance for half a dozen years? Does not the heart grow old too sometimes?’

Carey’s novels follow the standard wisdom of the day in that the virtuous prosper whilst the imprudent are confounded. However, there is every acknowledgement that the path of righteousness is far from easy.

**v. Woman as Expert: The Gentleman at Home**

In her fiction, Carey re-presents the androcentrism of the real world but she observes that androcentrism from a specifically domestic/feminine viewpoint. As women are excluded from the community of the male, it is unsurprising that she writes at length about the *domestic* tastes, habits and vicissitudes of her

---

male characters. Whether or not intentionally, it is in such matters that Carey's novels are tailored to the experience and needs of a female readership. For, in the simple act of representing the domestic servicing of men, she affirms the importance of a time-consuming though potentially undervalued element in the existence of most women. In addition, in depicting her fictional males within the home she depicts them in their least powerful position. Though their womenfolk are dependent upon them financially, they are dependent upon their womenfolk for home comfort. Yet this is not to say that Carey invariably entertains the reader with images of perfect housewifery and gratified male consumers. In many cases, the reader is led to sympathise with a hard-working bread-winner who, having completed a day's labour receives neither sympathy nor gratitude from his family when he returns home. For example the reader can enjoy a safe and smug kind of horror when Mollie gives her schoolmaster-brother, Cyril, a cup of cold tea in *Lover Or Friend?* (p. 45). No adverse comment is passed on Mollie but Cyril's tiredness and slight depression are dwelt upon sufficiently for the reader to realise that this is not the home-coming he deserves.

However, the women in Carey's fictional families usually greet their menfolk with better grace and sociability. In *The Household of Peter* [1905], the eponymous hero's sisters always have an inviting tea-table ready for him when he returns home from work, and they always try to provide his favourite foods. Similarly, Anne Frere in *For Lilias* [1885] is always on hand when her brother needs her, though, oddly enough, her consistent good nature and reliability are most strikingly illustrated in a passage which describes a rare rupture in the usual domestic harmony:

> [Capel Frere] expected to find tea-things, a hissing urn, and Anne with a cheerful face - whether she felt cheerful or not - ready to talk to him on any subject he liked to propose.... but the candles were still unlighted, and the little square table stood in its shining blackness with no dainty white drapery, no smug tea-tray or suggestive muffineer. Instead of that, there was that most industrious of women, Anne, keeping blindman's holiday, with a brat of a child sitting comfortably in her lap, toasting its bare feet at the fire, with honest disregard of appearances.

Even if Capel Frere's peevishness is like that of a spoilt child who fears that someone else has usurped his place, the rhetoric of the scene suggests that somehow he is being defrauded of something that is his by right.

Yet, throughout her novels, Carey does more than to suggest that women have an obligation to service men. She also argues that the majority of men are incorrigibly helpless with regard to anything domestic, and thus decidedly in need of female assistance. For example, in *Rue With a Difference* [1900], the otherwise intelligent and affectionate Mr Nugent, is totally incapable of comprehending the

---


needs of his young daughter. He leaves little Phillipa entirely in the hands of her heartless grandmother and a harsh-mannered nurse even though they both ignore any suggestions he makes for her well-being. He is quite explicit about his ignorance:

‘Poor little Phil... if she were only a boy I should know how to deal with her. I am very fond of my little daughter... but I am obliged to leave her to her grandmother’s management.’

Nor does he realise that his daughter is being ill-treated. It takes another woman, Valerie, to undeceive him and to provide a solution. Valerie takes Phillipa into her own home and, by careful nursing, saves the child from a nervous breakdown.

However, Mr Nugent also requires Valerie’s help on more mundane matters. Once he has rid the house of his wicked mother-in-law, he asks for advice on how to turn it into a proper home: ‘There are limits to masculine knowledge... and the drawing-room baffles me’ (RWAD, pp. 406-7). The reader will not be surprised by the request. Having, earlier in the novel, compared his own substantial but joyless house with Valerie’s smaller but cosier cottage, Mr Nugent describes the latter as ‘a real home-nest’ and, ‘[sits] in his solitary library in the evening... [thinking] longingly of [Valerie’s] bright little sitting-room’ (Ibid., p. 236).

That women should be well-versed in the art of creating a home was hardly a radical notion for Carey’s time and her novels mirror in fiction what some of her contemporaries were publishing as fact throughout the nineteenth century. For example, the influential Charlotte Yonge, in her often-reprinted conduct book, Womankind [1877], states that,

Men can seldom, if ever, make a home by themselves, and though they can live their lives without a present one, sometimes rising above the need, sometimes falling below, it is seldom that there is not either in memory or in hope, some precious spot that has been, - nay, that still is the home of their affections, or to which they hope yet to attain. (Womankind, p. 264)

And, indeed, Carey even goes so far as to illustrate Yonge’s notion that ‘men can seldom... make a home by themselves’ by representing in her novels comfortless all-male households. However, Carey goes one stage further than lecturing women about the necessity for creating happy homes. She also

---

84 Carey actually uses the term ‘nervous breakdown’. See p. 230.
85 For details of other writers on the role of the home-maker, see Chapter IV, ‘Hearth and Home,’ passim.
86 For Carey, making a home is something that can only be achieved by a fairly leisured female and not by servants. (See Chapter IV, ‘Hearth and Home,’ passim.) In Robert Ord’s Atonement, Robert and Garton share a comfortless house with only one elderly maid-servant; in Queenie’s Whim Andrew Calcott can afford any number of ‘hirelings’ but has no-one to turn his austere house into a home; and in Mrs Romney, Rab Lockhart has a beautiful house but is desperate to get married so that he can share it with someone.
obliges at least some of her male characters to be appreciative of the genius inherent in making them.

In *Rue With a Difference*, the male, excellent in himself, is portrayed as deficient whilst the woman is the expert. Thus, when Valerie kindly lends her expertise to the inept Mr Nugent and he is appropriately vocal in his thanks. Yet passages regarding this kind of female expertise share two inauspicious features: most of the incidents are comparatively trivial and most of the men involved in them are explicitly grateful. The former suggests that Carey was unable to dissemble about female powerlessness in weightier matters and the latter suggests that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century women craved the approval of their menfolk but seldom received it.

It cannot be known with any certainty what Carey’s intentions were with regard to her readership. Still less is it possible to recover any knowledge of how (or, indeed, if) her readers employed the novels in relation to their own lives. Nevertheless, Janice Radway’s survey of readers of the late-twentieth century mass-produced romance provides, by analogy, a suggestion of how Carey’s initial readership might have responded.

Radway’s research posits a correlation between women who provide a high level of domestic servicing to others and the repetitive consumption of a certain kind of compensatory literature. As Victorian and Edwardian women were also expected to provide this kind of servicing, it may be deduced that they too sought compensation in what they read. Radway’s main conclusion is that,

> By immersing themselves in the romantic fantasy, women vicariously fulfil their needs for nurturance by identifying with a heroine whose principal accomplishment... is her success at drawing the hero’s attention to herself, [and] at establishing herself as the object of his concern and the recipient of his care.

Carey’s novels do indeed provide her readers with the opportunity to identify with heroines who are successful in this sense. However, if Radway’s theory is extended to include the concept of vicarious approval alongside the concept of vicarious nurturance, it becomes of further relevance to Carey’s writing. It permits the notion that Carey’s original readers may have immersed themselves in her fiction in order to vicariously fulfil their needs for male approval, by identifying with a heroine whose principal accomplishment is her success at drawing a male protagonist’s attention to herself, and at establishing herself as the object of his gratitude.

87 Another passage in which a man cannot do the job so a woman takes over is to be found in *At the Moorings*. A neighbour of the main male protagonist sets herself the task of making his study habitable.

Mr Lassiter might be a learned professor, but in the arrangement of furniture he was lamentably deficient in taste; it would only be kind and neighbourly to rectify his mistakes... Ned’s private and particular sanctum was quite transformed into a comfortable and orderly study.

There, doesn’t it look nice!” exclaimed Betty, flushed but radiant... And in sheer honesty and gratitude Ned was forced to agree with her. (ATM, p 19)

Conclusion: Compensation, Comedy and Coping Strategies

Though, in her novels, Carey appears to be totally aware of the institutionalised version of masculinity, she constantly undermines it. She does not humiliate men; she merely betrays the knowledge that she has discovered weaknesses in their generally serviceable armour of superiority and rationality. However, she does something more within the temporary space that her novels create for women than simply expose male weakness. She helps the reader come to terms with the 'man's world' in a number of ways, not least by taking the occasional humorous glance at the so-called masters from the position of omniscient observer rather than that of controlled subject. For example, in *Not Like Other Girls*, Carey makes a fictional contest between three men for the controlling interest in the all-female Challoner family completely absurd.

Archie Drummond is initially complacent about his position. As a clergyman, he has the perfect excuse for visiting the family and for offering advice. However, his assumption that he is without competition soon proves to be unfounded;

“They have not a man belonging to them’, he had said triumphantly, and then that odious Dick had turned up, and now this extraordinary-looking being who called himself Sir Henry Challoner. Archie took down the ‘Peerage’ when he got home.... He found the name there all right. (LoF?, pp. 383-4)

He later says of Sir Harry, ‘I like quality better than quantity.... He is so big, I am sure his brains must suffer by comparison’ (Ibid., p. 415). Meanwhile, young Dick Mayne, who is engaged to one of Mrs Challoner’s daughters, also resents the competition. The vicar merely inspires his envy -'such a handsome beggar, too - a prig, one can see that from the cut of his clothes and beard!'- but Sir Harry makes him feel positively violent (Ibid., p. 291).

Mrs Challoner...was... heard to say that she almost loved [Sir Harry] like a son - a speech that... made him excessively angry. 'I should like to kick that fellow’, he growled... But then Dick never liked interlopers. (Ibid., p. 396)

Even the genial Sir Harry is displeased to find that one of his womenfolk is engaged to Dick, whom he deems to be 'somewhat insignificant' (Ibid., p. 387; p. 430). The reader, though enmeshed in an androcentric society, can enjoy reading about the clashes precisely because the three men have no rights in the matter and because the Challoners are totally unaware of these male rivalries. When Carey gives reign to her humour at male expense in her novels, she neither attacks nor alters the fundamental male
power base of Victorian society. However, women are invited to share in the knowledge that a man's sense of his own importance does not necessarily meet his power to act.89

In inverting the cultural myth of masculine as normal and rational and in privileging the female perspective, albeit intermittently, Carey is likely to have alienated any male readership. However, in the mid-nineteenth century almost any writing by women could be easily dismissed. J. M. Allan, writing for the Journal of the Anthropological Society in 1869, posited that,

A female novel can generally be detected by the failure in the attempt to draw masculine character, and describe the conversation of men among themselves; ...heroes are...mere caricatures of real living men... men are more successful in delineating women than women are at delineating men... There never was a woman who could look into the heart of a man as Shakespeare has looked into the female heart. 90

Nor was he alone in reaching this kind of verdict. The reviewer for The Graphic, in what is a relatively kind review of Carey's Not Like Other Girls, writes somewhat similarly. However, the latter at least provides a telling remark about how, and whom, she is supposed to have ‘failed.’ According to this reviewer, Not Like Other Girls is ‘essentially a womanly book,’ and thus it has ‘the almost inevitable fault’ that ‘all the male characters [are]... more like young women than men.’91 This latter sweeping generalisation must be examined more closely if it is to be useful.

It may be concluded that neither all, nor even most, of Carey’s male characters fit this description. The fictional experiences and attitudes of most male characters are such that they conform with societal expectation in the real world of Carey’s time. Where middle-class male characters are not acceptable to the community of the male, they do not become ‘amiable young women’ but effeminate or otherwise deficient men and, as such, earn the censure of Carey’s various narrators. It must also be borne in mind that all male characters are viewed at all times from a feminine perspective, if only that of the author. The aspects of fictional male personality interrogated by Carey are those that were interesting to her and possibly those that she believed would interest her readers. Therefore the male point of view is neglected.

Perhaps the assertion that ‘all the male characters [are] much more like amiable young women than men’ could be better rendered ‘all the male characters will be liked much more by amiable young

---

89 Carey also indulges in humour at expense of Alick Lyall in Sir Godfrey's Granddaughters (see pp. 11; 168-9 and 230-2); and at the expense of Rab Lockhart in Mrs Romney (see pp. 24-103 passim.).
90 J M Allan, 'On the Real Differrences in the Minds of Men and Women,' Journal of the Anthropological Society, London, 1869, Vol.7, p cvii. Radway's findings in Reading the Romance quite unconsciously contradict Allen. A book-seller interviewed by Radway is reported as saying "I've always thought that women are more insightful into men's psyches than men are into women's. Well, men just don't take the time. They just don't... I think that one of the most rare commodities that there is...an insightful man." (Radway 1987, p. 83.)
91 The Graphic, 6 July 1884, p. 559.
women than men.’ This is because Carey’s novels contain two types of male characterisation that men would have deplored. Some characters are as Carey saw them in reality, their numbers including the mean, the contemptible and the laughable as well as the merely normal; others are portrayed in idealised form, though according to female ideals and acting in roles interesting to women rather than according male ideals and acting in roles interesting to men. Both the realistic and the idealistic portraits suggest that many men in the real world did not match up to feminine requirements. Perhaps Carey did not portray her male characters badly; perhaps, for their counterparts outside the novels, she sometimes portrayed them a little too well.
Chapter IV: Hearth And Home

It is at home that parents and children, brothers and sisters...mingle in the sweet fellowship of domestic bliss.  

The Vicar still sat by his study fire with his open book before him. Clare always sat opposite to him with her knitting or mending-basket beside her.... at times he would lay down his book or push aside his papers, and tell her the day’s troubles or the thoughts that were passing through his mind. And then it would seem to the tired, happy wife as though heaven and earth were very near together, and life a great mystery and sacrament of love.  

Few will read [Carey’s] work without feeling that the characters have been drawn from life - fortunately for us there are few homes which have not an Aunt Milly ever ready to cheer and comfort...  

Introduction: Representations and Realities
Many Victorian and Edwardian accounts of home and family life, whether fictional or non-fictional, employ the same small range of referents, re-presented in fairly predictable configurations. The three accounts of family relationships quoted above may be seen to illustrate this point. The first is from the preface of an admonitory work entitled The Young Man From Home, which was published by the Religious Tract Society in about 1890. The book is non-fiction; it would have been deemed by the writer, the publisher, and by at least some of the original readership, to be representational of an empirical reality. The second quotation is truly fictional; it is from Rosa Carey’s novel Sir Godfrey’s Grand-Daughters [1892]. However, in the last of the quotations, a review of one of Carey’s novels from 1880, no distinction is made between fiction and reality. The two are regarded as identical in a conceit which praises Carey’s work for its realism.

Andrew Blake, author of Reading Victorian Fiction suggests that such conflations of fiction and reality were common, certainly in the periodical press, during the Victorian era. Taking as an example The Fortnightly Review between 1865 and 1875, he concludes that ‘Fictions... were regarded both by the magazine’s reviewers and by other contributors as real pictures of society.’ However, Blake’s own view, that the representation of reality in novels is at best qualified and that fiction has a function beyond that of mere mimesis, is more defensible as well as being more pertinent in the present context. He posits that,

Fiction is ...an active constituent in society, able to take part in debate and promote change.... Furthermore... novelists at this time were actually expected to preach.... Fiction, then, can be seen not as the passive ‘reflector’ of an already given society.... Instead, fictional literature can be seen as... being aimed at specific readerships within it, of presenting, to that specifically chosen audience,
certain types of information and attitude, and helping to form or change attitudes and behaviour. (Emphasis original)

By keeping in mind Blake's suggestion that Victorian texts are both mediated by 'preaching' and designed for specific audiences, the present-day reader is better prepared to deal with the great contrast between the group of nineteenth-century works quoted above and the very different non-fictional representation of reality to be found in some of the social reporting of the age. In the three texts already quoted, the same range of referents regarding the construction of the home are mobilized whether the text purports to be fiction or non-fiction. All three draw upon the basic assumptions that 'home' means rest, comfort, companionship; that the occupants of a home enjoy leisure; that they can afford warm fires. In short, the texts are all based upon the assumption that home is a desirable place. However, these three texts merely produce constructions, drawn from a dominant discourse of home. They deal in ideas: an evangelist's prescription of what home should be like; a novelist's representation of a less than perfect but desirable home; a reviewer's generalization about home experience.

By contrast, social reporting in the same period, structured by a commitment to first-hand evidence, case-studies and statistical data, frequently portrays a more fragmented and contradictory picture of home life; one which does not conform so readily to the popular conventions. For example, in an account produced in 1899, the philanthropist and social reformer Seebohm Rowntree reported that 27.84% of the citizens of York were living in 'poverty.' This he defined as '[having] earnings... insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of mere physical efficiency.' Rowntree's report clearly indicates that, however desirable the ideal represented in the previous group of quotations, 'home' defined as a place of comfort, companionship, leisure and warmth hardly denoted a universal experience.

The dominant domestic discourses of the Victorian era and beyond were thus both highly artificial in their construction and almost totally modelled upon the social mores of a complacent middle class. However, as these were the people who controlled the major means of cultural production - everything from ownership of the publishing companies to the making of Parliamentary legislation - they could afford to construct the world from their own point of view. Thus, most writers of non-fiction represented the middle-class home as a norm (as if it were a uniform reality) and most writers of fiction

---

5 Blake 1989, pp. 7-8. Blake had, of course, been anticipated to a certain extent by Ian Watt, the latter positing that a feature of the novel per se was 'a controlling moral intention.' This, too, appears to indicate authorial intervention between the text and the world it purports to describe. See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, in association with Chatto & Windus, 1968), p. 136.

'preached' a gospel of middle-class social mores (as if it were the only ideal worthy of reader aspiration).

Carey undoubtedly conformed in most respects to the social mores of her class and age. Her adherence to domesticity as an ideal is evident throughout her writings, her novels suggesting that she believed household harmony to be both the responsibility of the women in the household and the highest form of work to which they could aspire.7 Marriage, motherhood and more domesticity are seen to be the fitting and desirable rewards for unmarried women who have done their duty well in the parental or familial home.8

However, this is not to say that Carey always depicts families living in exact accordance with the dominant ideal. Even her novel, *Sir Godfrey's Grand-daughters*, quoted above, is as much about the difficulties of communal-familial living as about its rewards. In portraying unsatisfactory, or at least imperfect, domestic circumstances, Carey was simply re-presenting another series of pre-existent referents to which she had been exposed. As Rod Edmond notes in *Affairs of the Hearth*,

There are very few durable happy families in Victorian literature. General studies of the period depict the Victorian home as a peaceful, even sacred, place, a haven in a heartless world... [but] Victorian writing is full of unhappy homes, appalling families, and the break-up of happy homes and families. *Mary Barton* and *The Mill on the Floss* are just two, very different kinds of novel, in which cheerful, functioning families disintegrate and are unable to be reconstituted.9

Nevertheless, the notion of home as a 'peaceful... sacred... haven in a heartless world' is indeed dominant in the literature of the period, even if it is only advocated as an ideal or, as Andrew Blake suggests, presented to the readership as a subject for debate. Blake argues that,

The novel... was public property in a way in which family life and letters were not: it gave people a chance to discuss domestic ideology in public without touching upon their own domestic secrets. It is therefore a most important point of contact between the public and private. (Blake 1989, p. 72. Emphasis original.)

However, debates about domestic ideology existed at other levels than that of literal discussion. Taking Raymond Williams' concept of hegemony it is possible to view the relationship between the dominant

---

7 This chapter discusses the representation of the home in Carey's novels but see also her non-fictional article entitled 'Hercules' in *The Girl's Own Paper*, 9 October 1897. In this article, 'dear girls' are recommended to 'Little duties lovingly undertaken... a gentle welcome to the weary father and mother at the end of a toilsome day,' and so on.

8 Characters apparently 'rewarded' in this way include Langley in *Queenie's Whim* [1881], the eponymous heroine of *Nellie's Memories* [1868], Judith Hillyard in *But Men Must Work* [1892] and Aunt Milly in *Heriot's Choice* [1877-9]. However, Judith Rowbotham suggests that it might be over-simplistic to view marriage as a reward in such texts. See *Good Girls Make Good Wives*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp 43-45. (Where two or more years are ascribed to a text - as with *Heriot's Choice* [1888-9] - this indicates the period of initial serialization.)

discourses of the domestic and any alternative domesticities as a broad range of assertions and resistances. According to Williams, the exponents of any dominant discourse would not simply have been able to enforce it upon a quiescent populace, for the dominant/hegemonic

does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own.... [S]peak of 'the hegemonic' rather than the 'hegemony', and of 'the dominant' rather than simple domination.... The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive.... The reality of cultural process must then always include the efforts and contributions of those who are in one way or another outside or at the edge of the terms of the specific hegemony.¹⁰

To view the subject in Lyotardian terms, non-dominant referents relating to something called 'home' came from a variety of sources, not all of which could be ignored. Carey would not have found it possible to represent the dominant version of the domestic unchallenged in a novel with any pretensions to realism. However, this discussion of, and resistance to, discourses of the domestic is not limited to fictional literature. The same discourses and resistances are to be found in works which purport to be factual. For example, the ultra-conservative and pro-establishment Charlotte Yonge premises her non-fictional work, *Womankind* [1877], on the notion that the middle-class woman does not need to undertake remunerative employment and so is totally at liberty to spend her time in the home.¹¹

However, Yonge could not ignore the concrete existence of women of her own social standing who were without means. Thus, the book suggests a wry tolerance of their deviance from a supposed norm rather than an appreciation of their alternative reality:

> And for the young who need support, it would be well, if they have no special talent, to try to learn to be telegraph clerks, or even dress-making, or whatever is possible in their station.
> “The Year Book of Women’s Work” will point to the means of getting instruction and employment, and there is much less every year of the fear of losing caste by absolute labour. (*Womankind*, pp. 237-8. My emphasis.)

A virtual dismissal of the challenge to the dominant lies in Yonge’s qualifiers, ‘in their station’ with regard to the type of employment and ‘much less’, added to the phrase ‘fear of losing caste.’ It seems, that for Yonge at least, the presence of resistance to the dominant ideal does remarkably little to negate or obscure its visibility or power. However, the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the representations of, and the resistances to, the domestic ideal in the novels of Rosa Carey. In order to do this, it is first necessary to look at the individual components of the social construction which the Victorians and Edwardians called home.

Didactic Narratives of Domesticity

The essential features of Victorian and Edwardian bourgeois domesticity are to be found in their purest form in many non-fictional didactic texts of the day, particularly in household manuals and books of advice for women. Though representations of domesticity were based upon middle-class mores, texts were aimed at all levels of society. Charlotte Yonge’s definition of a home is representative of dominant thought throughout the period:

Is it not above all... the place where one is always welcome, and above all sure of sympathy and ease? A place to gravitate to, not merely as one to eat and sleep in and serve as a shelter in case of illness, but the place where, in spite of all love of change or society, one always comes back as the dearest and pleasantest to us, whatever may be its disadvantages. (*Womankind*, p. 264)

However, that Yonge was writing primarily for a middle-class readership becomes evident in passages such as the following:

the great essential of a home... is a living room that gives a sense of comfort, cheerfulness and pleasantness. The cottage kitchen... often fulfils this office to perfection, but among the womankind principally addressed here, it is the drawing-room that generally answers the purpose.... (Ibid., p. 267)

Nevertheless, members of the working classes also received direct attention from the purveyors of the domestic. The barely veiled didacticism of a book entitled *The Two Neighbours: A Tale of Every-day Life* [1887] more than qualifies the work for inclusion here. The protagonists are women who have formerly been domestic servants but who have subsequently married and become full-time housewives. One, Susan, is vain and lazy, the other, Mary, is modest and diligent. The following extract provides, for the reader, a lesson in priorities:

Mary... lifted up and examined the wide embroidery...

"I worked it all myself," said Susan, but she did not add that her house and her husband had been neglected whilst she did so.

"How clever you must be," said Mary innocently, "to find time for such beautiful fancy work, with all your household duties."12

Susan leaves Mary’s house feeling ashamed of her lack of appropriate industry and the next chapter, entitled ‘Mary Allen’s Rules’, sets out the prescribed behaviour. The chapter includes three basic principles, ‘good old rules which my grandmother taught me’:

‘A place for everything, and everything in its place;’ ‘A time for everything, and everything in its time;’ and ‘Never put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day.’13

---


13 *The Two Neighbours*, Chapter IV; quotation from p. 44.
However, it also contains a more detailed description of Mary Allen’s daily routine. There is an
obvious similarity between the three maxims quoted above and three ‘Domestic Rules’ to be found in a
more general reference work called *Enquire Within*. The editions for 1871 and 1899 both contain the
following list:

i. Do everything at its proper time.
ii. Keep everything to its proper use.
iii. Put everything in its proper place.\(^\text{14}\)

The work also advises upon more specific matters, these being as diverse as ‘Acting Charades’ and
‘Zinc and Camphor Eye-wash.’\(^\text{15}\) However, the *Enquire Within* series appears to have been directed
towards a slightly wealthier socio-economic group than that addressed by *The Two Neighbours*. In the
1899 edition, an implicitly female reader is presented with a list of ‘GOLDEN HINTS FOR
HOUSEWIVES AND HOME COMFORTS’ and she is advised to read these ‘frequently that their full
value may be secured,’ but the paragraph continues:

> Let your servants also read them, for nothing conduces more to good housekeeping than for the servant
to understand the “system” which her mistress approves of.\(^\text{16}\)

Nor was the gospel of domestic order, as propagated amongst these lesser lights, intended to be shorn of
its drawing-room ethos of ‘sympathy and ease.’ Although there are few references to these requirements
in *The Two Neighbours*, much may be deduced from works aimed at middle-class readers. For
example, in *Sanitary and Social Essays* [1892], Charles Kingsley exhorts lady district visitors to
inculcate suitably womanly behaviour amongst their female working-class neighbours:

> What you have to do is to ennoble and purify the womanhood of these poor women; to make them
better daughters, sisters, wives, mothers.... (Emphasis original.)\(^\text{17}\)

The implication is that ‘these poor women’ are as deficient in ‘womanhood’ as their district visitors are
superior; and that the poor are a class in need of instruction in supposedly normative values.

Writers such as Yonge and Kingsley place the onus for making a home according to this pattern entirely
upon the women of a household. However, one might initially receive a totally different impression of

---

\(^{14}\) *Enquire Within Upon Everything, To Which Is Added Enquire Within Upon Fancy Work*, (42nd edn.),
(London: Houlston and Sons, MDCCCLXXI), p. 93 (hereafter *Enquire Within 1871*); *Enquire Within
Upon Everything*, (96th edn.), (London: Houlston and Sons, 1899), p. 112 (hereafter *Enquire Within
1899*).

\(^{15}\) These items appear in the indexes of both *Enquire Within 1871* and *Enquire Within 1899*.

\(^{16}\) *Enquire Within 1899*, p 103. Note the tacit assumption that both servant and domestic manager are
female.

\(^{17}\) Charles Kingsley, ‘Woman’s Work in a Country Parish,’ in *Sanitary and Social Essays*, (London:

From the section entitled ‘National Character’ the reader learns that,

The most striking characteristics of an Englishman are his love of liberty, justice, and independence, and his high sense of honour and fair-dealing.... He is unrivalled for good taste in domestic architecture, and his home is always a model of cleanliness, neatness and comfort....

18

It is strange that a geography text-book should omit all reference to one half of the population of a country. It might be deemed equally strange that the agency behind the much-vaunted ‘cleanliness, neatness and comfort’ should be unspecified. However, more recent writers, Dale Spender and Nancy Chodorow, provide useful perspectives on domestic servicing which are, by analogy, applicable to nineteenth and early-twentieth century texts. Spender quotes Marion Glastonbury’s trite but pertinent remark that ‘men are sincerely ignorant of the processes that supply their comforts’ whilst Chodorow provides the following, more detailed, perspective:19

Social reproduction is... asymmetrical. Women in their domestic rôle reproduce men and children physically, psychologically and emotionally. Women in their domestic rôle as house workers reconstitute themselves physically on a daily basis and reproduce themselves as mothers emotionally and psychologically in the next generation.20

Thus, according to both Spender and Chodorow, a person’s experience of home is greatly dependent upon gender. Chodorow posits that to be a man or a child is to be a consumer whilst to be a woman is to be a provider; Spender intimates that to be a provider means to be invisible. The absence of women in Mackay’s book for boys may thus be seen to point to this difference of experience between the genders.21 Men consume domestic labour without seeing its production; women are, of necessity, obliged to see domestic servicing, whether physical or psychological, because they are the ones who provide it.

Yet there was more to the domestic ideal than the middle-class orientated, gender-specific provision of ‘sympathy and ease’ and ‘cleanliness, neatness and comfort.’ Home was also the place that shaped the

---

21 Samuel Smiles also devotes considerably less space to the means of creating a home than he does to the enjoyment a man may gain from it.

The poorest dwelling, presided over by a virtuous, thrifty, cheerful, and cleanly woman, may thus be the abode of comfort, virtue and happiness; it may be the scene of every ennobling relation in family life; it may be endeared to a man by many delightful associations; furnishing a sanctuary for the heart, a refuge from the storms of life, a sweet resting-place after labour, a consolation in misfortune, a pride in prosperity, and a joy at all times. (My emphasis. See Samuel Smiles, *Character*, (London: John Murray, 1897 [1878]), p. 40. Hereafter, *Character.*

Note that labour is something done outside the home. A woman does not work, she merely ‘presides.’
next generation. Yonge says of ‘happy homes of peace, and of innocent mirth’ that ‘[t]he women who come from [them] make others’ (Womankind, p. 271). However, the main purpose of the home, if one believes all that books directed at male audiences have to say on the subject, is to foster male genius. Samuel Smiles was one of the many men to write in these terms, positing that,

Home is the first and most important school of character. It is there every human being receives his best moral training, or his worst; for it is there that he imbibes those principles of conduct which endure through manhood, and cease only with life.22

The veneer of sheer sentimentalism which he subsequently adds, when he explains the place of women in this nurturant ‘school of character,’ goes some way to obscure the gender inequality inherent in home experience:

The home is the woman’s domain - her kingdom.... Her power over the little subjects she rules there is absolute.... She is the example and model constantly before their eyes, whom they consciously observe and imitate. (Character, p. 37)

However, it seems that adult men are excluded from her reign. There follows on from this effusion a string of anecdotes about great men and the debts they owe to their mothers. Thus,

De Maistre, in his letters and writings speaks of his... mother with immense love and reverence. Her noble character made all other women venerable in his eyes. He described her as his “sublime mother”- “an angel to whom God had lent a body for a brief season.” To her he attributed the bent of his character, and all his bias towards good; and when he had grown to mature years, while acting as ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg, he referred to her noble example and precepts as the ruling influence in his life. (Character, pp. 42-51).

Similarly, it is said of George Washington’s mother that,

as the richest reward of her solicitude and toil, she had the happiness to see all her children come forward with a fair promise into life, filling the spheres allotted to them in a manner honourable to themselves, and to the parent who had been the only guide if their principles, conduct and habits. (Character, pp. 44-5)

Smiles also naively comments that ‘We do not often hear of great women, as we do of great men. It is of good women that we mostly hear....’ (Character, p. 43). However, Smiles was not alone in sentimentalising the home as a place where male greatness is fostered. In W. H. D. Adams’ Plain Living and High Thinking [1883], the first chapter is entitled ‘At Home’ and it includes a section entitled ‘A Mother’s love illustrated by examples’.23

---

22 Character, p. 32. Note that ‘human being’ means male (women do not attain ‘manhood’).
Conversely, positive home influence is seen as that which fortifies a man against the temptations of an evil world or, at least, that which saves him from total degradation if he succumbs. Women of all ages are seen to be the primary agents in providing this good influence, Yonge placing much of the onus upon sisters:

A sister can do much to keep her brother within bounds if she has his thorough love and trust, and can sympathise with him heartily, ministering to all his innocent pleasures as his willing slave, but standing resolute if there be a spice of evil in them. (Womankind, pp. 137-8)

Likewise, J. W. Kirton, in Happy Homes and How to Make Them, writes of the effects of a good home even upon the man who subsequently errs:

"The last thing forgotten in all the recklessness of dissolute profligacy, is the prayer or hymn taught by a mother’s lips, or uttered at a father’s knee; and where there seems to have been any pains bestowed, even by one parent,... this is... more than ordinary ground for hope" -The Experience of a Prison Chaplain. (Punctuation original.)

Thus, the domestic ideal, as constructed from overtly didactic sources, may be seen to have entailed the provision, by women, of ‘sympathy and ease’ and of ‘cleanliness, neatness and comfort,’ to men and children, for the specific purpose of cultivating male genius and morality. The ideal may also be seen to have acquired a veneer of sentimentalism that partially obscured the inherent asymmetry of home experience. The very repetitiveness of these concepts of ethos, order and sentiment appear to give them a normative status against which any other set of behaviours, working patterns or relationships could be adjudged deviant. Together, they imply the existence of a positive stereotype called ‘home’; to imply a standard vocabulary to fit a prescribed experience, regardless of what might have been a far more varied range of experiences in reality. There appears to have been only one kind of vocabulary acknowledged by the dominant about domesticity: that which extolled its virtues and condemned the household that was not run according to its referents.

The Rôle of Home-maker

In addition to affirming the feminine nature of home-making, both fictional and non-fictional texts from the Victorian and Edwardian period detail a discernible hierarchy for women within a household. The foremost female rôle within this hierarchy, that of home-maker, was allocated to the closest connexion of the male householder. The order of precedence was that of wife, mother, sister (if residing with him) and daughter. There was only room for one home-maker per household and it was her duty to administer to all domestic matters, whether practical or psychological.

---

24 J W Kirton, Happy Homes and How to Make Them, (Birmingham: The Educational Trading Co. Ltd., n.d [c.1879]), p. 82. (Hereafter, Happy Homes.)

25 The term ‘home-maker’ as opposed to that of ‘mistress’ is used here as the focus is primarily upon her work in the home rather than upon her supervisory role towards servants and her social status.
An unmarried daughter of any age was strictly subordinate to her mother so long as she lived in the parental home. Thus, in the *Girl's Own Paper* for 13 January 1894, a correspondent was told,

> Whether your mother be an invalid or not, your name should be inscribed upon her visiting card, underneath her name, so long as she lives, and you remain - a single woman - under her roof.26

However, a widowed mother was herself in constant danger of finding herself set aside if she and her eldest son were members of the same household. Whilst he remained a bachelor she reigned supreme but when he married she was obliged to abdicate in favour of the new-comer. A wife always took precedence over a mother and was automatically entitled to take on the home-making role. In her memoirs, Mary Elizabeth Lucy tells of the change in status she experienced when her eldest son married in 1865:

> nor did I realise my position till I went upstairs to take off my things and found my bedroom was prepared for the future Mrs Lucy.... So now, on 1st July 1865, I was called upon to give up forever the bedroom I had occupied as wife and widow 41 years.... The two days passed at dear Charlecote in preparing for my successor were certainly a trial ...but still I rejoiced that Spencer's marriage was near at hand, and the bright hope of his future happiness dispelled the cloud of my own gloomy thoughts and made me forget 'self' and how changed was my lot.... 27

Nor was this the full extent of the female hierarchical structure within the family. There was also an acknowledged 'pecking order' amongst cousins and sisters. A correspondent seeking advice from the *Girl's Own Paper* later in 1894 was told,

> On a visiting card for an unmarried lady who has ceased to have her name printed on her mother's card, the name is always preceded by "Miss". The Christian name is used when the person is not the daughter of the eldest son, and has not a right to the name.28

---

26 *Girl's Own Paper*, 13 January 1894, p. 239.

27 Mary Elizabeth Lucy (ed. Alice Fairfax-Lucy), *Mistress of Charlecote, The Memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1983), p. 133. (Hereafter, *Mistress of Charlecote.*) Primogeniture as much as social custom determined her position in the household. (Whilst she retained much of her husband's capital, her eldest son was entitled to the house.) However, the rule seems to have been good even when property was not involved. Similarly, an unmarried sister who kept house for her brother lost her central status if he married. Thus the lives of middle-class sisters Mary and Katherine Bryce altered for the worse when their bachelor brothers both married in 1889. The sisters were in their forties and their younger brother was fifty-one so the shock was considerable. Mary, the elder sister had been mistress of the home that they all shared but she was obliged to make way for her elder brother's wife. The new circumstances were unworkable so the sisters moved out during the same year. See Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 266-7. (Hereafter, Jalland 1986.)

28 *Girl's Own Paper*, 18 August 1894, p. 736. (The "Miss" in such a case would need to have been a 'Maiden lady[!] of a certain age' and living in her own establishment in order to have her own visiting cards at all. See 'A Member of the Aristocracy,' *Manners and Rules of Good Society*, (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., 1887), p. 21. Sources other than *Girl's Own Paper* suggest that only the eldest unmarried daughter in the family could appropriate the family name without also appending her christian name. For example, in her memoirs, Mary Elizabeth Lucy cites a letter in which two of her granddaughters (two sisters) are referred to as Miss Lucy and Miss Linda respectively. Lucy was the children's surname. See *Mistress of Charlecote*, p. 139.
Thus, the daughter of a younger son would have been obliged to style herself, for example, Miss Anne Smith whilst her cousin, by right, simply called herself Miss Smith. Amongst sisters, a married woman gained her status from her husband’s family but the eldest unmarried sister was deemed to have some authority over her younger siblings. In Womankind Yonge tells the reader ‘the younger ones should remember that the eldest sister at home must always remain the head, and be deferred to’ (p. 144). Thus, if an eldest sister married, the ‘title’ passed down to the next in age. Yet it was only the eldest unmarried daughter of a widower who could hold any real power for she was appointed to take on the rôle of home-maker in her mother’s place.  

However, any status or power inherent in the home-making role carried with it great responsibility for the well-being of the household. A lucid statement to this effect is to be found in the first chapter of Everybody’s Book of Correct Conduct [1893]. There, status and responsibility are juxtaposed as if to emphasise their affinity:

'It is the correct thing
To remember that the lady who rules the household must have absolute authority in it and rule as absolute queen. No comfort or order can be obtained without this. If her orders are to be questioned, the correct thing is to do so in private, and never in the presence of the young members of the household, or of the servants.

[It is also the correct thing] for the lady who holds this position to remember that the every-day happiness of those in the home circle is in her hands; that she has the greatest power of anyone to make the home a place of peace and happiness, or a place to avoid.  

This domestic hierarchy, with its emphasis upon the powerful and responsible home-maker is replicated throughout Carey’s novels. However, in that, stylistically, a novel can be more discursive than an etiquette book, Carey is more emphatic in her portrayal of the resistances to the proper functioning of the hierarchy. The writer of Correct Conduct merely betrays the contingent nature of the home-maker’s power by betraying that the home-maker is often, herself, subject to the authority of a male householder. By comparison, Carey’s fiction often contains episodes in which the home-maker’s legitimate authority is undermined by one who has no pretext for doing so. Carey thereby suggests that even the authority contingently ascribed to the home-maker is far from unassailable.

---

29 See for example Womankind, p. 265. However, this would depend upon her age and whether an aunt was living with the family.
30 ‘M C’, Everybody’s Book of Correct Conduct, (Whitstable and Walsall: Pryor Publications, 1996 [1893]), pp. 11-12. (Hereafter, Correct Conduct.) As if this passage did not itself indicate the limitations of feminine power, in the chapter entitled ‘As a Wife,’ the lady of the house is reminded that, ‘although you are in authority at home, nevertheless [your husband] is the head of the house.’ See p. 26. See also ‘The Contrast’ in The Mother’s Friend, Vol. IV - new series, 1863, pp. 4-7, for a didactic narrative about the power and responsibility of the home-maker.
Thus, in *Only the Governess* [1888], when the middle-aged Ivan Thorpe marries, his young wife becomes mistress of the household, taking the place hitherto filled by his unmarried sister. However, Miss Thorpe does not give up the reigns of government easily. She yields up the household keys and her seat at the head of the table but constantly criticizes the inexperienced young wife's attempts at household management and magnifies the least of her faults to her husband. The long-suffering wife tells another character in the novel,

"She had been everything to him once and she could not forgive me for taking her place; from the first she misunderstood and disliked me." 32

Similarly, Etta, the poor relation in *Uncle Max* [1887], undermines, and finally usurps, the position of the rightful home-maker, Gladys. Etta is merely a distant cousin of the householder; Gladys is his elder sister. In addition, Carey frequently portrays the change of government which occurs when a designated homemaker dies. The notion of precedence by age after a mother's death is made explicit in *Aunt Diana* [1885]:

"My dear Alison," returned the governess solemnly, "...It is true you are young, not much over eighteen; but.... You are the eldest daughter, and the rightful mistress of the house." 33

Meanwhile, during a more sombre investiture detailed in *Nellie's Memories*, a dying mother imparts more responsibility than authority:

she took me by the hand and called me her good, her favourite child, and solemnly committed my brothers and sisters to my care, bidding me watch over them with a mother's love, and over my father with the tenderness of a wife.34

Yet, in spite of the centrality of the home-maker, other females had their legitimate rôle to play. According to Yonge, the 'eldest home sister' had her responsibilities in the nursery but, as Carey's tales such as *Averil* [1890-1], *Cousin Mona* [1895] and *Our Bessie* [1888-9] convincingly suggest, all young women could play their part in bringing 'sunshine' into the home.35

35 It is the correct thing...
For the women of the household to make it pleasant and attractive, and for the men to show their appreciation of these efforts. (Correct Conduct, p. 9)
36 *Womankind*, p. 136.
These three didactic novels, published by the Religious Tract Society and aimed at a ‘teen-aged’ audience, are especially rich in characters ripe for emulation. In the first, orphaned poor relations Lottie and Annette try to make life happier for the sorely-tried home-maker, Averil. As well as running errands and taking fair shares in the needle-work, they supply Averil with the affection and sympathy that is otherwise lacking in her home life. Meanwhile, Averil herself only undertakes the home-maker role because her step-mother is too indolent and too extravagant to do her rightful duty. Averil manages the finances and builds up good working relationships with the servants, as any good home-maker should, but she additionally bears the complaints and ill-temper of her step-mother and step-sisters whilst she does so. The three women who attempt to create a home in this novel offer different paradigms or partial paradigms for emulation by the young reader. Though Averil’s financial independence and worldly wisdom are only within reach of the few, all are capable of cultivating her even temper. More easily acquired by the young are Lottie’s sunny and optimistic nature and Annette’s intuitiveness and restfulness.

In *Cousin Mona* another orphan finds her role of assistant home-maker equally difficult. For Rufa, who lives with the eponymous cousin Mona and her brother, Everhard, the impediment to domestic happiness is the decline of Mona’s brother into premature senility. Yet even here the establishment of a happy home is accomplished as Rufa slowly attempts to make herself both pleasant and useful around the home. The lesson to the young reader is that even the most uncongenial of home circumstances can be improved, whatever the status of the woman willing to attempt the task. By comparison, the eponymous heroine of *Our Bessie* has a much easier task; from the start, she is represented as a much-loved eldest sister and her mother’s right hand.

However, such heroines are not only to be found in Carey’s overtly didactic fiction. Other young women who provide household ‘sunshine’ without formally taking on the home-maker role include Joan in *The Key of the Unknown* and the eponymous *Mrs Romney*, who lives with her parents-in-law. Other novels suggest an even greater degree of usefulness. Grace in *Not Like Other Girls* [1884] acts as governess to her younger sisters as well as taking on her share of the household chores whilst Irene in *The Sunny Side of the Hill* [1908] practically runs the house - she has ‘a genius for it’ - and thus enables her mother to take on ‘parochial work.’

Conversely, where Carey portrays female characters who detract from household harmony, these receive marked narratorial criticism. For example, an only daughter, Muriel in *The Mistress of Brae*

---

Farm [1896] is censured for following her own pursuits and neglecting her mother who is both lonely and seriously ill. In essence, Carey is normative in her presentation of the home-maker and her female hierarchies are clearly defined. Either the right or the wrong person takes on the home-making rôle; and the remaining women either contribute to the well-being of the household or they do not. Yet even successful home-makers in the novels dramatise their role in such a way as to suggest that, in life, home-making work was difficult and, at times, distinctly unsentimental.

When portraying the home-maker at work, Carey addresses both the ethos and physical maintenance of the household, though the emphasis is usually upon the former rather than the latter. In keeping with the norms of the servant-employing classes of Carey's time, home-makers decide upon the tasteful arrangement of the furniture though they seldom actually move it, make the coffee at breakfast time though they seldom boil the water or lay the table, and make and mend household linen and clothing though they seldom wash or iron anything.

However, it is quality of mind rather than delimitation of tasks which distinguishes the home-maker from her servants; and it is the ability to sympathise with the joys and sorrows of others within the household that makes her a good home-maker rather than a bad one. Thus, in At The Moorings, Sheila tenderly encourages her brother to talk about the woman he loves even though his marriage will displace her from her current position of authority within the household (ATM, pp. 282-285). Similarly, in Queenie's Whim, it is said of a home-maker, 'Langley's opinion, Langley's sympathy, were always claimed, and never in vain.'

Efficient though uncongenial home-makers are to be found in Carey's novels - for example the lachrymose Joanna Chaytor in Mollie's Prince [1898] and the endlessly-occupied Mrs Herrick in Herb of Grace [1901] - but they are usually fairly minor characters and are usually censured for their lack of sensitivity. The preferred personal qualities in a home-maker, a good temper, willingness to serve others and the possession of an innately refined nature, are discussed at greater length. In obliging her home-making heroines to be of benign temperament, Carey concurs with that prodigy of domestic virtue, Mrs Isabella Beeton:

---

38 Other characters who promote discord within their homes are Etta in Uncle Max and the step-sisters of the eponymous Averil.
GOOD TEMPER SHOULD BE CULTIVATED by every mistress, as upon it the welfare of the household may be said to turn; indeed, its influence can hardly be over-estimated, as it has the effect of moulding the characters of those around her, and of acting most beneficially on the happiness of the domestic circle. Every head of household should strive to be cheerful.... Gentleness, not partial and temporary, but universal and regular, should pervade her conduct.  

Correspondingly, Carey does not permit her approved fictional home-makers to be even righteously angry with other members of their households. In Aunt Diana, the much-tried Alison has just cause to remonstrate with her younger sister but ultimately refrains from doing so:

"Mabel, how can you be so disagreeable?" began Alison hotly. But she cooled down on remembering Aunt Diana’s advice -“Never get warm over an argument, Ailie. When you begin to feel angry, it is time to hold your tongue.” And Alison held hers. (AD, p. 202)

Along with many authors of non-fictional works, Carey lays a particular injunction against displays of ill-temper by wives towards their husbands. J. W. Kirton, author of Happy Homes and How to Make Them [c. 1871] advises wives to be pleasant even when their spouses provoke them.

If he should be inclined to dispute with you, abstain from a long argument with him. Let it be a standing motto, “never to irritate.” Gentleness is the best way to carry a point, and to keep a husband in a good temper is one of the duties of a wife.  

Similarly, Charlotte Yonge, whilst aware that men could be at the root of much ill-temper, ultimately deemed the general happiness of the household to rest on female effort alone.

To make a really happy home the father must co-operate with her. If he is thought of with terror for his temper, or if he cannot or will not tolerate his children’s interruptions, there will be less peace and gladness, but still the mother can keep up the home element if she gather the children round her, keeping him and his requirements foremost in her own estimation and the children’s with the dutifulness of love. (Womankind, p. 265)

Such admonitions make normative the fictional situation in which Carey makes a wife apologise for upbraiding the husband whose extravagance has ruined them:

‘I was not good to you tonight, Julius. I had no right to be so angry with my husband.’

‘I forgive you, my dear child!’ he returned magnanimously.’

‘Yes, but I’m not sure I forgive myself. It is a wife’s duty to bear everything....’ (SGG, p. 384)

Yet a peaceable nature is insufficient in itself. Carey’s novels suggest that a home can only be created by a woman whose interest in the household is affectional rather than pecuniary and she often posits

---


42 Happy Homes, p. 132. See also Correct Conduct, p. 25. ‘As a Wife

_It is not correct._

To allow [your husband] to see you worried, or crying over trifles. It will weary him of you sooner than anything else. It is the correct thing for you to make the sunshine of life for him, as he has all the responsibility, and must of necessity have many trials heavier than you can know of.
that hired servants have neither the ability nor the incentive to create a home on behalf of their employers. For example, in the following passage from *Queenie's Whim*, the eponymous heroine, even though formally estranged from her uncle, willingly renders him the service that the paid nurse has forgotten:

"Why do you look towards that door? do you want anything?"
"That woman has forgotten my medicine," he muttered, "and I have that strange sinking again. Hirelings are not worth the price of the bread they eat."
"Let me give it to you," returned Queenie, rising, and mixing the draught.... Queenie skilfully raised the invalid and put the glass to his lips.... *(QW, pp. 71-72)*

By using the word 'hireling', Carey permits biblical resonances to add depth to the distinction between loving service and financial transaction. Herself no hireling, Queenie is indeed willing to look after her own; but having the care of her incapacitated young sister means she is unable to respond to her uncle's plea that she come to nurse him. Even though desperately poor, she reluctantly turns down his offer of a good salary for the work, telling him,

"It goes to my heart to refuse you. If I were free I would come and serve you, not only for the sake of the money, but because mamma loved you so dearly." *(QW, p. 74)*

However, the fictional Andrew Calcott's desire to have Queenie living with him is not limited to a wish for more reliable nursing. He also craves the presence of someone from the same social background as himself; someone to whom he can entrust his domestic happiness as well as his physical comfort, as he tells Queenie, 'Mrs Morton is a very capable person, but I should like someone who would read to me and amuse me.' *(QW, p. 72)*. In short, he wants someone who, in taking on this familial position, can provide his luxurious but empty house with the ethos of a home. Another man who requires more of his domestic circumstances than a housekeeper can provide is the fictional Doctor Stewart, who is to be found in the same novel. He begins by observing to himself that his house-keeper makes him extremely comfortable:

Jean, excellent woman, knowing his ways, had lighted the fire and brought his slippers down to warm.
'I am not so badly off as a bachelor that I need be in such a hurry to change my state...' *(QW, p. 344)*

Yet he concludes that he does not regret his forthcoming marriage:

Well, she is a dear woman, and I don't repent of what I have done; for, in spite of Jean's excellent management, one feels a trifle dull sometimes now that the old mother's gone and Edie is married. By the bye, I must write and tell Edie about this, she will be so delighted.' *(Ibid.)*

---

43 According to St John's gospel, 'he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not.... careth not for the sheep.' *[John 10:12-13.]* See *The Holy Bible*, Authorised King James Version, (Glasgow, London, New York etc.: Collins Publishers, n.d. [1611]). This is the 'Protestant' Bible, appointed to be read in Church of England churches. It would have been the only version used by the C. of E. during most of the Victorian era.
The fictional doctor is portrayed as somewhat unromantic about his bride but Carey at least permits her reader to see that the home-maker is more than simply a privileged servant. To quote the narrator of Carey’s later novel, *Sir Godfrey’s Grand-daughters*, those ‘little graceful finishes that bespeak cultured taste’ are vitally important. Yet, one further point is to be made on this account: such ‘graceful finishes’ and ‘cultured taste’ are not the automatic result of either middle-class or amateur status. They need to be cultivated assiduously if they are not innate. Thus, the character who has the role of homemaker in the household under discussion here is unfavourably compared with the woman who will take on the role in the future. Pamela is the house-holder’s sister; Gerda his prospective wife:

Pamela evidently had no domestic capabilities; those little graceful finishes that bespeak cultured taste were totally wanting at Roadside. The drawing-room was large but somewhat bare-looking; two or three easy-chairs had been dragged to the edge of the hearth-rug, leaving an empty space; books and work and papers were thrown on the big, roomy couch. ‘It could be made so much better,’ thought Gerda, with the irritated feeling of seeing good material wasted. Her fingers longed to unloop and readjust the stiff draperies that hung over the window; she would have pushed the big couch into that snug corner by the fire, and the cabinet of old china should have been moved to the other end of the room. Gerda amused herself that night settling a thousand fanciful details; she put herself in Pamela’s place. With a few pounds, a very few indeed, the room should look lovely. One of those Oriental nondescript stuffs should be fashioned into a portiere; a dozen or two yards of cretonne, a little Madras muslin, a big jar, and a palm would do wonders. (Ibid.)

At this point in the narrative, Gerda is not specifically thinking of the drawing-room as her own. Rather, she is instinctively exercising her more general faculty of home-making over the material that presents itself. It is only incidentally that, by so doing, she demonstrates her suitability to be a wife.

**The Homemaker’s Rewards, Punishment and Training**

In Carey’s novels, the immediate reward for domestic competence, good temper, willing service and innate refinement is usually a contented household and male approval for the home-maker. Thus, when the fictional Aunt Milly takes over the stricken Lambert household in *Heriot’s Choice*, the local doctor is soon made to name her ‘a mother in Israel,’ this being an allusion to the biblical Deborah, who, in an important sense, mothered an oppressed nation. This compliment to Aunt Milly’s judicious management of the household appears to be Carey’s highest praise for a home-maker. It is Carey’s acknowledgement that home-making is no easy task; that it is potentially an embattled position. In addition, because a ‘mother in Israel’ is someone to whom all will come for advice the title also describes Aunt Milly’s centrality in the family and her availability as one who will dispense both wisdom and solace. Langley Clayton in *Queenie’s Whim* also receives this latter kind of accolade:

---

44 *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters*, p. 227.
45 One of Israel’s judges (or advisors), she rallied the troops and gave them the confidence to win against the more technologically advanced Canaanites (Judges 4:4; 5:7).
That she was a woman infinitely loved and respected was plainly evident. Langley's opinion, Langley's sympathy were always claimed, and never in vain; the same patient attention, the same ready help, were given to all. (QW, p. 96)

This centrality within the family home is very often succeeded by a suitable marriage and a similar role within the marital home. Thus, both the 'mother in Israel,' Aunt Milly and the 'loved and respected' Langley Clayton marry, though not until they are in their thirties. It is notable that each marries a widower whose first marriage was unsatisfactory and that each attracts a partner on account of personal qualities rather than physical beauty. In each case the husband is intimate with her entire family and thus knows of her domestic virtues; in each case the husband knows that he will be gaining a home of the kind he has not known since childhood.46

Yet there are occasions upon which Carey varies this pattern of domestic virtue rewarded. The eponymous heroine of Averil is not appreciated by her step-family in spite of her efforts, both domestic and financial, on their behalf. Nor does she eventually marry as do many other of Carey's older, poorer and disabled female characters. However, she is ultimately able to arrange her life more to her liking when the ungrateful step-family emigrates to Canada. Similarly, Ellison in The Mistress of Brae Farm is poorly rewarded for taking in a destitute cousin and her child. Her fiancé and the cousin fall in love and eventually marry, rendering Ellison's portion that of single blessedness.

However, for heroines who do not marry, another kind of reward is possible: that of pseudo-maternity. The eponymous Averil enjoys an affectionate, almost maternal, relationship with the two young cousins who live with her as well as a familial relationship with a number of poor 'pensioners' for whom she provides a village home. Similarly, Ellison in The Mistress of Brae Farm experiences motherhood at one remove through her relationship with her ex-fiancé's children. Other characters are made to take on a mother's role in its entirety. Thus, Anne in For Lilies [1885] brings up her adopted daughter from the age of two and Miss Jem in The Highway of Fate [1902] becomes 'mother' to a child of six. However, there are a variety of 'maternal' roles to be had. That of Sister Frances in No Friend Like a Sister [1906] is three-fold: caring for her patients, studying the welfare of her nurses and enjoying her role as aunt to the children of her married brother and sister.

That single women should bring up children was a far from unusual notion for Carey's time but, whilst the fictional Anne's brother is made to paraphrase the proverb, 'Old maids' children and bachelors' 

46 However, Carey does not make these stories especially romantic. Aunt Milly only gets her man after he has proposed to his eighteen-year-old ward and subsequently broken the engagement on discovering that she loves someone else. Langley Clayton marries the lover she rejected in a fit of pique in her youth but only after she has nursed the woman he married subsequently through her last illness. For details of others home-makers 'rewarded' by marriage see also note 8.
wives are always paragons,' Carey's 'maiden' mothers are not subject to the ridicule frequently to be found in fiction. Rather, their 'maternity' is constructed in terms similar to those describing a birth-mother. Anne's 'daughter,' Marjory,

seemed to fill the void in Anne's life, and lend to it a little of the importance and joy of maternity; the interest that is often missing in a single woman's life was hers by adoption and choice.

In expanding the conventional perception of the maternal role, Carey places the rewards of the unmarried domestic woman virtually on a par with those who marry.

However, when the home is not well-run, the indignant cries of offended males fill the pages. In this respect, Carey's fiction accords very much with the dominant. Carey may forgive a female character for being unmarried but she does not afford the same kind of immunity to those who are inefficient in the performance of their domestic duties. Although she may portray the failed home-maker sympathetically, she never strongly censures the obstreperous male. Any sympathy with the female character is on account of her failure, not because she has been upbraided.

Hence, when Richard in Heriot's Choice makes cutting remarks to his fifteen-year-old sister on account of her poor housekeeping, he remains unreproved. Even his father remarks that he is 'too hard at times' but no-one appears to tell the culprit that he must curtail his contemptuous speeches (HC, p. 56). In the following extract, Olive, the disorganised and hard-pressed homemaker is attempting to do her German homework and at the same time serve coffee:

"There, you have done it again," [said Richard] "The second clean cloth this week disfigured by these unsightly brown patches."
"Something must be the matter with the urn," exclaimed Olive....
"Nonsense, the only fault is that you will do two things at a time. You have eaten no breakfast... and made us all uncomfortable. And pray how much German have you done?"
I can't help it, Cardie; I have so much to do, and there seems no time for things... I am sorry...."
"Actions are better than words," was the curt reply. (HC, pp. 45-6)

The authoritarian and censorious brother is himself only nineteen years old and is neither the breadwinner nor the head of the family. Yet his right to complain is upheld. Carey has their aunt, who


48 R. N. Carey, For Lilias, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902 [1885]), p. 36. See also Aunt Diana, p. 259: 'Aunt Diana knew the way to a boy's heart... there are some unmarried women whose large natures can embrace a whole world of little ones, and such a one was Aunt Diana.'
observes the scene, consider him, on the whole, justified. In the space of a single page, sympathy for the young home-maker turns into sympathy for her tormentor:

‘I am half inclined to find fault with Richard myself... he does not make sufficient allowance for a very young housekeeper.... No wonder Richard’s fastidiousness is so often offended; but his continual fault-finding makes her worse...’ 49

Women who suffer under the auspices of a poor home-maker are not usually permitted to be so vocal. Thus, characters such as Mollie in *Lover Or Friend* [1890], Gladys in *Uncle Max* and Philippa in *Rue With A Difference* [1900] have to wait for outsiders to recognise their plight before their lot can be improved.

If the narratorial voice in the novels applauds the home-maker who has domestic expertise and a benign temperament, conversely approval is withheld from women who wilfully fail to provide the appropriate ethos and servicing. Such ‘failures’ are also rewarded according to their perceived deserts. A number are specifically ‘punished,’ in a kind of ‘poetic justice,’ for the misery they inflict upon others. For example, Etta in *Uncle Max* wrongfully usurps the home-making role and wrongfully uses her power once she is in control. Her reward for this non-nurturant behaviour is permanent banishment from the luxurious home to which she is accustomed. Placed in an isolated area, beyond the bounds of the family and her own class, there is little chance of her being able to take any kind of even pseudo-maternal role. However, this is the nature of her punishment. Similarly, Augusta in *No Friend Like A Sister* makes life so unbearable for her sisters and her sister-in-law that they all move out of the family home. Her fictional ‘punishment’ is three-fold: having driven her family away, she is lonely; for most of the narrative she is made to experience unrequited love; and, when she finally marries, it is because the man in question needs a nurse rather than a wife. Thus, her maternal role comes to her very late and when it does it is an inversion or perversion of the usual reward for domestic duty well done. Her ‘baby’ is a querulous adult.

However, to have maternity or pseudo-maternity withheld is not the fate of all unsuccessful homemakers. If the person in the role is merely young, or sincere but incompetent, Carey permits her to learn and to improve. Thus, in *Heriot’s Choice*, the burden of housekeeping is removed from fifteen-year-old Olive’s shoulders by an aunt who comes to live with the family. This permits Olive a period of training for future usefulness. Similarly, an even younger homemaker, Dossie, is relieved of the job of trying to create a home for her father in *Only the Governess*. Nor is age the only deciding factor; a woman is also judged on the opportunities she has had in order to gain domestic experience. For Huldah, the

---

49 *HC*, p. 52. Similar complaints from brothers towards their sister (though with rather more justification) are to be found in *Aunt Diana*. 
eponymous heroine of the same novel, there are mitigating circumstances. She 'had no mother to
guide [her]' in early life and had no good example to follow thereafter (OTG, p. 192). Thus, she is
permitted to not only run a home badly but also to leave her husband without losing her ultimate earthly
reward, maternity. Olive and Dossie eventually marry happily; Huldah, who is already married, returns
to an appreciative husband and is eventually portrayed as the mother of three children.

In short, Carey does not always perfectly assimilate the hegemonic discourse of the home-maker, or
rather, she is not so closely bound by this particular reality that she cannot see alternative readings. She
subverts the dominant by making visible the potential brutality of the male; she sympathises with the
woman who cannot produce the appropriate qualities of the home-maker on demand, for what ever
reason; and she broadens the range of potential rewards available to home-makers, by expanding the
usual interpretation of the maternal role. Either she has, in her role as addressee, absorbed referents
from outside of the hegemonic, or she has exercised her power to alter the discourses of the hegemonic
before re-presenting them to her readers. Yet in spite of these manipulations of the stereotype, Carey's
homemakers tend to conform to, or are compared unfavourably with, the stereotype presented by the
etiquette book and the household manual.

Home - Not Home - Bring Home

Thus far, discussion has focused largely upon the role of home-maker and upon the sentimental gloss
given to the role by many writers. Yet, in more general descriptions of the home, sentimentality is not
merely expended upon the provider of home comforts. A great deal also attaches to the word 'home'
itself. John Angell James enthusiastically exclaims that,

> Home is one of the most delightful words, and it is no wonder that it should have become the subject of
poetry and song. There is music in the sound; and in every heart that is not yet corrupted, there is a
cord that vibrates to the note.\(^5\)

Because the word was invested with an apparently fixed and universal set of meanings, actual
experience could be overwritten, the constructed concept being virtually impossible to overwrite save in
terms of expressing its opposite. Hence, a family dwelling which was not clean, comfortable and
serviced by a self-sacrificing female was designated as 'not-home' rather than as a variant of the
supposed norm. The home-maker who generated other meanings for the word 'home' was effectively
censored and dissatisfaction regarding the asymmetry of experience between homemaker and
'consumer' as described by Nancy Chodorow could not be openly articulated. Much of the literature
from Carey's time - including personal letters and diaries - appears to contain the simplistic assumption

\(^5\) James is right about the songs and poetry. To give one potent example, the popular song 'Home Sweet
Home' ('Mid pleasures and palaces') was written before 1831 and still has currency today. See
Brewer, p. 461.
that a dwelling is either 'home' or 'not home' and that, if 'not home,' then blame may be apportioned. In the following extract from a letter written in 1898, the writer does not say that the house is 'not home' but it is evident that his expectations of a home were not being met by his widowed mother:

Mother of course is so busy. She has been at home all day, but went out about a quarter past seven I am told. Gone to meet her darling, I suppose, isn't it sickening. Fancy coming to an empty house night after night; and even when she is at home she cannot be genial.51

This mother, in her rôle as home-maker, is doubly damned in her son's eyes. Not only does she fail to provide the home with the requisite 'sunshine,' but she also prefers the company of her man-friend to that of the members of her immediate family. Rhetorically, the son has a legitimate grievance: 'home' is something that he is entitled to but in this case it does not exist according to the referents of the dominant discourse.

This way of looking at the home is summed up succinctly by Samuel Smiles. He alludes to marital homes in particular but the words 'home-maker' and 'consumer' could easily be substituted for 'wife' and 'husband':

If the wife cannot make her home bright and happy, so that it shall be the cleanest, sweetest, cheerfullest place that her husband can find refuge in - a retreat from the toils and troubles of the outer world - then God help the poor man, for he is virtually homeless! (Character, p. 314)

Nor does Carey appear to refute this home/no home view of the family dwelling. For example, in The Highway of Fate, Keefe Desmond uses heavy irony to intimate that where he lives is not home in the canonical sense of the word:

the sitting-room into which Keefe ushered his companion looked comfortless and squalid to the last degree. A black, cindery fire burned in the grate, and a smoky kerosene-lamp gave an imperfect light; the remains of a meal were still on the table, and there were coffee-stains on the dingy cloth; the chairs and couch were heaped up with stage properties and articles of female attire....

'Isn't this a comfortable home, Jack?' he said with a bitter sneer.52

Yet if the word 'home' in itself evokes strong emotions, by extension, the expression 'to bring (or take) home a wife' is also highly emotive. In a sense the phrase is misleading. Whilst it suggests that the

52 R. N. Carey, The Highway of Fate, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902), p. 311. The stage properties etc. indicate that Keefe's wife is a working woman. However, the rhetoric of the scene makes no allowance for this. Other examples of 'not home' are to be found in Our Bessie, (London: The Office of The Girl's Own Paper, ?1914 [1888-9]), pp. 110-114 (family quarrels in a wealthy household) and Mary St. John. In the latter novel, p. 155 describes Walter Reid's lodgings; p. 158 describes his former reckless lifestyle. In At The Moorings, Ivor's family suffers from physical want rather than lack of desire to create a home on the canonical model, pp. 174-179.
object is to take a wife into a home that is already established, it is rather more concerned with taking a home-maker into a house that requires her expertise. This comes across clearly in a serial story by Leslie Keith in the *Girl’s Own Paper* in 1906. In the second episode, the bride describes how her husband of a few hours took her to their future home:

> We climbed the stairs hand in hand, and when the last flight was surmounted... we stood with beating hearts before the closed door.... He took a latch-key from his pocket and put it in my hand. “Open it,” he said: “it is you who are the home-maker, Con, and you must lead the way.”

Similarly, in Carey’s novel, *Aunt Diana*, a young wife creates a home for a man and his widowed father:

> very soon after that dear mother’s death [Gerard] had brought home his young wife, that he and his father might no longer lack the comfort of womanly ministry.

However, the phrase to ‘take home a wife’ is more complex than this. It can mean the transformation of the parental home into a marital home (as was the case with Mary Elizabeth Lucy when her eldest son married) or it can be the integration of the wife into her new extended family whilst creating a new home away from the parental home. A short story from *The Daisy* in 1881, describes an instance of the latter:

> when he brought home his young wife, she took the girl to her heart at once, thanking Tom with genuine pleasure for giving her so sweet a daughter.

The son does not live with his mother but, nevertheless, the daughter-in-law is ‘brought home’. To a certain extent, the phrase ‘to bring home a wife’ may be taken as synonymous with ‘to be married’. However, the word ‘home’ still invests the expression with meaning beyond that of the legal aspect of the wedding ceremony.

Yet Carey may be relied upon to look at even the most fundamental of bourgeois discourses from an alternative viewpoint. The notion of ‘taking home a wife’ has ironic connotations in the case of Ivor, the scapegrace younger brother in *At The Moorings*. Ivor leaves the family home without a qualm to return eight years later bringing home not only a wife but also two children for his older and more mature siblings to support. Thus, he is not ‘bringing home a wife’ in the sense of starting his own

---

53 Leslie Keith, *Pro and Con*, Girl’s Own Paper, October 20 1906. p. 47. (Serialised 13 October 1906-13 April 1907.) Dickens also uses the phrase ‘brought me home’, meaning the speaker was literally taken to her new home as a bride in *The Cricket on the Hearth*. See Charles Dickens, *The Christmas Books*, (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1910 [1846]).

54 *AD*, p. 35. For more general examples of the phrase to ‘take home’ a wife, see also *Only the Governess*, p. 192; *Queenie’s Whim*, p. 474; R. N. Carey, *Uncle Max*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912 [1887]), hereafter *UM*, p. 60.


56 Carey uses both the phrase and this latter concept in *Not Like Other Girls*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1905 [1884]). In an argument with his father, Dick Mayne says, ‘I think you might wait, father until I proposed bringing you home a daughter-in-law.’ (See p. 25).
family unit, this being a mark of independence and maturity. Rather he is regressing into the
position of child within the family home. Carey sets against this ‘unnatural’ behaviour of the younger
man the fact that the elder and more responsible brother, Ned, therefore cannot afford to ‘bring home’,
in the more socially acceptable sense, a wife of his own. Thus, although Ned has an angelic sister to
keep house for him, he is to be pitied because he is effectively deprived of his rightful (marital) home; to
quote Smiles, ‘poor man... he is virtually homeless!’

Father and Mother

Other emotive signifiers that metonymically denote the home include the words ‘father and ‘mother.’
Given Carey’s preoccupation with the domestic, it is perhaps unsurprising that she should focus more
upon the latter. Yet, even taking this bias into account, strong paterfamilias figures are conspicuous by
their absence. A brief survey of Carey’s forty-one novels produces a list of thirty-two in which a major
female character has no father living or whose father dies early on in the narrative. Of the major
households with which the heroine in question associates (through kinship, employment or friendship),
in only sixteen out of forty-one cases is the householder’s primary relationship within the household that
of husband or father. In seven novels it is that of elder brother; in four more, that of some other male
relative. In the remaining thirteen novels no husband, father, or father substitute is present at all.

---

See also Barbara Heathcote’s Trial, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1915 [1871]), p. 391. The
remorseful son says, ironically, to his father, ‘And because there are not enough for you to work for, I have brought
you another mouth to feed.’

Heroines whose fathers are alive throughout the narrative: Barbara in Barbara Heathcote’s Trial; Audrey in Lover or Friend?; Catherine in Mrs Romney; Waveney in Mollie’s Prince; Githa in The
Angel of Forgiveness; Maureen in The Sunny Side of the Hill; Alison in Aunt Diana; Bessie in Our
Bessie. (Other People’s Lives, being a collection of short stories, is impossible to classify.)

Paucity of Husbands and Fathers in the Heroine’s Most Significant Household (Male Heads of
Household Only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Novel</th>
<th>Name of Heroine</th>
<th>Relationship of Heroine to the Householder in her Immediate Family</th>
<th>Most Significant Household</th>
<th>Householder’s Relationship to Immediate Family</th>
<th>Householder’s Relationship to Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nellie’s Memories</td>
<td>Nellie</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wee Wife</td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Ord’s Atonement</td>
<td>Rotha</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Heathcote’s Trial</td>
<td>Dympna</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooded and Married</td>
<td>Milly</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriot’s Choice</td>
<td>Queenie</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td></td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>brother ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queenie’s Whim</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>‘daughter’</td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>brother ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary St John</td>
<td>Marjory</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td></td>
<td>brother</td>
<td>brother ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Lilias</td>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td></td>
<td>step-son</td>
<td>step-son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Max</td>
<td>Hulshad</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the Governess</td>
<td>Olga</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basil Lyndhurst</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lover or Friend?</td>
<td>Gerda</td>
<td>niece</td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>daughter-in-law</td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Romney</td>
<td>Gloeden</td>
<td>niece</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old, Old Story</td>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td></td>
<td>husband</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Luttrel’s First Patient</td>
<td>Waveney</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollie’s Prince</td>
<td>Eden/Bonnie</td>
<td>employee/niece</td>
<td></td>
<td>uncle</td>
<td>uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Lady Frivol</td>
<td>Berrie</td>
<td>house-keeper</td>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life’s Trivial Round</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57 See also Barbara Heathcote’s Trial, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1915 [1871]), p. 391. The
remorseful son says, ironically, to his father, ‘And because there are not enough for you to work for, I have brought
you another mouth to feed.’

58 Heroines whose fathers are alive throughout the narrative: Barbara in Barbara Heathcote’s Trial; Audrey in Lover or Friend?; Catherine in Mrs Romney; Waveney in Mollie’s Prince; Githa in The
Angel of Forgiveness; Maureen in The Sunny Side of the Hill; Alison in Aunt Diana; Bessie in Our
Bessie. (Other People’s Lives, being a collection of short stories, is impossible to classify.)

59 Paucity of Husbands and Fathers in the Heroine’s Most Significant Household (Male Heads of
Household Only)
These latter households are either all-female or have a female householder. According to this reckoning, most heroines both live in households that are not headed by husbands or fathers and associate with households that are not headed by husbands or fathers.

Amongst the few fathers that are to be found in Carey’s novels, a number of them tend to be weak and ineffective rather than possessing the ability for wise government whilst in the few cases where a father is perceived to fulfil an appropriate role, authority tends to be visibly lacking. For example, on account of the following musings, Audrey in *Lover Or Friend* can hardly be said to be in awe of her parent:

> 'If you want to do a thing, do it quickly, and without telling anyone, that is my motto. Father is no one. If I were going to run away from home, or do anything equally ridiculous, I should be sure to tell father first; he would only recommend me to go first class, and be sure to take a cab at the other end, bless him!'  

Nevertheless, these non-authoritarian fathers tend to be endearing, or at least much loved, even on occasions when the narrator perceives there to be actual deficiency. For example, of Ned’s long-dead spendthrift father in *At The Moorings* it said that, ‘With all [his] sins, never had a father been so tenderly loved’ (*ATM*, p. 29). Similarly well-loved, though with rather more cause, is the impetuous art-teacher and painter, Everhard Ward, to be found in *Mollie’s Prince* [1898].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Householder</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Status/Tie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>At The Moorings</em></td>
<td>Sheila</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Household of Peter</em></td>
<td>Ranee/Vera/Sallie</td>
<td>sister</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Angel of Forgiveness</em></td>
<td>Githa</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Esther Cameron’s Story</em></td>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>niece</td>
<td>uncle/brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aunt Diana</em></td>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Merle’s Crusade</em></td>
<td>Merle</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td>husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Our Bessie</em></td>
<td>Bessie</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the vast casts of characters and their geographical mobility it has been difficult to produce statistics that are both meaningful and succinct. Many novels contain more than one heroine and many contain a heroine who lives in more than one significant household in the course of the novel. Thus, the table above claims to give nothing more than an impressionistic view of family construction in Carey’s novels.

With the above limitations in mind, the heroine of each novel is listed in column [1]. Column [2] lists the relationship of the heroine to the householder in her most significant household. Column [3] lists the householder’s status/tie in relation to his closest family ties within the household. (The heroine does not necessarily participate in this particular set of relations.) Thus, in *Uncle Max*, Ursula’s relationship to the householder is that of friend but his primary relationship within the household is that of brother to his two sisters. Similarly, in *Basil Lyndhurst*, Olga is sister to the householder. However, his primary relationship within the household is that of husband.

60 The following heroines are householders in their own right: Ellison in *The Mistress of Brae Farm*; Valerie in *Rue With a Difference*; Dinah and Elizabeth in *Herb of Grace*; Miss Jem in *The Highway of Fate*; Christian in *A Passage Perilous*; Elinor in *No Friend Like a Sister*.

Significant households in the following novels have a female householder who is not a heroine: Not Like Other Girls (Mrs Challenor); *But Men Must Work* (Mrs or Miss Hillyard); *Averil* (Mrs Willmot); *Little Miss Muffet* (Mrs Foster); *Cousin Mona* (Miss Gordon); *The Sunny Side of the Hill* (Miss Brydon); *The Key of the Unknown* (Lady Mary).

61 Of the eight fathers of heroines still alive, five are satisfactory. See: *Barbara Heathcote’s Trial*; *Our Bessie*; *The Sunny Side of the Hill*; *Lover or Friend?*; *The Angel of Forgiveness* [1907]. Father not an active constituent in the household: *Aunt Diana*. Father providing poorly for children financially: *Molly’s Prince*; *Mrs Romney* [1894].

The bias against normative fathers and towards other relations as heads of families is perhaps a reflection of Carey's own life.63 Her father died in 1868, and her mother in 1871. Thus, she wrote about eight of her novels whilst living in her elder brother's household, about sixteen whilst living with her elder widowed sister and her children, and the remaining fourteen or so after moving to her own all-female establishment in 1897 or 1898.64 However, Carey's work also reflects an age in which many parents died before their children reached maturity, in which a greater age range amongst siblings enabled some brothers to take on the role of head of household, and in which powerful social and economic factors encouraged siblings to remain living together after the demise of their parents.65

Nevertheless, the ethos in approved households is, in virtually all cases, parental. Hence, the words 'father' and 'mother,' in particular the latter, are often used as metonyms for the home itself. Carey was far from being the only Victorian writer to use the terms in this fashion. For example Mrs Craik takes the notion to its extreme in *John Halifax Gentleman* [1856]. Throughout the latter half of the novel the narrator, Phineas, consistently describes John and Ursula Halifax as 'the mother' and 'the father.' Carey does not go to these lengths but a good example of how she uses the word 'mother' to mean 'home' with all its permitted resonances is to be found in Robert Ord's *Atonement*:

> The mother's room was suited for tete-a-tetes, for quiet droppings-in of two or three; a place for the vicar to sit before the fire... and read his letters. It had a great crimson couch appropriated by invalids. Here sick bodies and sick hearts were nursed by the mother herself.66

Effectively, the room which constitutes the physical fabric of the home, the uses to which the room is put, and which manifest the ethos of the home, and the home-maker/mother, the major occupant of the room, are undifferentiated. One reason for Carey’s constant references to the mother as a signifier of the

---

63 It certainly goes against the grain of etiquette books such as *Correct Conduct*, which take the home headed by a married male householder to be the norm.
64 This chronology is based upon Helen Black's interview with Carey, which probably took place in 1891, upon the evidence of her will and upon the addresses on her later publishing contracts. (See Black 1906, pp. 145-156, *passim*.) Carey appears to have lived in the parental home until 1871, in her brother's home until 1885 and with her sister until 1897 or 1898. At this time, she moved to her own establishment, where she died in 1909.
65 Life expectancy was about 40 years in the mid-nineteenth century and had only improved to 52 years for males and 55 years for females by 1911-12. See Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 5-6. (Hereafter Jalland 1996.) Family size declined from the 1870s (marriages of the 1860s lasting more than twenty years produced an average of 6.16 live births but those of the 1880s produced only 5.3) whilst the death-rate for infants under a year old remained fairly constant throughout the nineteenth century, at around 154 per thousand life births (Jalland 1986, p. 175; Jalland 1996, p. 120). However, family size ultimately depended upon material circumstances. In 1874, amongst the professional and upper classes the mortality rate for infants under one year was a relatively low 8 per cent (Jalland 1996, pp. 121). Thus, a fictional 'average middle-class family from the 1880s,' comprising a group of five doubly-orphaned siblings, the eldest male of whom was the legal guardian of the remainder, would have been quite plausible.
66 *ROA*, p. 57. Carey does not consistently - or even extensively - refer to Mrs Ord as 'the mother' throughout the novel. After this passage, the conflation of Mary Ord as mother with the home becomes implicit.
home is that the homemaker’s rôle was perceived by the dominant discourse as maternal rather than
sexual; nurturant and self-abnegating rather than assertive and individualistic. The approved home­
maker or potential home-maker in Carey’s novels is therefore made to utilise ‘motherly’ referents. The
character is framed in one of three ways: she is a mother, acts like a mother or quotes her mother. In
the first two cases it means she can be relied upon to be self-sacrificing for the good of the household; in
the third, she is indicating that the home she creates will be religious by keeping the commandment to
‘Honour thy father and thy mother’ (Exodus XX:12). She will also be humble about her own merits
because she is giving credit to the mother who taught her rather than claiming originality. In Carey’s
novels, if a mother is quotable then she must be good; if a daughter quotes her, the daughter must also
be good.

Notably, some of the most oft-quoted mothers in Carey’s novels are those who have long since died. Even more touchingly, some daughters are made to draw comfort from their departed mothers in other
ways than by simply quoting their wisdom. Olive in Heriot’s Choice likes to sing her mother’s
favourite hymn. She tells her aunt on one occasion, ‘I had forgotten everything. I thought mamma was
singing it with us, and it seemed so beautiful.’ (HC, p. 79). Olive also spends some time beside her
mother’s grave each Sunday afternoon. She explains,

‘I can come and pour out all my trouble to her, just as I used to;...[S]ometimes I fancy she answers
me, not in speaking, you know, but in the thoughts that come as I sit here... Others may laugh at it...
but it is impossible to believe mamma can help loving us where she is; and she always liked us to come
tell her everything, when we were naughty, or if we had anything nice happening to us.’

By this act of faith, to Olive, the family home is still complete even though her mother is no longer
physically with her.

However, mothers in Carey’s novels are not simply important in terms of providing the homemakers of
the next generation with rôle-models. Potential husbands for heroines - especially the more distant or
taciturn - indicate their suitability for the married state by their relationship with their mothers. For
many of these heroes, too, the mother in question has long since died. The intimation is very much that
the son seeks to recreate the home of his early youth by finding a wife who is just like his mother.
However, there is an added dimension to this quest. A man who has appreciated his childhood home
and who loves and misses his mother can be relied upon to do his part in establishing such a home; a
man who reveres his mother’s memory can be relied upon to treat all women well. Both Reginald

Queenie’s Whim, p. 73; Uncle Max, p. 12; Heriot’s Choice, p. 79; At The Moorings, p. 38.
HC, p. 70. See also Basil Lyndhurst, p. 467. For a daughter communing with her parents through
music, see Robert Ord’s Atonement, pp. 113-114. Perhaps more unusually, a son is made to say ‘One
never loses one’s mother’ in At The Moorings. See p. 242.
Lorimer in *The Old, Old Story* [1894] and Garth Clayton in *Queenie's Whim* are sentimentally attached to paintings of their mothers. In the former case, the mother is smiling down at her son 'from the wall by his own fireside'; in the latter the picture of the mother with the 'sweet gentle face' is in her son's special 'den' or study.\(^6\) It is as though the mother still keeps the home together even though she cannot personally supervise its management.

In many other cases, the hero will only speak about his mother to one whom he deems to be in some way like her. This is an indicator that he will eventually propose marriage to the woman favoured with the confidence. That such confidences are a privilege is made explicit in *At The Moorings*:

> as though some overpowering impulse moved him, Luke began to speak of his mother, first hesitatingly, and then as though it were a joy to him to talk of her....
>
> Sheila was much touched. She understood clearly that this reserved, self-contained man was paying her a rare compliment; but she had no idea that she was the only woman, with the exception of his aunt, to whom he had ever spoken to of his mother. (ATM, p. 241)

Even the phrasing of the passage is similar to that of a Victorian proposal of marriage: he speaks 'hesitatingly'; she is 'touched' at the 'compliment' and she is described by the invisible narrator as 'the only woman' to have his confidence outside his family. A sample letter in *The Ladies' and Gentlemen's Letter Writer* [1862] contains similar wording. Letter LXXXI, entitled 'From a Young Lady to a Young Clergyman who has offered marriage' includes the line '...I must candidly confess that I feel both honoured and pleased by your preference.' Similarly, *Correct Conduct* reminds wives that 'It is the correct thing to remember that... your husband has paid you the compliment of selecting you out of the world of women.'\(^7\) Another of Carey's novels in which a man talks about his mother to a potential bride is *Our Bessie*. However, here, the rhetoric is that of a declaration of love rather than a formal proposal of marriage:

> Richard Sefton had never spoken of his mother to any one before. What could have drawn the beloved name from his lips? Was it this girl's soothing presence, or the stillness of the hour and the quiet beauty around him? Richard was impressionable by nature, and possibly each of these things influenced him. It was a new pleasure to speak to a kindly listener of the memories that lay hidden in his faithful heart. (OB, p. 119)

However, the language of romance brings forth not a declaration of love but an implicit comparison between the mother of 'beloved name' and the girl of 'soothing presence.'\(^7\) Finally, the mother-romance correlation to be found in *Sir Godfrey's Grand-daughters* is worth noting on account of its

---


\(^7\) *Correct Conduct*, p. 21.

\(^7\) A similar episode is to be found in *Cousin Mona*. The romantic elements are the flowers that the hero brings his lady and the pleasant evening spent *tete-a-tete* whilst he speaks of the all-important parent of recent decease. See *Cousin Mona*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1897), pp. 173-5.
narrator’s *direct* comparison between the mother and the prospective wife, though, in this instance, no displaced declaration/proposal is involved. The infatuated hero of the novel, Alec Lyall, is to be found sitting up late one night, pondering over his accounts:

Dr Lyall sat a long time by his fire that night; it was evident that some important decision was weighing in the balance. He had his account-books before him; some abstruse calculation seemed to trouble him; then his brow cleared, and he threw himself back in his chair.

'It is not so bad, after all,' he muttered, 'and things will improve. One would have to be careful, and work hard for some years; but my father began on less.' Then he paused, and his eyes glistened as he thought of his mother. She had always been a hallowed memory to him; her fair face and calm, gentle ways would never be forgotten by her children. Something in Gerda’s voice and expression had reminded him of his mother.

'Why should I not feel my way with her?' he said to himself. ‘There is no fear that I shall be interfering with another man’s rights. If she could bring herself to face a little roughness and uphill work for my sake, no one would have the right to forbid her....’ (SGG, p. 241)

The correlation Carey makes between mothers of saintly memory and prospective wives is interesting in its own right. It bespeaks a commitment to an explicit range of domestic values, including that of family continuity. However, the presence of displaced courtship narratives is even more interesting. It suggests that, through the agency of motherly referents, Carey elevates and romanticizes the often-tedious role of household management without sexualizing it.

**Conclusion**

Though Rosa Carey was far from being an iconoclast, the resistances to the dominant version of domesticity to be found within her novels are many and varied. She does not appear to question the domestic ideal itself but she betrays an awareness that the role of the woman in the home was far from being a sinecure. She does not speak of the labour and neglect to mention the labourer, as does the Reverend Mackay in his description of the Englishman’s model home. Nor does she depict gainful employment solely as something undertaken by men and the home as somewhere without ‘toils and troubles’ analogous to ‘the outer world,’ as does Samuel Smiles. Household tasks, for example the ever-present mending, are deemed to require genuine exertion and women who work in the home are seen to tire towards the end of the day. In addition, where the tensions inherent within the female hierarchy might be as invisible to men as domestic servicing is itself, Carey treats such tensions as being of the utmost importance to the women involved.

Carey’s novels also appear to question the conventional wisdom of her time, that the only worthwhile occupation for women was marriage. Whilst a wife could indeed take on the role of home-maker and render all other women in the household lower in status, it did not mean that these women were thereby superfluous. Carey’s novels set out an important and dignified position for each woman within the household because they indicate that each woman can make a positive addition to the household ethos.
In addition, Carey plays with the convention that marriage and maternity are the reward for duty well-performed in the familial home. Some narratorially approved spinsters are rewarded with pseudo-maternity. That is, they receive sole charge of a child. However, such fictional women are constructed in much the same way as are birth-mothers rather than receiving the ridicule more generally directed at single women with child-care responsibilities. Thus the rewards of spinsters are on a par with those of women who marry.

Finally, Carey has certain of her male characters take more than a consumer’s interest in the domestic sphere by making them both revere their mothers and utilize this devotion in the building of their future domestic circumstances. This devotion goes beyond W. H. D. Adams’ glib description of ‘A Mother’s love illustrated by examples,’ for narratorially approved bachelors only tend to speak of their mothers when they are near to proposing marriage. In their intention to reproduce the home of their childhood, specifically through the work of someone who takes the place of the revered mother, such characters give validity to the domestic world itself.
Chapter V: Sentimental Heresies

There's No Place Like 'Home'

In a nineteenth century conduct book called Happy Homes and How to Make Them, the reader is given the following admonition:

HAVE A FAMILY ALTAR OF YOUR OWN.-

"Wherever the family appears in its beauty, wherever moral health is fortified, wherever life presents itself at once in its austere and its smiling aspects, wherever we find united progress, manly effort, tenderness, vigour, harmless mirth, deep sorrows, accompanied by genuine consolations; in short, a lofty happiness, and the true apprenticeship of life, you will find that those who love and support each other, together bend the knee."

If such be the case, then let us recommend the practice of daily reading the Bible, however small a portion; and also of seeking God's blessing by prayer. By this means you will best secure a virtuous, moral, happy, and godly home....  

Although it is impossible to gauge the level of religious adherence in the homes of Victorian and Edwardian England, the message itself was a commonplace. The proposition, that a happy home is a religiously motivated home, may be found in literature ranging from the hearty 'self-help' books of Samuel Smiles to the fulsome novels of Marie Corelli.

However, it may also be seen that Victorian and Edwardian society had domesticated Christianity. The opening of the chapter entitled 'Home' in Charlotte Yonge's non-fictional work, Womankind [1877], may be taken as an indication of this tendency. Yonge writes,

The Altar and the hearth! Well may they be coupled together, and well does Wordsworth in his "Lark" describe the faithful heart as-

"True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!"

Popular religious texts of the Victorian and Edwardian eras posited, and indeed generated, links between what the society of the time circulated by way of discourses on the home and what they believed to be the biblical authority underlying them. Yet, whilst the word 'home' is found in the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments, in no instance does it have the resonances to be found in Victorian and Edwardian writing.

The domestication of Christianity depended upon not only the opportunity for commentary and glossary that popular secondary texts on the Bible provided but also the arrival of a particular moment in the history of domesticity itself. These conditions did not obtain in biblical times and even the translators of

---

1 J.W. Kirton, Happy Homes and How to Make Them, (Birmingham: The Educational Trading Company, n.d. [inscribed 1871]), p. 79. (Hereafter, Happy Homes.)
3 C. M. Yonge, Womankind, (London: Mozley and Smith, 1877), p. 264. Wordsworth’s poem is actually called ‘To A Skylark’ and does not mention the human heart at all. Written in 1825 when Wordsworth was anything but a conventional Christian, it, too, has been appropriated by the establishment here. For the full text of the poem, see William Wordsworth, ‘To a Skylark’ [1827], 1.12, in The Works of William Wordsworth, (hereafter Works), (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994), p. 209.
the King James Bible and the compilers of the Book of Common Prayer did not add the kind of gloss needed to produce the ‘domestic’ religion of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Whilst the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer contain a good deal about the faithfulness of wives and the obedience of children, there is no concept of an individual family unit whose relations are based primarily upon the affections.

In the Bible, of the fifty-one references to the word ‘home,’ the vast majority refer to the actual location of a person’s dwelling-place, as is one of the meanings of the word today. Other references simply make ‘home’ the opposite of ‘abroad’ (Lam. 1:20; Lev. 18:9). A few of the latter superficially appear to permit additional meanings but ultimately any perceived similarity to the nineteenth-century home may soon be proved to be Victorian accretion. For example, the notion of women as ‘discreet, chaste, keepers at home’ (Titus 2;5) suggests both a physical location and a foreshadowing of the Victorian division of society into public and private spheres, the woman’s place being designated as ‘at home.’

In Happy Homes and How to Make Them, J. W. Kirton certainly utilizes the verse from Titus as if this meaning were easily discoverable in it. His chapter on the duties of a wife contains as a heading the very words ‘A WIFE SHOULD BE A KEEPER-AT-HOME.’ The section begins,

Some women are everlastingly gadding about like butterflies from flower to flower; of such it is said, “Whose feet abide not in her own house.”...

While it is the man’s place to be out, it is the woman’s place to be at HOME. An inspired writer says, “Teach the young women to be discreet, keeping at home, good, obedient,” etc.

---

4 The King James Bible was first published in 1611 and the Book of Common Prayer in 1662. (This version of the Bible was the only one authorized by the Church of England during the nineteenth century.) In seventeenth-century England there was little concept of the nuclear family, companionable marriage or childhood as a distinct phase of development. Arguably, the nurturant home on the modern model arrived with Rousseau’s Emile (1762). A case may be made that the sentimental version of the home only arose in fiction in the eighteen-fifties with the advent of Patmore’s The Angel in the House and Yonge’s The Heir of Redclyffe, both published in 1854, and in non-fictional narratives from the late eighteen-thirties onwards, for example those in the conduct books of Sarah Stickney Ellis. However, this view differs in detail from that expressed in Nancy Armstrong’s, Desire and Domestic Fiction, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 5. Armstrong appears to argue that notions of the sentimental domestic are to be found in fiction as early as Samuel Richardson’s Pamela (1740-1). Admittedly, the heroine of Pamela is portrayed as operating through ‘psychological motives’ and is thus ‘sentimental.’ It is also admitted that the book has a domestic setting. However, it is posited here that neither the home itself nor the woman in relation to the home were sentimentalized until later in the century.

5 A certain amount may be deduced about the meanings that the translators attached to the word ‘home’ from The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 976. Of the eight substantive meanings listed, the term was used to denote the household ‘occasionally’ in Old English and the grave or future state in Middle English whilst the popular twentieth century understanding of the word only started to emerge later. These later meanings are attributive rather than substantive: ‘of, relating to or connected with home... domestic, family’, 1552; ‘treating of domestic affairs’ does not appear until 1797; whilst the appearance of ‘family or home life’ as an expression is attributed to Samuel Smiles (1812-1904).
Yes, "The sphere of women is home - the asylum of love, the nursery of virtue... the circle of all tender relationships...." 6

However, taken solely in its biblical context, this reference to 'discreet, chaste, keepers at home' is about the virtue of the individual rather than the private sphere of the family. Besides, this apparent reference to 'housekeeping' in the domestic sense is immediately set at nought when compared with the Old Testament passage, 'neither keepeth [he] at home, who enlargeth his desire... and cannot be satisfied,' in which the subject is emphatically male.7 The implication here is that the temperate man should also be a keeper at home. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the passage from Paul's epistle to Titus could be interpreted as a justification for the establishment of public and private spheres.

The only biblical passages which remotely suggest a home on the Victorian/Edwardian model are those in which the word home is preceded by a possessive pronoun and, of these, only one passage is suggestive of nurture:

...[Jesus] saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. (John 19: 26-27)

Yet this speech, though suggestive of more than usually tender familial relationships, does not indicate anything about the kind of home into which she was received.8

An example of the extent to which the biblical notion of home had been overwritten by the domestic ideal as it arose in the mid-nineteenth century is to be found in the Rev. H. C. Lees' devotional work, The Divine Master in Home Life [1915]. Early in the first chapter the author notes that,

By derivation "home" means the same as "village." But how far the word has advanced since then! And it is affection which has created an atmosphere in which the idea of mere dwelling has given way to thought of the most restful of life's realities.9

6 Happy Homes, pp. 120-1. Punctuation and capital letters original. The words 'Whose feet abide not in her own house' are to be found in Proverbs 7:11 and they apply to a woman who behaves like a harlot. Where explicit biblical endorsement of the notion of public and private spheres is lacking, Kirton fashions the two available quotations into a rhetorical choice for women: will you be a wife or a whore?
7 Habakkuk 2:5. The sheer bellicosity of the subject described in verses 5-8 leaves the reader in no doubt as to his gender.
8 The three references entailing the use of a possessive pronoun are all in St John’s Gospel: 19: 27 (discussed), 16:32 and 20:10. Of the remaining two quotations which appear not to be purely references to location, Ecclesiastes 12:3-7 speaks of man’s 'long home', the grave, and 2 Corinthians 5:6 is discussed below.
9 Rev. Harrington C. Lees M.A., The Divine Master in Home Life (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1915), hereafter 'Lees 1915.' Although published six years after Carey's death, it indicates that the discourse had not greatly changed over many years. For a discussion about whether or not all homes were 'the most restful of life's realities,' see the chapter of this thesis entitled 'Hearth and Home.'
In this passage the author appears to be aware that the word 'home' meant one thing in biblical times and another in the twentieth century. However, by page 160, Lees writes of the 'exquisite domestic picture' of Christ's childhood as if it was of the same nature as the 'advanced' home of the affections. It is also notable that, when he describes the ideal twentieth-century home as a place of comfort and beauty, Lees alludes to the allegorical Palace Beautiful in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* rather than to any passage in the Bible.\(^\text{10}\) It seems that there is no equally potent biblical equivalent.

'**on earth as it is in Heaven**'

However, the most important appropriation of a biblical text for domestic purposes entails a decontextualised reading of 2 Corinthians 5. Here, the basis for another facet of the Victorian discourse of home may be found. In it, there are two orders of location, effectively two kinds of home: the home on earth and the home in heaven. The chapter opens with the comforting notion that,

> we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.\(^\text{11}\)

Although, in context, the 'earthly house' refers to the human body, the phrase is often taken to mean a literal house, or even a family home. According to this interpretation, the home has a spiritual as well as a temporal basis. The successful home is thus permeated with the essence of the heavenly home, the eternal aspect surviving the inevitable dissolution of the temporal. In a sense, the temporal and the eternal are seen to occupy the same space. David Lyall’s domestic novel, called *The House Not Made With Hands* [1912], certainly carries this resonance.\(^\text{12}\)

---

\(^{10}\) Lees 1915, p. 11. *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a religious allegory written by John Bunyan, was initially published in two parts, the first in 1678 and the second in 1684. The Palace Beautiful is alluded to in both parts. It was still widely read in the nineteenth century and Rosa Carey has characters discuss it in her novels, *Merle’s Crusade* [1886-7] and *Our Bessie* [1888-9]. (Dual dates here and elsewhere in this chapter indicate dates of initial serialization.)

\(^{11}\) The actual context of the phrase is as follows:

> 16 ...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day....

> 18 ...we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

> 2 For this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is in heaven....

> 4 ...not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (2 Cor. 4:16-18, 2 Cor. 5:1-4. [emphasis original])

Given that the passage speaks of being clothed with 'life,' it seems that the 'house not made with hands' is the body rather than a physical building or set of familial relationships.

\(^{12}\) David Lyall [Mrs Burnett Smith, generally known by her maiden name, Annie S. Swan], *The House Not Made With Hands*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d. [1912]). The main plot follows the fortunes of a second wife, Alison Crewe, whose task is to turn her new family's opulent but uncentred and irreligious household into an earthly home which reflects its heavenly counterpart. Although this novel was published three years after Rosa Carey’s death, the two women were contemporaries. Annie S. Swan was in print at least as early as 1883 and Carey remained in print until at least 1924.
However, the sixth verse in this same chapter from 2 Corinthians gives the opposite impression, stating that ‘whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.’ This proposition sets up a choice of mutually exclusive psychological ‘locations’ for the individual: a choice of either a spiritual or a temporal ‘home.’ Given that being with the Lord is the desired object, the verse implies that it is impossible for the Christian to be ‘at home’ in any temporal sense; ‘the body’ must be rejected in favour of ‘the Lord.’ Novels written from this perspective are frequently intrusively religious, given that they are, effectively, world-denying. For example, a tale published by the Religious Tract Society, entitled *Uncle Jabez; or The Teachings of Adversity* [c. 1871], is largely composed of the articulated worries of an ideally religious and poverty-stricken family that the miserly uncle of the title is, in the religious sense, ‘not prepared to die.’

If the Victorians and Edwardians deemed it desirable to draw a parallel between earthly and heavenly homes, then, they discovered some kind of biblical basis. However, the message gleaned from scripture was ambiguous. There were two basic positions that could be taken by the domestic-religious Victorian or Edwardian: a *hierarchy* of the two types of home or an *identification* of the two. In strictly theological terms, earthly homes were at best a poor shadow of the heavenly home and at worst a snare rather than a support. Thus, hierarchically, the heavenly home and the earthly home were completely separate and shared nothing of each other’s nature. However, popularly, the two orders of home were the subject of identification, whereby the home on earth and the home above were somehow linked, the earthly partaking of the heavenly nature and preparing its inhabitants for the call to the final home. The Rev. Lees straight-forwardly utilizes the identificatory model:

> If home be the dearest place in the world, and Christ be the “joy of heaven to earth come down,” then to have Christ in the home is to anticipate Paradise at once.

This same chapter concludes with an exhortation to the reader to pray that “Christ may make His home in our hearts,” and His heaven in our homes.” The book concludes with an even more explicit parallel:

> For He Who has gone, and they who have followed Him have left us something behind. And we who have known Him standing, walking, sitting with us in our homes, shall not count it strange to enter into His home, palace though it be, and find Him standing there with our loved ones, to welcome us in. (Lees 1915, p. 213)

---

13. ‘By the author of “Margaret Browning,” etc.,’ *Uncle Jabez; or The Teachings of Adversity*, (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d. [inscribed 1871]), p. 36. However, even this story does not sustain an other-worldly discourse continuously. The family comes out of adversity with all reasonable middle-class aspirations satisfied. The three boys become a minister, a doctor and the owner of a profitable business respectively and the mother and daughter become leisured women.

Notably, Lees' book was published by the Religious Tract Society. Thus, there was deemed to be nothing indecorous in his writing.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the Victorians and Edwardians often played with the concept linguistically, shifting from one stance to the other. In another Religious Tract Society publication, \textit{The Young Man From Home} [c.1890], there appears to be an ambivalence, or, at least a confusion about the relationship between earthly and heavenly homes.\textsuperscript{16} For more than three quarters of the book, James uses the word ‘home’ to describe in glowing terms the temporal household that the young male reader has supposedly recently left.\textsuperscript{17} However, in the penultimate chapter, the author proclaims that ‘This world is \textit{not} our home, and unhappy is the man who makes it such. HEAVEN IS THE HOME OF IMMORTAL MAN.’ (Italics and capitals original). Notably, from this page onwards, the references to temporal homes become fewer. Except for the title of chapter XII, ‘RELIGION CONSIDERED AS A PREPARATION FOR SUPERINTENDING A HOME OF YOUR OWN UPON EARTH, AND FOR GOING TO AN ETERNAL HOME IN HEAVEN’, he usually substitutes the word ‘household’ (\textit{The Young Man From Home}, p. 128). It appears to be the author’s intention to eclipse the temporal meaning of the word ‘home’ with the more spiritual meaning, for the book concludes with a dire warning:

\textit{There is a home for all truly penitent prodigals IN HEAVEN; and there is a home for all impenitent ones, but it is - IN HELL.} \textsuperscript{18}

Yet, taken over all, the object of the book is manifestly twofold: to train young men to be effective on earth as well as to prepare them for heaven. Although ‘This world is \textit{not} our home,’ there is a chapter entitled ‘RELIGION VIEWED AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING THE TEMPORAL INTERESTS OF ITS POSSESSOR,’ in which the reader is asked, ‘Do you wish to prosper and get on in the world?’ and is told ‘it is quite lawful for you to wish it, you \textit{ought} indeed to wish it...’ (Italics original. Quotations from p. 119.) According to James, if there was no home on earth worth having, there was apparently something very like one.

\textsuperscript{15} Whilst the use of a number of R.T.S. publications in this chapter was initially an accidental bias, this balance has not been changed as the views expressed in the texts are known to have been acceptable to a broad range of opinion within the Christian churches. The R.T.S. agenda was to provide non-sectarian, non-doctrinal material that was conducive to the promotion of the Christian life. Whilst virulently anti-Romanist, its policy-making bodies included representatives from all shades of mainstream Protestant thought. The distribution of these texts indicates an even broader acceptability amongst ‘consumers.’ For details of the composition of the R.T.S. Executive Committee and of the variety of bodies applying for grants of books and tracts, see the Minutes of the Executive Committee, held amongst the Records of the United Society for Christian Literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. See USCL/RTS fiche boxes 1-24 (1799-March 1953).

\textsuperscript{16} John Angell James, \textit{The Young Man From Home}, (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d. [inscribed 1892]). (Hereafter, \textit{The Young Man From Home}.)

\textsuperscript{17} See, for some examples, \textit{The Young Man From Home}, p. 7, p. 37, p. 39, p. 80, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{18} Capitals and emphasis original. See \textit{The Young Man From Home}, p. 159.
James was by no means alone in his ambivalence. Along with the rise of ‘domestic’ religion came a flowering of domestic-religious literature of all kinds, which absorbed these discourses and refined and perpetuated them without necessarily clarifying anything. The earthly/heavenly homes concept was a popular one though, as has been noted, even religious writings shifted from the hierarchical to the identificatory model. Yet even when the two models were used consistently within a text, they could be juxtaposed within the same journal without anyone questioning their theological content. For example, *The Sunday at Home* magazine contains articles representing both strands of thought. An article entitled, like John Angell James’ book, ‘Leaving Home’ begins with the following:

A shadow of pathos falls over the brightest domestic scene, if, as we gaze upon it, we reflect that it cannot last long, for if death does not enter the little circle, withdrawing one after another until it shrinks to nothingness, then life will beckon each away, to form new circles elsewhere.

It ends with the lines, perhaps from a hymn, ‘Parting dies outside the door/Of Universal Home.’

This article clearly adopts the hierarchical model. The opening lines immediately point to the unsatisfactory nature of earthly home life: it is not permanent, whereas the ‘Universal Home’ is eternal. In the ‘Universal Home, there will be no more partings. By contrast, an article entitled ‘A South Aspect,’ to be found in the same volume of the magazine, seems to be making an identification, certainly between earth and heaven (through the presence of Jesus), even if the word ‘home’ is not used:

Cheerless is the room without Him, whatever its earthly aspect. Warm and sunny is the suffering bed where He is welcome, even though there be no earthly comfort round it.

Rosa Carey necessarily devoted a great deal more space to temporal than to spiritual homes. Though overtly and sincerely religious, she was first and foremost a writer of novels and she could not have sustained an ‘other-worldly’ discourse continually. Most of her writings are fictions permeated with religion rather than being tracts thinly veiled by fictions. Yet allusions to a connexion between the earthly home and the heavenly home are to be found in most of her novels. In many cases, allusions to the heavenly home are merely conventional euphemisms for the process of dying. Thus, in *Heriot’s Choice*, Aunt Milly says of her niece who is desperately ill, ‘I think she wishes to know if God means to take her home’ and in *Cousin Mona* [1895], the eponymous heroine says of her brother, ‘God has... taken him home first.’

However, Carey can, like James, shift between identifying the heavenly with the earthly home and ranking them hierarchically. For example, in *Our Bessie* [1888-9], Carey begins on the identificatory

---

model. She has the eponymous heroine say of her sister who has died, 'Hatty has been six weeks in her new home.'

Previously, the narrator has told the reader that Bessie 'would creep softly into a certain empty room,' her dead sister's room, to say her prayers. There,

Sometimes as she prayed the sense of her sister's presence would come over her strongly; she could almost feel the touch of the thin little hands.... (Ibid., p. 186)

As she prays in the room where her sister has lived and died, Bessie can feel the presence of one who has 'gone home.' The reader is then directly addressed with the assurance that,

Somewhere, not here, but in the larger room of a purified existence, your beloved one lives, breathes, nay, thinks of thee.

The creation of a parallel between 'a certain empty room' and 'the larger room' surely indicates that the spiritual and the temporal are very close, even if they do not occupy the same space. However, this comforting identification is eclipsed by a later image, which then establishes the more scripturally sound hierarchy. Bessie quotes Henri-Frederic Amiel to her fictional sister, Christine, who feels she had been unkind to the now-departed Hatty:

Life is short, and we never have too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us.

Thus, it would seem, at the last, that the earth is a not a home but the site of a pilgrimage during which there is nothing but suffering. Only at the end of the 'dark journey' of life on earth is there a real home. Yet Carey probably selected the passage as much for its social message about kindness as for its religious overtones. A more typical Evangelical message is contained in the paragraph above the quotation from Amiel:

22 R. N. Carey, Our Bessie, (London: The Office of the Girl's Own Paper, 1914 [1888-9]), p. 188. (Hereafter, OB.)
23 That people 'live' after death is biblically verifiable. See Matt 22:32. Luke 16:22-32 (the story of Dives and Lazarus) indicates that it is possible for the dead to think of the living. However, the same passage would indicate that the dead are not permitted to return in any way in order to edify the living. Carey treads on the very outskirts of orthodoxy here.
26 This austerity on Amiel's part is not surprising, given his background. He was a Protestant who had been brought up in Geneva. In her introduction to Amiel's Journal, Mrs Humphrey Ward remarks that Geneva was a town 'in which the Beautiful had been for centuries regarded as the rival and the enemy of the True.' See p. xiii.
'think... of how, by your waywardness, you have wounded the loving heart of Jesus.... Let the sense of Hatty's loss send you to Him in penitence for pardon.'

For both practical and compassionate reasons Carey most often uses the identificatory model. If earthly homes can be made to resemble in some faint way the Heavenly Home, this increases the dignity of domestic work and gives it additional meaning; housework becomes Heaven-work. However, even more importantly, such an identification tempers the starkness of death and the austerity of the established religion. Certainly Carey's characters who see a connexion between the home on earth and the home above are better comforted in cases of bereavement than their more theologically correct counterparts.

Thus, when Olive in Heriot's Choice sings her dead mother's favourite hymn - 'I had forgotten everything. I thought mamma was singing it with us, and it seemed so beautiful.' - she feels that the family, divided by death, has become reconstituted.27 By this act of faith, the family home is still complete even though her mother is no longer physically with her.28 However, to her brothers, this reminder of their mother is a reminder only of their great loss:

'One's most sacred feelings trampled upon mercilessly... it is unpardonable.... Such cruel heedlessness deserves reproof, but it is all lost on Livy; she will never understand how we feel about these things. (HC, pp. 77-8)

Similarly, Mr Brett, the clergyman in At The Moorings [1904], knows that he would be lonely if he had not the thought that his dead mother was always near him:

'One never loses one's mother.... I do not know that I am fanciful or superstitious, but I have an odd belief in my mother's nearness. One cannot argue on such matters, but love teaches us many things. I should not care to part with my special creed, I am not so enamoured of loneliness.'29

The recipient of these confidences agrees with him but notes that '[t]here is too little faith in this world' and that '[p]eople are far too ready to bury their dead and to forget' (Ibid.).

27 HC, p. 79.
28 Cf. also Felicia Hemans, The Faith of Love, lines 37-48:
Nor shut mine ear to the song of old,
Though its notes my pangs renew.
-Such memories deep in my heart I hold,
To keep it pure and true.

'By the holy instinct of my heart,
By the hope that bears me on,
I have still my own undying part
In the deep affection gone.

'By the presence that about me seems
Through night and day to dwell,
Voice of vain bodings and fearful dreams!
-I have breathed no last farewell!

Yet an impressive feature of Rosa Carey’s writing is her sense of proportion. Carey, like James, wrote with one eye on heaven but the other very firmly on earth. Possibly the best example of this balance of priorities is to be found at the conclusion to *Doctor Luttrell’s First Patient* [1897]. The elderly widow, Madge Broderick, whilst looking heavenward, counts her temporal blessings. She sometimes tells her niece,

“I have two lovely homes... One here with you and Marcus and the darling children, and one in the ‘many mansions’ where Fergus and baby boy wait for me.”

Nor is Madge unwilling for this state of affairs to remain. The sentence which follows, the last in the novel, reads, ‘And as she said this a radiant smile would light up her features like sunshine.” Carey manages to balance the necessity for a home on earth, in both its physical and its spiritual manifestations, with the scriptural assertion that life is a pilgrimage and that death could come at any time. She does this, not by denying the presence of death but by domesticating it. By small acts of faith, some characters in her novels retain their family circles unbroken even though death has intervened.

**Intimations of Immortality**

However, Carey also appears to subvert the austerity of the established religion by filling out more orthodox pieties with allusions to the early work of William Wordsworth. This entails another range of sentimental heresies though these do not, in themselves, have even the semblance of biblical authority.

In keeping with her interest in maintaining the family circle even when family members die, she seems to show particular sympathy with Wordsworth’s contention that without a sense of immortality there could be no love. In the first of his *Essays Upon Epitaphs* [1810], Wordsworth writes that,

> the sense of immortality, if not co-existent and twin birth with Reason, is amongst the earliest of her offspring... it is to me inconceivable, that the sympathies of love towards each other, which grow with our growth, could ever attain new strength, or even preserve the old, after we had received from the outward senses the impression of death... if the same were not counteracted by those communications with our internal Being, which are anterior to all

---

30 R. N. Carey, *Doctor Luttrell’s First Patient*, initially serialised in the *Girl’s Own Paper* October 3, 1896 - March 20, 1897. Quotation from March 20, 1897, p. 397. Madge’s reference to ‘many mansions’ is an allusion to John 14:2. On the subject of Carey’s unorthodox theology, it might be added that ‘baby boy’ does not have a name. If this is because he died before he was baptised then, theologically speaking, Madge could not meet him in heaven. The *Book of Common Prayer* states that, ‘None can enter the Kingdom of God, except that he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the Holy Ghost’ (p. 181).

31 See also Carey’s last novel, *The Key of the Unknown* [1909], in which a bereaved son ‘who never forgets his mother,’ nevertheless welcomes his father’s second wife. He writes to her,

> ‘It has always been my belief that those who have gone before into the other world... are able in some way to enter into the joys and sorrows of those they loved here. And if I am right, I can imagine how our dear mother will rejoice to know that father has so kind a companion to cheer his loneliness. I know [my brothers] are as relieved as I am that he has someone to care for him.’ [pp. 175-6]

The focus of the passage is on family relationships which are not severed by death: the first wife, in her heavenly home, is believed to entertain nurturant thoughts about the home on earth. However, the sorrowful husband is not denied consolation with a second wife on this account.
these experiences.... [I]f the impression and sense of death were not thus counterbalanced, such a hollowness would pervade the whole system of things... that there could be no repose, no joy. Were we to grow up unfostered by this genial warmth, a frost would chill the spirit, so penetrating and powerful, that there could be no motions of the life of love; and infinitely less could we have any wish to be remembered after we had passed away from a world in which each man had moved about like a shadow. (My emphasis.)

Wordsworth thereby asserts that the ability to love is based upon the intuitive knowledge that loving others is a safe investment of feeling. The human soul is immortal so the object of the affections is never lost.

With more feeling than theological accuracy, Carey, too, describes the advent of the spiritual into the temporal and the promise of a specific kind of immortality. In The Old, Old Story [1894], a temporal love made possible because of a guarantee of the eternal is the experience of a long-married couple, Clemency and Reuben Garrick. For part of the story, Clemency is away from home and Reuben can only visit her for a few minutes each day. Yet, on his departure,

Clemency would watch him until he was out of sight, and then go back to her work with the love-light still in her eyes - that strange, mysterious radiance, God-given and divine in its origin, and which is as lovely in aged eyes as in the eyes of youth.

The much younger Reginald’s quick, ardent love [for his fiancée, Gloden,] was only a flickering torch as yet, compared to the steady lamp lighted in Clemency’s quiet eyes. It takes a lifetime of proving and bearing before the full mellow glow can be reached, that light that comes from God, and burns to all eternity.

The ‘proving and bearing’ that Clemency has undergone suggests Wordsworth’s notion of ‘the sympathies of love... towards each other, which grow with our growth,’ whilst the light which will burn ‘to all eternity’ bespeaks ‘the impression and sense of death counter-balanced’ by ‘those communications with [the] internal Being, which are anterior to... experiences [of death].’

---


33 R. N. Carey, The Old, Old Story, (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1900 [1894]), p. 328. (Hereafter, The Old, Old Story.) Here, Carey steps dangerously near to heresy, for the Bible states three times that ‘...in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage’ (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35.) Carey could probably escape the charge on the grounds that they will love each other through eternity rather than remain married in the earthly sense. The notion that marriage might continue after death is suggestive of Swedenborg. See Emanuel Swedenborg, A Compendium of the Theological Writings, ed. Rev. S.M. Warren (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1909), pp. 444-458, especially p. 455: ‘They who are in love that is truly conjugal look to what is eternal.’

34 Cf. also Wordsworth’s Ode, Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood [first published 1807], (hereafter called Intimations of Immortality or ‘the Ode’), stanza IX:

Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither
Can in a moment travel thither....

For the full text of the poem see Works, pp. 587-590.
Given her staunch Anglicanism, it seems unlikely that Carey sympathised deeply with the notion that immortality could be intuited through the ‘internal Being’ or self rather than through the person of Jesus. Still less would it seem possible that she could countenance the non-Trinitarian theism of Wordsworth’s Ode, *Intimations of Immortality*. Yet, in her novel, *Heriot’s Choice*, Carey appears to approach the philosophy of the latter by giving her young heroine, Olive, an unusually direct intimation of the hereafter. Close to death, Olive feels as though she is substantially reunited with her dead mother. However, she does not die because her father and brother recall her to temporal life. The experience is related twice, first to her Aunt Milly:

‘it was only Cardie’s voice that brought me back... I was falling - falling into dark, starry depths, full of living creatures, wheels of light and flame seemed everywhere, and then darkness. I thought mamma had got me in her arms, she seemed by me through it all, and then I heard Cardie say I should break his heart, and then he sobbed, and papa blessed me. I heard some gate close after that, and mamma’s arms seemed to loosen from me, and then I knew I was not dying.’ *(HC, pp. 190-1)*

Up until this point, Olive articulates her experience in terms reconcilable with the Christian tradition, the gate representing the entrance to heaven and her mother’s presence being a pretty conceit in keeping with the notion of going to the eternal home. It is when she relates her experience a second time that her narrative runs against the grain of normative Christianity. She tells a family friend, ‘I know what death means now. When I come to die, I shall feel I know it all before.’ *(HC, p. 193)*. This, predictably, brings about an orthodox Christian response:

‘But you did not die, dear Olive!’ exclaimed Ethel, in a startled voice. ‘No one can know but Lazarus and the widow’s son; and they have told us nothing.’

Yet Olive’s reply is an assertive ‘all the same I shall always feel that I know what dying means.’ She continues, occasionally interrupted by an awed audience,

‘When I close my eyes I can bring it all back... the deadly shuddering cold creeping over my limbs, everyone weeping round me, and yet beyond a great silence and darkness; we begin to understand what silence means then.’

‘A great writer once spoke of “voices at the other end of silence,”’ returned Ethel...

---

36 Late-twentieth-century scholars are divided as to whether the *Ode* is about literal or figurative immortality. J. A. Hodgson discusses the two basic schools of thought, humanist interpretations and transcendental interpretations (basically Christian), before going on to make his own analysis. I take Hodgson’s stance of non-Christian theism. See J.A. Hodgson, *Wordsworth’s Philosophical Poetry 1797-1814*, (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 104-9. However, of most importance here is Rosa Carey’s response. This cannot be known in any absolute sense. Any estimate of her belief in the matter can only be based upon a knowledge of her own Christian adherence and upon the reception of Wordsworth’s poetry in the late-nineteenth century.
37 The idea of a heavenly gate has a biblical basis. See Matt. 16.19, in which Jesus says to Peter ‘And I will give unto thee the keys of the keys of the kingdom of heaven’. Thus, (Saint) Peter is envisaged as being the keeper of a literal door or gate.
'But silence itself - what is silence? - One sometimes stops to think about it, and then its grandeur seems to crush one. What if silence be the voice of God!' (Ibid.)

Olive’s experience of a ‘great silence’ beyond the noisy temporal weeping around her is strongly suggestive of Wordsworth’s contention that it is possible to view the temporal and the eternal simultaneously. In his Ode, Wordsworth writes of the shadowy recollections of immortality which make ‘Our noisy years seem moments in the being / Of the eternal Silence.’39 As if to emphasise the Wordsworthian nature of her intimation of immortality, Carey has Olive, who is herself a poet, look out of the window into a landscape located only about thirty miles from Grasmere.40 There, she could see the dark violet fells, the soft restful billows of green, [and] silver splashes of light through the trees. How peaceful and quiet it all looked. (HC, p. 193)

Olive’s dispirited appraisal of the landscape recalls the worthy rather than ecstatic determination on Wordsworth’s part to make the best of Nature’s ‘habitual sway’ rather than the ‘delight’ of immortality. Wordsworth writes:

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves,
Forbid not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.41

That living under the ‘more habitual sway’ is not Olive’s choice is indicated by the explicitly Christianized passage which immediately follows the description of the fells:

Ah! if it had only been given to her to walk in those green pastures and ‘beside the still waters of the Paradise of God;’ if that day which shall be known to the Lord ‘had come to her when “at eventide it shall be light;”’- eventide! alas! for her there must still remain the burden and heat of the day - sultry youth, weariness of premature age, ‘light that shall be neither clear nor dark,’ before that blessed eventide should come, ‘and she should pass through the silence and into the rest beyond.’42

---

39 Cf. also Amiel’s Journal, p. 21, ‘O silence, thou art terrible! ...Thou showest us within ourselves depths which make us giddy, inextinguishable needs, treasures of suffering’; p. 130, ‘The divine state par excellence is that of silence and repose, because all speech and all action are in themselves limited and fugitive.’

40 Poems purported to be by Olive are to be found on pp. 178-9. They were actually written by Carey’s long-time friend and house-mate, Helen Marion Burnside, a published poet and author. The novel is set primarily in Kirkby Stephen, a village Carey knew well. Her brother-in-law, Canon Simpson, was the clergyman there for a number of years.

41 Intimations of Immortality, stanza XI (Is. 191-195). In chapter V. of the same novel, Olive’s sister, who also misses her dead mother, has a fit of crying and finally falls into a healthy sleep; ‘that kindly foster-nurse Nature often taking restorative remedies of forcible narcotics into her own hands.’ Cf. Wordsworth’s Ode, stanza VI: ‘The homely nurse doth all she can / To make her Foster-child, her Inmate man, / Forget the glories he hath known....’

42 HC, pp. 193-4. See also Psalm 23:2; Zechariah 14:7; Matthew 20:12.
Nor does this overtly Christian conclusion to the episode satisfactorily contain Olive’s communicable experience of dying. Olive remains a female Wordsworth who both has and shares intimations of immortality.

It is very unlikely that Carey deliberately introduced these allusions to provide a non-Christian element into her writing and, indeed, had she been deemed heretical by either her readers or her reviewers, comment would certainly have been made. For Heriot’s Choice was initially serialised in The Monthly Packet, a publication with an extremely High Church bias, which had as its editor the pro-Oxford Movement novelist, Charlotte Yonge. Nor was she alone in alluding to Wordsworth’s early poetry in conventional religious contexts. The Rev. H. C. Lees is once again a good case in point. The latter describes Jesus as having come from heaven to earth,

"not in utter nakedness" even along the valley-road of incarnation, but "trailing clouds of glory" from God Who is His Home.

The more likely explanation is that such writers permitted themselves a great deal of literary licence. They made their allusions safely, if not unthinkingly. When Wordsworth wrote his Ode, he was still far from being religious in the conventional sense but, by the time of his death in 1850, he was the poet of the Establishment; a friend to both the Church of England and the Oxford Movement. Seamus Heaney goes so far as to suggest that, ‘As the years proceeded, Wordsworth became more an institution than an individual.’ He was also Poet Laureate, an honour later denied to the more obviously heretical 

---

43 Heriot’s Choice was serialized in The Monthly Packet between July 1877 and October 1879.
44 Lees 1915, p. 2. Wordsworth writes:
   Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
   The Soul that rises in us, our life’s Star
   Hath had elsewhere its setting,
   And cometh from afar:
   Not in entire forgetfulness,
   And not in utter nakedness,
   But trailing clouds of glory do we come
   From God, who is our home....

See Ode, stanza V. Notably Lees does not claim that ordinary human souls arrive on earth in the same way. See also Lees 1915, p. 98: ‘the child is the father of the man.’

45 William Blake described Wordsworth as a ‘Heathen Philosopher’ (see Critics on Wordsworth, ed. Raymond Cowell, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973), p. 14). However, school-books make no note of this. J. Logie Robertson, M.A., A History Of English Literature, third edition, revised, (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and sons, MDCCC), notes of Wordsworth that, ‘Nature to him was a living thing, the expression of a universal spirit, which communicated its own thoughts in direct impulses to man through the medium of hills and valleys, starry skies and flowing streams [etc.]’ (p. 257). J. M. D. Meiklejohn, The English Language: Its Grammar, History and Literature, 28th edition enlarged, (London: Meiklejohn and Holden, 1907) speaks merely of Wordsworth’s unaffected style and suggests that ‘[h]e drew aside poetry from questions and interest of mere society and the town to the scenes of Nature and the deepest feelings of man as man.’ (p. 416). Whilst in each case the word ‘Nature’ is capitalised, the concept does not appear to be treated in any religious sense.

Swinburne. These credentials would probably have been sufficient for Carey and, indeed, for Lees; they would have needed to look no further.

‘Their graves are green, they may be seen’
Whatever the theological differences between Carey’s religious beliefs and the original conception of Wordsworth’s *Ode*, the two writers certainly shared an interest in the physical presence of graves. In particular, parallels may be drawn between Carey’s characters who visit the graves of their loved ones and the little girl in Wordsworth’s popular poem, *We Are Seven* [published 1800]. In *We Are Seven*, Wordsworth has his little cottage girl insist that her dead brother and sister are still part of her life whilst the narrator vainly tries to convince her otherwise. The narrator suggests that “‘If two are in the church-yard laid, / Then ye are only five.’” but the little girl lists her evidence to the contrary.

‘Their graves are green, they may be seen,’
The little maid replied.
‘Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side

‘My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

‘And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

(*Works*, p. 83-4)

Given the variety of tasks performed at the grave-side, the little cottage girl effectively still lives with her siblings. She sings to them, eats with them and performs her domestic duties by their side. She even lives with them in a literal sense: her home is ‘the church-yard cottage’ (l. 23). As Alan Gardiner succinctly explains,

The adult is capable of mathematical calculation but lacks the child’s intuitive awareness of eternal nature. Interestingly, it is the narrator who holds the conventional religious notion of life after death, telling the child that her brother and sister are ‘in Heaven’ (l. 62). But to the child Heaven is an
Carey once again appears to have found a visual image satisfying without considering the theological implications. As a Christian, she certainly would not have considered Heaven to be an irrelevance. However, as has also been demonstrated, she did not consider that family members were lost in death. Thus, in *Heriot's Choice*, the visionary Olive describes her weekly visits to her mother's grave in terms very little different to those used in *We Are Seven*:

'I can come and pour out all my trouble to her, just as I used to...[S]ometimes I fancy she answers me, not in speaking, you know, but in the thoughts that come as I sit here... Others may laugh at it... but it is impossible to believe mamma can help loving us where she is; and she always liked us to come and tell her everything, when we were naughty, or if we had anything nice happening to us.'

Nor is this the only instance where Carey emphasises the visiting of a loved one rather than simply the visiting of a grave. The narrator in *Basil Lyndhurst* tells how she takes her brother's children to where their mother is buried:

'It seemed a sort of weekly treat to the children; even Willie would plead to go. 'It is my turn to go to mother!' he would say. 'And mine, too,' Girliie would chime in; 'I'm mother's dirl, too!'. It was wonderful how much we found to do, how busy the children would be. Sometimes they brought their little watering pots, or planned what flowers they would plant for the summer; they would hush their little voices as they talked, as though they feared to wake that tender mother.

Whatever the theological implications, this particular picture of children working and playing around the grave of their mother is a soothing and attractive one. A possible explanation as to why Carey portrays death in this way is to be found in another of her novels, *At the Moorings*. Here, two characters, Sheila [Miss Lassiter] and Betty examine the 'truth' value of euphemistic statements about death:

'So many of us have died, our "green gardens" fill fast...

'I like that idea "green gardens",' observed Miss Lassiter thoughtfully; 'it seems to veil so prettily the bald grim fact of death. I have had more than one argument with my brother on that very subject.... he once said that you might as well... plant flowers on a rock as to disguise that one stupendous reality "by mere meretricious word-embroidery".'

'Your brother must be a pessimist,' [Betty] said....

---

48 HC, p. 70. Cf. also Felicia Hemans, *The Message to the Dead*, ls. 41-4:  
And tell our gentle mother,  
That on her grave I pour  
The sorrows of my spirit forth,  
As on her breast of yore.  
'Ve have lost three children, Mrs John, - two baby boys and May; but we always speak of our six children.'  
Another instance of children playing in a church-yard and putting flowers onto a grave, though not that of a family member, is to be found in R. N. Carey, *The Angel of Forgiveness*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1911 [1907]), pp. 112-4.
Perhaps you are right; but his pessimism harms no-one but himself. And after all... men look at things from such a different standpoint. "Word-embroidery", as he calls it, is dear to the feminine mind.'

'Yes, I suppose so; but all the same I like things to be true.... I never had time for pretty conceits that had no real meaning. It was [my sister] Martha who used to talk about the "green gardens" when we were children; and when Rosie and Drummond and Willie died, we used to go every week to plant flowers and tidy our gardens. When I was a tiny mite, I used to say that they were buried flowers, which would sprout into angels one day, and I really believed it.'

A sweet expression crossed Miss Lassiter's face, but she kept her thoughts to herself....

Here, Carey suggests that it is legitimate to use 'word-embroidery,' so long as it has a basis in truth. Moreover, such 'word-embroidery' tastefully veils that which would otherwise be devastating to live with. Miss Lassiter's 'sweet expression' indicates to the reader that 'green gardens' and 'buried flowers... sprout[ing] into angels' are as near to the 'true' as is the 'the bald grim fact of death' itself. Where both versions represent the truth, Carey chooses the more positive of the two. Here is another kind of sentimental heresy in which those who are bereaved never lose the person who has died. Something tangible as well as something immortal remains. This borders on the heretical because, within the Christian tradition, the soul should be regarded as in Heaven and hence far away, whilst the body should be seen as a mere shell. Yet, because Carey provides an obviously orthodox religious basis to her novels, this heresy, like any others she uses to provide comfort for her readers is rendered invisible.

Carey also appears to have shared Wordsworth's belief in the greater social utility of graves. According to the latter, a grave-stone is erected 'for a satisfaction to the sorrowing hearts of the survivors' but, even if it only bears the deceased person's name and dates of birth and death, it also contributes to the preservation of the extended family and to the stability of the community (Selected Prose, p. 327). In the third of his Essays on Epitaphs, Wordsworth argues that,

As... the name is mostly associated with others of the same family, this is a prolonged companionship, however shadowy; even a tomb like this is a shrine to which the fancies of a scattered family may repair in pilgrimage; the thoughts of the individuals, without any communication with each other, must oftentimes meet here. - Such a frail memorial then is not without its tendency to keep families together; it feeds also local attachment, which is the tap-root of the tree of Patriotism. (Selected Prose, pp. 370-1)

51 ATM, pp 6-7. (See The Old, Old Story, p. 423 for another reference to a 'green garden.') Similarly, in Heriot's choice, Ethel imagines that her little sister who has died is growing up in heaven, taught by angels (see p. 131). On this occasion, Carey quotes some apt lines from Longfellow's poem, Resignation:

Not as a child shall we again behold her,
For when with raptures wild
In our embraces we again enfold her,
She will not be a child;

But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion...

For the full text, see The Poetical Works of Longfellow, (London: Ward Locke and Co., 1882), pp. 149-50. This particular sentimental belief actually has some biblical basis. See 1 Cor. 13:11-12, in which there is an analogy between a child growing to adulthood on earth and the partial earthly knowledge to be exchanged for perfect knowledge at some stage after death.
Given Carey’s preoccupation with the home and the family, it is easy to see why the image of ‘a frail memorial... not without its tendency to keep families together’ might have appealed. However, Wordsworth’s notion of ‘local attachment’ may also have interested her. Wordsworth explores this sense of belonging which graves can inspire in a little more detail in the first of the Essays Upon Epitaphs. In this essay, his generic description of worship in a country parish-church has a comforting, domestic quality about it which makes the regular juxtaposition of the quick and the dead appear truly desirable. To Wordsworth, the people buried in the country churchyard are yet a part of the society; they provide the living with a sense of history, a sense of community and a lesson about the future:

The sensations of pious cheerfulness, which attend the celebration of the sabbath-day in rural places, are profitably chastised by the sight of the graves of kindred and friends, gathered together in that general home towards which the thoughtful yet happy spectators themselves are journeying. Hence a parish-church, in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of community of the living and the dead; a point to which are habitually referred the nearest concerns of both. (Selected Prose, p. 330)

It is possible that Carey looked to this concrete view of the graveyard as representing past, present and future when she wrote the description of the ruined Croft Church in her novel, No Friend Like a Sister [1906]:

Centuries ago, the Croft Church had been the parish church, until Cromwell’s Roundheads had destroyed it. Later on, a little graveyard had been made in the ruins. One arch and the font were still in good preservation, but so many bricks had been removed that only the foundation of the walls remained. The graves were few and quite uncared for but... Elinor had been surprised to hear that now and then there were baptisms in the old ruins, and that not many years before the marriage service had been read over an elderly pair.... Neither of them had been any further than [the two nearest villages], and Dan Winter had stoutly refused to be wedded ‘unless th’ould parson would tie him and Liza up in the Croft Church.’

The passage contains everything that one would expect from someone who was influenced by Wordsworth: centuries of unwritten rural history; contented (or at least placid) rural people; graves from the past but pointing the living towards the ‘general home’; and baptisms representing the temporal future.

Yet whilst the church-yard seen in this light is an object lesson for the community at large, Carey utilizes its concrete presence to make statements about the home and the private sphere. If one of her fictional homes overlooks a churchyard and the inhabitants are comfortable with its proximity, then this is a sign that such characters have authorial/narratorial approval. On many occasions, a family is to be found living next to the churchyard simply because the home is a vicarage. This is the case in novels such as Heriot’s Choice, Robert Ord’s Atonement [1873] and Mary St John [1882]. However, in other

---

cases the location appears to be less accidental. In *The Household of Peter* [1905], the eponymous hero and his sisters live close to the churchyard in which departed members of their own family are buried;

The Red House was nearly opposite St Andrew’s [church]. Across the wide boulevard was... a row of low white cottages abutting on the church-yard. The outlook was singularly quiet and peaceful, and hallowed by the thought of dear ones laid to rest in the shady corner behind St Andrew’s.\(^{53}\)

The ‘peaceful’ and ‘hallowed’ outlook of The Red House indicates a restful and religiously motivated home and is suggestive of the ‘local attachment’ favoured by Wordsworth. Yet, in *Queenie’s Whim* [1881], as much may be deduced about the inhabitants of Church-Stile House even though the adjoining church-yard contains no family graves. Discussion of the churchyard highlights the differences in character between the various members of the Clayton family and reveals their attachment to both to each other and to their home. Significantly, the only truly dissenting voice, the eponymous Queenie, is, at this point, an outsider:

Within a few feet were tall palings, and a granite obelisk; then some sparsely scattered tombstones...

‘I am afraid it strikes you as very dismal,’ said Langley softly, as they stood together at the windows...

‘I suppose one would get used to it in time,’ replied Queenie, somewhat evasively. Her healthy young vitality shivered a little at the incongruity between the warm cosiness of the life inside and the gleaming tombstones without, within a few feet of the fireside round which the family circle gathered.

‘But you think we ought always to be reading Hervey’s *Meditations* and considering our latter end,’ broke in Cathy gaily. ‘Nothing of the kind, I assure you; Garth grumbles and declares that he will build a new house for himself higher up the hill, and Ted agrees with him; but I don’t mind it in the least, and Langley likes it.’

‘Do you?’ asked Queenie... curiously.

‘I love it,’ was the quiet answer.\(^{54}\)

In this extract, only the outsider is depressed by the churchyard. All the permanent occupants of the home are simply responding, in good-humoured fashion, according to their roles within the household. Garth and Ted, the men of the house, are merely taking advantage of the Englishman’s supposed right to grumble, though they have no real objection. Cathy, the flippant child, delights in shocking her audience but it is evident that she loves her home. However, Langley, as a successful home-maker, who takes seriously her rôle as creator and sustainer of the household ethos, is completely open about her ability see something positive in the presence of graves. Her ‘quiet answer,’ based upon the confidence that comes from a proper understanding of graves, indicates that she will produce a tranquil, religiously-motivated and securely-rooted home environment for everyone else. The other members of the household can afford to grumble or be flippant: none of them seriously object to the grave-yard and

---


what it stands for, and they have the home-maker, Langley, there to transmute death into religion on
their behalf.\footnote{55}{Cf. also Martha in \textit{At The Moorings} who transmutes graves into 'green gardens' (see quotation above).}

Queenie, the outsider, provides the only negative response: she mentally shivers. This is perhaps
because, at this stage, she has no home of her own, no graves of her own, no ‘local attachment’ and no-
one to provide her with a more positive/euphemistic view of death. Similarly, in \textit{No Friend Like A
Sister}, the loving sisters-in-law who live near the ruined Croft Church enjoy walking around the
grave-yard but their less happily-circumstanced friend, Agnes, finds the view depressing (p. 165).

Thus Carey and Wordsworth share two concepts relating to the physical presence of graves. The
resting places of the dead provide a meeting place (whether psychological or physical) for the family
who has lost a much loved member, and they express the history and stability of the community.
However, Carey has one further use for them as a device in her fiction. She uses the grave-yard as an
indicator of positive home ethos. In such households, characters have a strong sense of family
membership, are religious and they are attached to the locality in which they live. The positively-rated
proximity of the dead indicates that the characters are at peace with themselves and with each other.

Conclusion

As a writer who emphasised affectional familial relationships, Carey found it necessary to euphemize
the constant presence of death. For, although the united family was the ideal, she was compelled to
acknowledge that all families had to cope with the inevitable partings wrought by death. She also seems
to have been aware that even the most devout and resigned survivor needed a little more support and
encouragement than was supplied by the unmediated pages of the Bible. Thus, although the ostensible
moral/religious content of Carey’s writing is biblical in emphasis, her approach is far from being
fundamentalist.

Her attempts at consolation in the novels are, broadly speaking, of two orders: the purely psychological
and the tangible. As with many other writers of her time, she posits a connexion between the home on
earth and the heavenly home. However, she most often utilizes the popular notion that the temporal
home may be identified with its heavenly counterpart rather than the more orthodox scriptural notion of
hierarchical difference.

Such identification is an assurance to the bereaved that the family remains united in a spiritual-religious
sense on earth as well as being more satisfactorily reconstituted in Heaven.\footnote{56} The projection of the
positive institution of the home on earth onto the alien biblical exposition of death gives a comforting face of familiarity to the unknown and the unpreventable. Conversely, claiming that earthly homes partake of the divine means that it is possible to soften the harsher tenets of a religion that, taken to its logical conclusion, divides families, encourages adherents to be asocial, and bids people to be careless of this temporal world. However, Carey also mediated the stark physical presence of graves in order to suggest, along with Wordsworth, that they could be a temporal comfort and a meeting place for the family on earth.

A major function of Carey's novels appears to have been that of providing an interpretation of the established religion for the benefit of the reader. Her interpretation turns Christianity into a popular rather than an adept religion which makes allowances for human nature, especially for the domestic affections, rather than demanding austerity; a religion which permits both grief and homely consolation, using images more familiar than those found in the Bible. It provides a comprehensible version of heaven based on the experience of this world. Picturing a loved one as a flower sprouting into an angel, perfected in heaven, may well have had a more immediate appeal than any number of descriptions of heavenly cities; intimations of love from beyond the grave may have provided more comfort than any number of church services alone.

However, in conclusion, it is tentatively suggested that Carey constructed her sentimental heresies for another purpose than merely that the bereaved needed more comfort than that provided by the religion of the Book. It is suggested that she was also concerned that the official mediators of the book, the clergy, often failed to provide the comfort and spiritual nourishment so desperately needed by their congregations. Although most characters in Carey's novels who have notably erroneous religious beliefs or who express their discomfort about aspects of the Bible are children, very young women or uneducated country people, in a sense, they may be seen to represent a more wide-spread unease about the established church. They represent the notion that, doctrinally speaking, either their clergymen have not made the words of the Bible comprehensible and relevant or that the delivery of their sermons has been lacking in conviction.

A number of these references are amusing, though not without their poignancy. The 'Sister' referred to in this passage from Wee Wifie [1869] is a sister of charity:

56 For example, in Queenie's Whim, the child Emmie twice speaks of those who are waiting to meet her in heaven. See pp. 86-7 and p. 460.
57 See, for example, Matthew 10:21 'And brother shall deliver up brother unto death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents'; Matthew 8:22 'Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead'; Matthew 6:34 'take no thought for the morrow.'
little Tim, dying of his broken bones, whispered as "Our Sister" kissed him, "I am wishing you could die first, Sister, and then it would be first-rate, seeing you along with the gentry at the Gate;" for, to Tim's ignorant mind, the gentry of heaven were somewhat formidable. "And what am I to say to them, plase your honour? when they come up and says 'Good morning, Tim,' but if sister were along of them she would say, 'It is only Tim, and he never learnt manners nohow.'"58

Clearly, this fictional child does not lack belief in heaven. However, he seems to have a totally unbiblical belief that there are certain social qualifications for being accepted there.59 However, speeches by uneducated adults even more clearly imply a deflected or diffused criticism of an establishment which is failing them; an establishment that countenances clergymen who cannot relate to their congregations or provide any kind of personal example. Gale Warburton in No Friend Like A Sister is particularly subject to this kind of comment:

Sunday after Sunday the little flock gathered in Tylcote Church, listened with cold respect and reverence to their vicar's carefully delivered discourse, and, after browsing on the scanty pasturage provided for their nourishment, went home with perhaps the text still lingering in their memory.

'That was a grand text the vicar gave out this morning,' observed Caleb Strong, the little deformed bootmaker; 'I can't call to mind that I ever heard these words before - "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." My word, Liz, how he rolled out the words - it was like the swell of the organ or a poem; but the queer part is, I haven't a notion what he meant by it.... Caleb... spent his Sunday evening hunting vainly through his mother's old brown Bible for the text that had so fired his imagination.... (NFLAS, pp. 174-5)

Thus, for all his erudition, the vicar leaves even the most earnest seeker of spiritual enlightenment to flounder helplessly. Moreover,

Rev. Gale Warburton never visited his people; he had so little to say to them that it was embarrassing on both sides; he was not sufficiently in touch with them to make such visits either pleasant or profitable. He could decipher hieroglyphics and even converse in Hindustani, but the hearts of his parishioners were a sealed book to him. When they... asked for help, he was never known to refuse it; and when they sent for him, he would... go to the sick and dying; but it may be doubted whether those few beautifully read prayers yielded much comfort.

'The vicar's a graddy sort of chap, but he don't have much to say to a mon,' observed old Richard Fawcett.... he was speaking to his best friend Anna Keith, who was ministering to him, as she ministered to all the ailing bodies and minds in the neighbourhood of Crow Farm. 'He is turribly fine and learned, nae doubt, but the words seem more stone than grit, and fairly chokes me.' (NFLAS, pp. 175-6)

However, Carey's fictional clergy are criticized for a number of other reasons.60 For example, one vicar in Mary St. John, has such a soporific effect on his Sunday-school scholars that,
During the sermon most of the younger children fell asleep and dropped off their forms; some were picked up and shaken by the pale-faced teacher; others were propping their heavy heads against Mary. The vicar went droning on, excellent man, with his secondly and thirdly, and his slow summing-up of practical points. 61

Though preaching a 'practical' sermon, this particular clergyman cannot make them lively enough to be memorable.

As if for contrast, a successful clergyman is often to be found paired with an unsuccessful one. Thus, the aristocratic and erudite Gale Warburton may be compared with a visiting preacher, Forbes Rutherford, at whose sermon 'every soul seemed stirred to new emotion.' (NFLAS, p. 350). However, many much shorter sketches are to be found in the novels, in which the measuring of one man against another is made more explicit. In The Old, Old Story, the contrast is made between a vicar, Rev. Carrick, and his curate, Ewen Logan:

it must be owned that a little more of that charity that thinketh no evil would have added to Mr Logan's popularity and usefulness in his dealings with his flock.

'I don't hold with snipping talk myself,' observed one godly old woman; 'it converts no-one, and only makes ill-feelings. There's Nannie Stubbs gone clean against Mr Logan, in spite of his powerful sermons, and all because he tackled her too sharply about pleasureing on a Sunday evening. The vicar - God bless him! - would just have said, "Nannie, I have missed you the last Sunday or two; how's that, my woman?" in a friendly sort of way that would have given no offence. 62

The ardent Mr Logan speaks with painful accuracy of 'sabbath-breaking' but the pleasing and conciliatory fiction that her clergyman had missed her would have been more effective.

In addition, in cases where clergymen have zeal without warmth, erudition without enthusiasm or a basic lack of sympathy with their parishioners, Carey generally puts such conciliation as is possible into the hands of the laity rather than into the hands of other clergy. These characters are usually women of only moderate learning or average intellectual powers, 'word-embroider[ers]' rather than academics, who win others over to faith as much by love as by reason. Thus, in No Friend Like a Sister, the puzzling quotation from the Bible is found and explained to Caleb Strong by Rev. Warburton's much-slighted sister, Agnes; prayers and spiritual comfort for the dying Richard Fawcett are supplied by the lower-class Mrs Keith. Similarly, in The Old, Old Story, Mr Logan's mother dispenses 'goodies' to the

---


61 The Old, Old Story, p. 31. A similar contrast is provided by the vicar and the curate in Mary St. John. On p. 261 the vicar sends the children to sleep during the sermon; on p. 266 the curate asks his wife, "am I not bound to my people by a tie as holy and as binding as my marriage vows? Cf. Heriot's Choice, pp. 67 and 72.
elderly women of her son's new parish whereas he dispenses little but wholesome admonitions (*The Old, Old Story*, p. 436).

However, notwithstanding the implied criticism of the formal earthly medium, it is clear that Carey yet believed in the message. There seems to be no reason to doubt either Carey's adherence to the Church of England or her sincerity or orthodoxy as a Christian. (She herself taught a Sunday-School class for many years.) It would appear that she merely attempted to bring the ideals of the church to the hearth and the bond of affection associated with the family to the service of the church by whatever means were at her disposal. Thus, in spite of her sentimental heresies, the establishment religion was never seriously undermined. Rather, compensatory strategies of an unorthodox kind were brought to the aid of orthodoxy.
Conclusion

It is pertinent to conclude this study of Rosa Carey's fictional responses to the themes of insanity, 'spare' women, male dominance, the home and religion with some reference to how her work was regarded during her life-time. After all, she was writing for her contemporaries rather than for unknown posterity, even though value and meaning may still be attached to her writing today. It is also necessary to look back to the initial reception of her novels because she currently has no readership to speak of, even though she may have one in the future. However, in looking at Carey's work from any perspective, a major problem to be overcome is that of the paucity of secondary sources. Carey gave few formal interviews to the journalists of her day and there is very little dedicated criticism, past or present. Thus, it is necessary to turn to the reviews of her work that appeared in journals and newspapers during her life-time. Of course reviews, like any other texts, are subject to both personal idiosyncrasy and vested interest. Nevertheless, as readers themselves, reviewers at least manage to highlight some of the issues that interested the reading public of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The reviews of Carey's novels and those of her peers contain little by way of consensus as to what is desirable in the novel genre. Thus, in the early eighteen-eighties, one reviewer complains that a novel by Carey is marred by an 'undue obtrusion of the religious element' whilst another tartly remarks that a Mrs Lovett Cameron possesses 'descriptive power... higher than her moral teaching.' Similarly, in the early years of this century, one reviewer deems Carey's novel of the moment to be 'old-fashioned' because 'no attempt at epigrammatic dialogue is made' whilst another takes exception to Ellen

---

1 By far the most useful critical work to date is Jane Crisp, Rosa Nouchette Carey, Victorian Fiction Research Guides XVI (Queensland: Victorian Fiction Research Unit, 1989). This guide also lists a number of interviews with Carey. Articles about Carey not included by Crisp are one by Helen Black in Girl's Own Paper, 16 September 1897, pp. 801-2 and one by Helen Marion Burnside in The Girl's Realm Annual for 1902, pp. 313-7. However, each of these contains wording identical to Helen Black, Notable Women Authors of the Day, (London: Maclaren & Co., 1893 [1906]), pp. 145-156. As the 1893 material used in the articles of 1902 and 1906 is only partially revised and updated, the chronologies of these later articles (and that of Black 1906) may not be accurate.

2 As Carey's reviews cannot provide a full picture if they are taken in isolation, it is pertinent to place them within a broader context of novel-reviewing activity. Thus, the reviews studied, where not directly quoted and thus individually sourced, are from the following American and English journals and dated between 1868 and 1909. (That is, from the period of Carey's life when she was in print.)

- The Academy
- The Athenaeum
- The Bookman
- The Graphic
- The Leeds Mercury
- The Literary World
- The Nation
- The Nation
- The Pall Mall Gazette
- San Francisco Chronicle
- The Spectator
- The Woman's Signal

All reviews of novels appearing on the same page as a Carey review were scrutinized in order to gain an over-all impression of reviewing criteria. The majority of these reviews for Carey's novels are listed individually in Jane Crisp's monograph. (See note 1.)

3 Review of Mary St John in Academy, 9 December 1882, p. 411; review of In a Grass Country in Athenaeum, 26 September 1885, p. 398.
Thorneycroft Fowler's work because her characters are 'too brilliant to live' and their 'continued crackling of epigram' is 'almost overpowering.'\textsuperscript{4} And, of course, reviewers have differing ideas about the same book. Thus, Capel Frere, a character in Carey's novel \textit{For Lilias} (1885), is both a 'finished male portrait' and 'more than a bit of a bore.'\textsuperscript{5} Yet, even allowing for the lack of consensus, it is possible to identify three broad areas relating to the novel to which the reviewers addressed themselves throughout the period: analysis of technique; discussion of moral content; and classification according to genre and supposed readership.

Analysis of technique often amounts to discussion of characterisation and dialogue with regard to their credibility as representations of the real world. Carey comes in for a good deal of adverse comment under this heading. In 1897 a reviewer for \textit{The Literary World} suggests that her stories are 'so pure and high in their moral tone that we must not condemn them for their lack of reality' whilst in 1902 a reviewer for \textit{The Athenaeum} comments that 'Miss Carey's puppets and their manner of play are known and admired by many.'\textsuperscript{6} Even perfect verisimilitude is cause for complaint on one occasion. When \textit{Rue With A Difference} is reviewed by \textit{The Academy} in 1900, an innocuous piece of dialogue brings forth a tirade of indignation out of all proportion to the supposed offence:

the point is, not that the hostess should have so spoken, but that Miss Carey should have set the words down. The book is full of nothings - mild, inoffensive, and inexpressibly tedious. It is so negligible that in the very act of perusal you scarcely know whether you are reading it or not.\textsuperscript{7}

Yet other reviewers acknowledge the appeal of a novel containing more truth than excitement, one writing of \textit{At The Moorings} (1905) that,

its happenings are always within the limits of probability, and its men and women are delineated faithfully, sympathetically, and with knowledge of the gentler sides of humanity. The story is very skilfully handled....\textsuperscript{8}

However, to twentieth century eyes at least, the reviewers' major obsession throughout the period seems to have been, not with realism or its alternatives, but with matters of novel length and the constraints occasioned by the standard three-volume format. Dissatisfaction with the format is evinced as early as 1869, a dispirited reviewer for \textit{The Athenaeum} telling readers that '[i]f three-volume novels are a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{4}Review of \textit{At The Moorings} in \textit{Athenaeum} 24 December 1904, p. 869; review of \textit{Fuel of Fire} in \textit{Athenaeum}, 11 October 1902, p. 482.
\bibitem{5} \textit{Athenaeum} 26 September 1885, p. 398; \textit{Academy} 26 September 1885, p. 200.
\bibitem{6}Review of \textit{Dr Luttrell's First Patient} in \textit{Literary World} 6 November 1897, p. 279; review of \textit{Herb of Grace} in \textit{Athenaeum}, 11 January 1902, p. 45.
\bibitem{7} \textit{Academy}, 'Fiction Supplement,' November 3 1900, p. 413.
\bibitem{8} \textit{Bookman}, April 1905, p. 31.
\end{thebibliography}
necessity of life, we should try to make the best of them.9 By 1880 the murmurs are considerably louder. In *The Graphic* for 14 February a reviewer announces that the days of three-volume novels are over, and a little judicious “boiling down” will, as a rule, make most books more attractive.10 Carey novels escape criticism in this particular set of reviews but the length of her novels is commented upon frequently throughout her career. There are complaints that *Robert Ord’s Atonement* (1873) is of ‘unwieldy length’ and, (with more than a touch of exaggeration), that *The Mistress of Brae Farm* (1896) ‘would make about six of the ordinary volumes that we used to have in the novel of the past.’11

Three specific length-related criticisms are levelled at the three-volume novel. The first is that it tends to have a weak plot but strong individual episodes. As a result the shape of the narrative is obscured or plot development is hindered. Thus, Carey’s *Barbara Heathcote’s Trial* (1871) is deemed to be marred by ‘a want of concentration in the story’ and Mrs Humphrey Ward’s *Robert Elsmere* (1888) to suffer from ‘diffuseness.’12 A second criticism is that some authors ‘[pad] out’ their novels with material not essential to the plot in order to reach the length required by publishing contracts; and a third is that such long novels can be unnecessarily complicated by the introduction of too many events or characters.13 Carey is never accused of padding her novels with non-essential material but she is certainly accused of other kinds of excess. The most amusing version of this latter complaint is to be found in a review of *Mary St John* (1882):

[There is] altogether too much in her three volumes. The critic feels inclined to say to her what he says to his hair-cutter, ‘If you please, I want it thinned.’ There is too much talking, too many insignificant events, too long ‘waits’ between the acts of the drama.14

Critics of Carey’s other novels sometimes suggest that whole strands of plot could be profitably missed out or considerably reduced. Thus one reviewer complains that *The Old, Old Story* (1894) contains ‘long yarns about uninteresting persons’ whilst another demands to know why *The Mistress of Brae Farm* should detail ‘the love-troubles of Ruth, and the “shilly-shallies” between Mr Yolland and Sam

10 Review of *Mrs. Lancaster’s Rival* (anon.) in *Graphic*, 11 February 1880, p 182.
11 *Athenaeum*, 17 May 1873, p. 627; Supplement to *Spectator*, 26 June 1897, p. 896.
13 For example, the review of *Mrs. Lancaster’s Rival* in *Graphic*, 14 Feb., 1880 betrays as much about the novelist’s problem with the format as it does about the reviewer’s response to the novel itself:

She... has fallen into the habit... of padding her works until they fill the standard measure of three volumes. By no possible contrivance could the original book be spun out to such an inordinate length, and the authoress has been compelled to adopt the very questionable plan of adding a fresh story to the third volume.

14 *Academy*, 9 December 1882, p. 411. Similarly, in 1881, a review of Miss Beale, *Idonea* in *Academy*, 12 March 1881, p. 186, states that the author ‘has crowded her canvas with too many figures, with the result of a blurred conception on the mind of the reader.’
Evidently, Carey wrote ideal novels from a publisher's point of view but the form in which she excelled was far from popular with some critics.

In making judgements about novel length and structure, reviewers seem to be moving towards a kind of literary formalism based upon the male-orientated classical education that was de rigueur throughout the period. Such judgements appear to be informed by scholarly notions of satire, tragedy and epic, and by an appreciation of epigram, perhaps acquired from the non-fictional realm of belles-lettres. Aristotle's Poetics seems to be in particular requisition. The reviewers who object to 'want of concentration' or 'diffuseness' in novels appear to premise their remarks on Aristotle's maxim with regard to plot construction:

\[ \text{it is necessary that the parts of the action be put together in such a way that if any one part is transposed or removed, the whole will be disordered and disunified. For that whose presence or absence has no evident effect is no part of the whole.} \]

Where excellence is deemed to lie in a close-knit structure and the absence of superfluous matter, there is bound to be adverse criticism for the typical three-volume novel. The charge that Carey's Lover or Friend? (1890) is 'over long for the solution of its plot' appears to be closely allied to Aristotle's dictum on 'limit of magnitude.' Similarly, the description of a novel, called A Family Likeness, as 'a really workmanlike performance, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, all in their places and in due proportion,' is straight from the Poetics. Yet Aristotle's notion that tragedy is the highest form of art comes across more strongly than any dictum regarding structure. The reviewer who writes that one of Carey's novels contains 'plenty of conversation... but not many incidents or striking reflections' is bound to be dissatisfied if the Aristotelian standard requires that the text take for its guiding principles the 'imitation of a noble and complete action,' and the notion that 'the most important... [part] is the arrangement of the incidents.'

Given the 'domestic' content of most of Carey's novels, one would not expect recurrent discussions of classical themes to appear in reviews of her work at all. Indeed, of all the reviews in the sample, in only one instance is she charged with writing 'a rather melodramatic episode' in a manner that is both

---

15 Academy, 3 November 1894, p. 348; Supplement to Spectator, 26 June 1897, p. 896.
16 All quotations from Aristotle, the Poetics, are taken from Classical Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations, edited with commentaries by Alex Preminger, Leon Golden et al, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 108-139. This translation of the Poetics was actually made by Golden so the text is hereafter referred to as 'Golden 1974.' For this particular quotation, from chapter VIII of the Poetics, see Golden 1974, p. 116.
17 Athenaeum, 27 September 1890, p. 414. See also Poetics chapter VII: 'whatever length is required for a change to occur from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad... is sufficient limit of magnitude.' (Golden 1974, p. 116)
19 Review of Uncle Max in Athenaeum, 5 February 1887, p. 189; Poetics VI (Golden 1974, p. 114).
‘tedious’ and ‘a little tragi-comic’; and in only one case does a reviewer note with favour that ‘the second and third volumes of a novel ‘are not without their element of tragedy.’

However, this is not surprising: in Aristotelian terms, the place allocated to ‘domestic’ fiction such as that written by Carey - and one it fills quite well on account of its dissimilarity to classical tragedy - is that of classical comedy. The domestic novel details ‘probable incidents’ and happy endings rather than ‘human action and life’ typically ‘end[ing] in misfortune’; it utilizes ‘mean’ or conversational language rather than ‘language that has been artistically enhanced’; and its major characters are ‘baser men’ rather than great ones, if, indeed, they are men at all.

The classically-minded reviewer appears to depreciate the genre accordingly.

When reviewers discuss the moral content of novels, a key term in the general debate is that of Sensation. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* succinctly defines Sensation as ‘the production of violent emotion as an aim in works of literature or art.’ However, a more graphic description of the term, and one related specifically to the genre of the Sensation novel, is provided by a reviewer for *The Athenaeum* in 1868:

> it tells a story which from beginning to end abounds in incidents and coincidences inconceivable to ninety-nine out of every hundred of its readers, and to the solitary unhappy odd one only barely conceivable with wonderment... fond lovers who suddenly discover themselves to be nearly related to one another, and gallant officers who find themselves in a ball-room *vis a vis* to a forgotten victim to culpable gallantry ten years back, are not pictures that appeal to anything but imagination....

Carey was seldom accused of writing novels of this kind; rather, her work was described by the reviewers as being in antithesis to it. The following critique of her novel *Other People’s Lives* (1897) could have come from any review of her work - positive or negative - over the entirety of her writing career:

> When one is exhausted with hairbreadth escapes, or irritated by literary brilliance, or unnerved by the poser of social questions, one may safely turn to Miss Carey, for her books will help one to forget these

---

20 Review of *Not Like Other Girls* in *Academy* 22 March 1884, p. 199; review of *Lover or Friend?* in *Academy*, 11 October 1890, p. 315.

21 All material from Golden 1974. The *Poetics* on comedy: ‘Probable incidents’ (ch. IX, p. 117); happy endings (ch. XIII, p. 121); ‘mean’ or conversational language (the iambic metre as ‘conversational’ and associated with the development of comedy, also, writers of comedy ‘less dignified,’ ch. IV, pp. 111-112; ‘standard words’ as ‘mean’, ch. XXII, pp. 130-1); ‘baser men’ as the subject of comedy (ch. IV, p. 111, ch. V, p. 112). The *Poetics* on tragedy: ‘human action and life’ (ch. VI, p. 114); plots ‘end[ing] in misfortune’ (ch. XIII, p. 120); ‘language that has been artistically enhanced’ (ch VI, p. 113); tragedy about ‘noble subjects presented in an elevated metre’ (ch. V, p. 112).


23 The novel alluded to, *Nature’s Nobleman*, ‘By the Author of “Rachel’s Secret,’” is reviewed in *Athenaeum*, 5 December 1868, p. 750. However, the reviewer notes that neither this definition, nor the novel which it is designed to illuminate, cover all the nuances of the word. *Nature’s Nobleman* ‘is free from the most objectionable characteristics of its species. Not a single one of the seven deadly sins...crops up in it.’ (Ibid.)
things. Yet she can tell a story well and in good English, and her characters are singularly like the people we meet at a garden party.  

Indeed, reviewers represent Carey’s novels as being moral almost to a fault. For example, a review in *The Graphic* describes *Only the Governess* as,

an exceedingly pleasant novel, and likely to be deservedly popular. The virtue is extremely welcome, if only by way of a change; and the small beer of incident is bright and refreshing, as well as wholesome and sound.

However, adverse remarks about excessive or outdated morality multiply as the nineteenth century progresses, even her advocates perceiving that large numbers of readers would find her work old-fashioned and lacking in excitement. Thus the critic of *Other People’s Lives*, who admires Carey’s work despite a lack of ‘hairbreadth escapes... literary brilliance, or... social questions,’ writes kindly if somewhat sadly,

We are glad to see that a new and cheaper issue of Miss Rosa Nouchette Carey’s stories is announced by Messrs. Bentley, for the fact shows the existence among us of a taste too likely to be extinguished by the varied and piquant items in the menu now offered to readers of fiction. A generation or two ago she would naturally have been in vogue; nowadays one might have questioned whether there were room for so simple and unaffected a chronicle of commonplace people as is contained in her latest publication.

However, these fears, articulated in 1898, were only to be fully realised after another three decades. For, whilst the literary world changed around her, Carey continued to produce well-written fiction that was as out of date as marriage, maternity and household management could ever be. Meanwhile, the supposedly well-informed were reading - or writing - novels about the ‘New Woman.’

The third major topic discussed by reviewers is that of the classification of works of fiction, either in terms of content or in terms of supposed readership. Classificatory reviews range from those about novels with a purpose - a novel advocating the Married Woman’s Sister’s Bill, a ‘total abstinence’ tract - to novels dedicated to specific aspects of society - a novel of theatrical life, a hunting novel. In

---

24 *Literature*, 16 April 1898, p. 449. Yet even Carey, styled by the Fiction Supplement to *Academy*, 3 November 1900, p. 413, as a writer of ‘blameless romances of an austere etiquette’ was adversely criticized on moral grounds earlier in her career. Her lapses from grace include: allowing the eponymous heroine of *Queenie’s Whim* (1881) to fall in love with a man who is about to engage himself to someone else; placing the heroine of *Basil Lyndhurst* (1889) in the position of waiting for the hero’s first wife to die so that she can step into her shoes; and ‘adopting the ugly American habit of making all girls wiser than their mothers’ in *Not Like Other Girls* (1884). See *Academy*, 12 March 1881, p. 186; *Academy*, 20 July 1889, p. 36; *Academy*, 22 March 1884, p. 199.


26 *Literature*, 16 April 1898, p. 449.

addition, there are to be found the kinds of genre classification which would be exploited in later years by the larger publishing corporations. Thus, there are references to 'a police novel' and to 'Indian novels.' This obsession with classification grows rather than diminishing over the years. Reviews of Carey's novels become littered with judgements such as 'quite suitable for the school-room' and 'fairly passes muster in its class'; and the author herself becomes 'warrant for expecting a pretty love-story.'

The merchandising of Carey's books largely on her name becomes possible because she is both long-lived and prolific in output. There is the material with which to create a market for a predictable product; she becomes a known quantity. Neither reviewer nor review-reader is obliged to enjoy the product on offer but at least it is knowable and thus unproblematic.

However, the ultimate stage in the classification of novels appears to be reached when some journals make classification integral to journal structure. The single general review section is, on occasions, made to yield to a policy of reviewing all novels of a particular genre together. Hence, purchasers of The Literary World in June 1896 are presented with the option of reading (or avoiding) a selection of reviews solely on 'Novels of English life' and those reading the Fiction Supplement to The Academy in November 1900 are presented with a section of reviews entitled 'The Novel of Domesticity.' For better or worse, a book by Carey is reviewed under each of these headings. It seems that the commodification of the book, whether as author-product or as genre-product, had come to pass long before the existence of late-twentieth-century distribution networks and multi-media advertising.

An exploration of Carey's reviews and those of her peers thus reveals an increasing polarisation between 'academic' types of evaluation on the one hand and classification according to genre and supposed readership on the other. Discussion of technique tends, in places, towards a qualitative assessment typical of the later academic literary establishment. This drive towards the intellectualizing and academicizing of English literature as a subject and discipline dealing in established theoretical texts is suggested by the reviewers' recourse to Aristotle's Poetics. Leon Golden posits that this revision in critical practice did not occur until the twentieth century:

The nineteenth century was a period of eclipse for the Poetics: romantic critics, operating under new premises - a theory of the imagination rather than a theory based on the materials of poetry - reacted sharply against Aristotle, or at least against the Aristotle of neoclassicism. Their doctrines are often antithetical to the Poetics: the exaltation of lyric over drama, of character over plot, of 'genius' over 'rules' and, most importantly, of expression over imitation.

---


29 Rue With a Difference, reviewed in Athenaeum, 24 November 1900, p. 680; Uncle Max, reviewed in Academy, 5 February 1887, p. 90; Rue With A Difference, reviewed in Academy, 13 October 1900, p. 310.

30 See Literary World, 27 June 1896, p. 202; Academy, 3 November 1900, p. 413.
It has remained for twentieth century scholars and critics to bring the *Poetics* into its second phase of major influence.\(^{31}\)

And, indeed, the domestic novel itself seems to fit Golden’s paradigm of the romantic in terms of its individualized characterization and of its loose-knit and multi-faceted plot. However, evidence of something beyond personal opinion and an enthusiasm for lyricism is to be found in *reviews* of domestic novels as early as a decade before the end of the nineteenth century. Even a review from 1900, which reproduces Aristotelian concepts in an almost jocular fashion, points to a history of usage. The reviewer writes,

> If we had to criticize... [this novel] in Aristotelian terms, we should say that we were sensible of the pity and the fear, but missed the cathartic effect.\(^{32}\)

This writer is familiar with the notion that classical criticism can be applied to nineteenth-century literature. The existence of the review suggests that formal critical influences were present amongst academic institutions and their products from a time earlier in the century; it implies both a reviewer who has previously studied the *Poetics* and a readership capable of understanding the allusion. This is suggestive of a fairly widely disseminated culture of literary theory, or at least the wide-spread use of a classical text which has been meaningfully discussed in English. The demise of the domestic novel as a universally topical genre may thus be seen as partially due to a revival in classical/formal criticism.

Meanwhile, the continuing publication and sale of novels such as those written by Rosa Carey points to the existence of an alternative readership which had different expectations from its reading matter, one which cannot have cared greatly whether the novels were erudite according to a male academic tradition or not. A glimpse of this alternative - and largely silent - audience, along with its preoccupations and requirements, may nevertheless be encountered in the reviews of Carey’s novels. Reviewers believed this readership to be overwhelmingly feminine. Thus, for example, the review of *Sir Godfrey’s Granddaughters* in *The Athenaeum* concludes with the assertion that,

> the reader who likes Miss Carey’s bright and mercurial style of telling a domestic romance will understand that he (or, a little more probably, she) has a treat in prospect.\(^{33}\)

That Carey’s reviewers had a poor opinion of the intellect and general level of education of this feminine readership is evident. Perhaps the most damning of all the reviews is the one of *Queenie’s Whim* to be


\(^{32}\) The novel, Robert Hichens, *Tongues of Conscience*, was reviewed in *Literature*, 3 November 1900, p. 349; cf. *Poetics* ch VII (Golden 1974, p. 115).

\(^{33}\) *Athenaeum*, 5 November 1892, p. 626. See also review of *Not Like Other Girls* in *Graphic*, 7 June 1884, p. 559.
found in *The Graphic* in 1881. Having begun by referring to the novel as 'sweetly pretty,' the reviewer goes on to say that

It is not to be accounted a fault, under all the circumstances, that the novel contains too much talk, and reports in over-minute detail how everybody looks and what everybody wears. For these little matters, though faults in themselves, are the very things for which so many people thoroughly enjoy stories like "Queenie's Whim." Such novels are like good long gossips about one's acquaintances among a set of good-natured and innocent-minded, if not very intellectual people, who find it refreshing to cry over the sorrows of their neighbours, and infinitely comforting to know for certain what their neighbours wore.  

The construction of the female reader herself as one of the 'innocent-minded, if not very intellectual' participants in the 'gossips' about 'little matters' is strongly indicative of a belief on the part of the reviewer that women were incapable of taking an interest in more weighty matters. It is indeed unlikely that many of Carey’s readers were familiar with Aristotle's *Poetics* or had enjoyed any of the benefits of a Classical education. Nor were many women able to broaden their horizons by taking up public-sphere employment of the kind available to men. Thus, of those with the most leisure to read, many were confined to the domestic world of the home and family and to household routine. Their priorities were bound to be different from those of their male peers. Yet one must be careful not to underestimate their powers of discrimination. For, by the later decades of the nineteenth century, private secondary education and some opportunities for higher education had become available to the women of the middle classes and the Education Act of 1870 had brought basic literacy to a much higher proportion of the population than ever before. Whatever the opinion of the reviewers, at least a portion of Carey’s readership is likely to have selected her novels in response to reasoned choice.

Reviewers occasionally gave this preoccupation with detail a more positive emphasis, commenting on the novels' 'essentially feminine' focus. Thus, the reviewer for *The Athenaeum* notes of *The Household of Peter* that,

> Like Miss Carey's other novels, this is an essentially feminine book, and, like them, it is not lacking in charm for the sex to which it especially appeals. Woman's joy in afternoon tea with hot sweet cakes and cream, and woman's anxiety over the waning freshness of a blouse, are herein developed with the author's accustomed sympathetic insight.

The reviewer has selected a few items as a synecdoche of the whole novel, thus in certain respects trivialising its overall scheme. However, she or he does not give the impression of dismissing it completely. The reference to Carey's 'sympathetic insight' into the day-to-day incidents that make up

---

34 *Graphic*, 19 March 1881, p. 275
35 The precise effect of the Act is questionable. However, literacy was acknowledged to be on the increase throughout the nineteenth century. See Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), pp. 400-1.
most women's lives does not appear to be entirely ironic. Though the reviewer does not appear to subscribe to the values and priorities that dictated Carey's subject-matter, there does appear to be an acknowledgement that these matters are of interest to others.

The exact composition of Carey's readership is by no means obvious from the reviews alone. However, one feature of it that is fairly consistent is the reviewers' insistence that her books are suitable for the young girl. For example, a review in *The Literary World* in 1896 notes that she 'can always be depended upon to write good, wholesome novels for girls, with reasonably unobtrusive morals.' Nor would Carey herself have argued with this assessment. She is on record as saying '[m]y ambition has been to do good and not harm by my works, and to write books which any mother can give a girl to read.' This single factor would not have endeared her to many readers of her day. For, not only was the standard of 'books any mother can give a girl' deemed to be remote from contemporary life, it also carried a painful reminder of the limitations placed upon artistic expression by nineteenth-century institutions such as Mudie's Select Library. Such restrictions led Charles Reade to demand that he be allowed to write - and publish - fiction 'not adapted to the narrow minds of bread-and-butter misses' and George Moore to state that '[l]iterature and young girls are irreconcilable elements, and the sooner we leave off trying to reconcile them the better.'

With regard to readers other than the young girl, it is necessary to return to what reviewers say about the content of the novels. The material more easily lends itself to conjecture about psychological profiles than class status, though the majority of heroines in the novels fall into the middle classes. Yet, though the readers themselves are shadowy, their perceived needs are very clearly stated. For example, reviews in *The Woman's Signal* and *Literature* suggest that, then as now, women simply enjoyed reading love stories. One might conjecture that a certain portion of readers bought the novels on precisely the grounds that 'Miss Carey has a perfect belief in lasting and faithful love.' Similarly, that many readers relied upon the 'warrant for a pretty love-story' that Carey's name guaranteed, another reviewer opining that,

> *My Lady Frivol...* belongs to that class of romance which will always find grateful readers. The most timid need never fear that the love story of the governess-heroine will have untimely ending.

---

37 Review of *The Mistress of Brae Farm* in *Literary World*, 12 December 1896, p. 456. See also review of *Life’s Trivial Round* in *Athenaeum*, 16 June 1900, p. 745; review of *The Key of the Unknown* in *Athenaeum*, 2 October 1909, p. 389.


40 Review of *Other People’s Lives* in *The Woman’s Signal*, 23 December 1896, p. 403.

41 *Rue With A Difference*, reviewed in *Academy*, 13 October 1900, p. 310; review of *My Lady Frivol* in *Literature*, 6 January 1900, p. 23.
In her survey of late-twentieth-century romance-readers, *Reading the Romance* (1987), Janice Radway notes that her respondents deemed a happy ending to the book to be essential to their enjoyment and we may conjecture that the same was true of female romance-readers a hundred years ago.\(^{42}\) So keen were Radway’s respondents to avoid disappointment that many of them actually read the endings to their romances before purchasing them, ‘to insure [sic.] that they will not be saddened by emotionally investing in the tale of a heroine only to discover that events do not resolve themselves as they should.’\(^{43}\)

The review of *My Lady Frivol* from *Literature* suggests that, metaphorically at least, nineteenth-century romance-readers did the same. According to the reviewer, such ‘timid’ readers elected to ensure that their forthcoming ‘[emotional] investment’ was secure, not by reading the last few pages of the book, but by making sure that the right name was written on the cover.

The novels also appeared to attract those who wished to enter wholeheartedly into Carey’s fictional worlds and to empathise with the joys and sorrows of her characters. Thus, the reviewer for *The Academy* notes of *The Old, Old Story* that ‘at the end [the reader] will sincerely rejoice that all goes well. This he must do because Miss Carey is herself wrapped up in her people.’\(^{44}\) Similarly, a reviewer for *The Leeds Mercury* notes that ‘the story will recommend itself to all those who like prosperity and happiness to be the portion of any characters in a book in whom they are interested.’\(^{45}\)

However, the potential for emotional investment did not stop at the level of the mere observer who rejoiced in the happiness of others. There was also, apparently, a readership which enjoyed the purely emotive sentimentalism to be found in some of Carey’s works:

> the author of *For Lilias* has now a public of her own, who are no doubt very grateful to her for creating so many really good people, that spend the bulk of their time in saying “loving words” and telegraphing “loving glances” to each other.\(^{46}\)

Yet not all reviewers despised the notions of a sentimental plot or a (romantically-conceived) happy ending. The same review of *My Lady Frivol* from *Literature* sums up what might well have been the philosophy of many a reader:

> after all, a simple romance told without affectation is more welcome and better art than a gloomy novel with a purpose.\(^{47}\)

---


\(^{43}\) Radway 1987, p. 99.

\(^{44}\) *Academy*, 3 November 1894, p. 348.

\(^{45}\) Review of *My Lady Frivol* in *The Leeds Mercury*, 4 October 1899, p. 3.

\(^{46}\) *Academy*, 26 September 1885, p. 200.

\(^{47}\) *Literature*, 6 January 1900, p. 23.
To summarize, it seems that Carey's readership, as sketched by the reviewers, has a number of definite requirements and that Carey's novels in some measure fulfill them. First and foremost, her readers need fiction that is optimistic and that concludes happily. Next, it has to provide opportunities for reader-input (enthusiasm or sympathy) and to supply various kinds of vicarious experience (a share in the fictional sentimental/emotional experiences of key characters). Finally, it has to be congruent with the reader's every-day experience and to valorize the reader's actual existence outside the novel.

It is thus apt that, in The Bookman for January 1901, a reviewer suggests that, ultimately, Carey's readership enjoys not so much a 'literary' experience as a psychological one:

Miss Carey may be said to suffer from her own excellence. Her books are so uniformly straight, and true, and tranquil, and charming, that we have learned to depend on her, and know she will give us no surprises. One is tempted to compare the mental fare of her providing with dinner in a well-ordered household; it is pleasant, wholesome, restful; but it will never stir one to that excitement which would be inseparable from dinner in a Dora Copperfieldian establishment. Miss Carey must take comfort from the certainty that the well-ordered household is the one in which the majority of us would choose to live; the other establishment is more suitable for smiling at from the outside.48

Carey's implied reader, as constructed by this review, requires a predictable product and one which yields a positive psychological effect. She prefers to participate in the 'well-ordered household' of Carey's novels rather than to simply read about some other kind of establishment; she wants to enjoy vicariously the tranquillity, charm and pleasure of an ordered and benign universe rather than to endure the discomforts and uncertainties depicted in more 'artistic' fiction.49

Other reviewers are more scathing about the value of Carey's optimistic and comforting outlook on life. For example, the word 'soothing' is used in an apparently derogatory sense on three separate occasions. Thus, 'Sir Godfrey's Grand-daughters' [1892] is 'pre-eminently soothing. There is nothing "intense" about the book'; whilst The Household of Peter [1905] is 'Altogether... a soothing and cheerful story'; and it is said of The Sunny Side of the Hill [1908] that '[t]hough far remote from real life, the atmosphere of the book is soothing and sympathetic.'50

Regardless of how this restful quality is valued, the books do indeed appear to leave the reader in a buoyant frame of mind. However, in this thesis it has been argued that Carey's novels go beyond merely

---

49 The 'product' does not sound especially enlivening when described in these terms but many reviewers, both positive and negative, also display an awareness that Carey has a large and enthusiastic readership. As a reviewer notes of Uncle Max [1887], The interest is sober, and for the most part domestic; and the number of novel-readers who prefer well-written narratives of this class is probably quite as large as the number of those who crave abundant sensation.
50 Academy, 24 December 1892, p. 586; Athenaeum, 21 October 1905, p. 539; Athenaeum, 17 October 1908, p. 469.
tranquillizing the reader. Though reviews suggest that the novels reinforce dominant ideologies about gender roles, this thesis has argued that Carey’s novels do more than replicate a position of oppression for women. Rather, through the articulation of common concerns and interests, the valorization of certain values and the invitation to the woman-reader to participate in a feminine community, Carey may be regarded as feminist or, at any rate proto-feminist. It has been suggested that Carey’s novels are, in several important ways, nurturant of women and endorse women’s lived experience. Thus, those who fail to fit in with normative society are permitted to see themselves reflected sympathetically in Carey’s attractive miscreants, potential heroines and wretched victims; single women see their position treated positively; home-making, with its attendant joys and sorrows is dramatized and thus acknowledged as real work; the reader is helped to come to terms with living in a ‘man’s world’; and religion is mediated through the home, thus domesticating the unbearable fact of death. Far from radical in outlook, Carey may yet be termed a proto-feminist as she writes positively and sympathetically about all matters concerning women.

This first in-depth study of Rosa Carey’s forty-one novels has been an attempt to ‘rediscover’ a significant nineteenth-century writer. For, hitherto, she has been doubly marginalized: initially by her contemporaries, preoccupied as they were with the growth of a restrictive literary formalism; and latterly by the present-day academic establishment, preoccupied as it is with a small range of canonical and ‘feminist-canonical’ texts. Yet Carey’s novels of domesticity, for all their concern with every-day events and minor morals, are arguably as discursive as many other genres currently popular with critics. To employ the rhetoric of Lyn Pykett’s critique of Sensation fiction, Carey’s writings may be viewed as more than expressions of the contained, conservative domain of the proper feminine. They may be explored as a sites in which many of the contradictions, anxieties and opposing ideologies of Victorian culture converge and are put into play.  

---

51 We need to see [the sensation novel] not simply as either the transgressive or subversive field of the improper feminine, or the contained, conservative domain of the proper feminine. Instead we should explore [it] as a site in which the contradictions, anxieties and opposing ideologies of Victorian culture converge and are put into play... (Lyn Pykett, The Improper Feminine, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 50-1.)
Bibliography

'A Medical Man', Cassell's Family Doctor, (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1897)

'A Member of the Aristocracy,' Manners and Rules of Good Society (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., 1887)

'An Old Boy' [i.e., Thomas Hughes], Tom Brown's Schooldays, (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd. 1898 [1857])

'By the author of ‘Margaret Browning,’ etc., 'Uncle Jabez; or The Teachings of Adversity, (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d. [inscribed 1871])

'M. C. ', Everybody's Book of Correct Conduct, Being the Etiquette of Every-day Life, (Whitstable and Wallsall: Pryor Publications, 1996 [1893])


Adams, W. H. Davenport, Plain Living and High Thinking, (London: John Hogg, 1883)


Blake, Andrew, Reading Victorian Fiction, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989)


Burnett, John, Plenty and Want, (London: Methuen and Co, 1985)


—, At The Moorings, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1914 [1904])

—, Aunt Diana, (London: The Offices of The Girl's Own Paper, n.d. [1885])

—, Averil, (London: The Office of The Girl's Own Paper, n.d. [1890-1])


—, But Men Must Work, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892)

—, Cousin Mona, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1897 [1895])

—, Dr Luttrell's First Patient, serialised in the Girl's Own Paper October 3, 1896 - March 20, 1897

—, Esther Cameron's Story, (London: Office of The Girl's Own Paper, 1914 [1883-4])

—, For Lillias, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902 [1885])

—, Herb of Grace, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1903 [1901])

—, Heriot's Choice, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1899 [1877-9])
—, Little Miss Muffet, (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.[1892-3])
—, Lover or Friend?, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1915 [1890])
—, Mary St John, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909 [1882])
—, Mollie’s Crusade, (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d. [1886-7])
—, Mollie’s Prince, (London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1898])
—, Mrs Romney and But Men Must Work, (London: Macmillan, 1899)
—, My Lady Frivol, (London: Hutchinson and Co., n.d.,[1899])
—, Nellie’s Memories, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892 [1868])
—, No Friend Like a Sister (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906)
—, Not Like Other Girls, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1905 [1884])
—, Only the Governess, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917 [1888])
—, Other People’s Lives, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897)
—, Our Bessie, (London: The Office of The Girl’s Own Paper, 1914 [1888-9])
—, Queenie’s Whim, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1898 [1881])
—, Robert Ord’s Atonement, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1898 [1873])
—, Rue With a Difference, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1914 [1900])
—, The Angel of Forgiveness, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1911 [1907])
—, The Highway of Fate, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902)
—, The Household of Peter, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1905)
—, The Key of the Unknown, (London: Macmillan, 1909)
—, The Mistress of Brae Farm, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920 [1896])
—, The Old, Old Story, (London: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1900 [1894])
—, Uncle Max, (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1912 [1887])
—, Wee Wife, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1894 [1869])
—, Wooed and Married, (London: Macmillan, 1902)

Corelli, Marie, The Sorrows of Satan (London: Methuen, 1899 [1895])
Edmond, Rod, Affairs of the Hearth, (London: Routledge, 1988)
Enquire Within Upon Everything, To Which Is Added Enquire Within Upon Fancy Work, 42nd edition, (London: Houlston and Sons, 1871)
Enquire Within Upon Everything, 96th edition, (London: Houlston and Sons, 1899)
Ewing, Mrs J. H., Jackanapes [1879] in Jackanapes and Other Tales, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1931)


Gibert, Agnes, *Floss Silverthorne or The Master's Little Handmaid*, (London: John J Shaw and Co., Ltd., nd. [c.1905-10])


Jeffreys, Sheila, *The Spinster and Her Enemies* (London, Boston and Henley: Pandora, 1985)


‘Le Voleur’, *By Order of the Brotherhood: A Story of Russian Intrigue* (London: Jarrold, 1895)

—, *For Love of a Bedouin Maid*, (London: Hutchinson, 1897)

—, *In the Tsar's Dominions*, (London: Hutchinson, 1899)

Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997)
Lyall, David, [Mrs Burnett Smith, aka Annie S. Swan], *The House Not Made With Hands*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d. [1912])
Patmore, Coventry, *The Angel in the House*, (London: George Bell and Son 1896 [1854])
—, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, (London: Routledge, 1992)
Radway, Janice, Reading the Romance, (London and New York: Verso, 1987)
Ruskin, J., Sesame and Lilies, (London: George Allen, 1906 [1865])
Showalter, Elaine, A Literature of Their Own, (London: Virago Press, 1988)
—, The Female Malady, (London: Virago Press, 1991)
Smart, Ninian, The Religious Experience of Mankind, (Glasgow: Collins 1979)
Smiles, Samuel, Character, (London: John Murray, 1897 [1878])
—, Self Help, (London: John Murray, 1902 [1859])
—, Thrift, (London: John Murray, 1876)
Stoker, Bram Dracula, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1897])
The Nuttall’s Pronouncing English Dictionary, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1879)
Williams, Raymond, Marxism and Literature, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
Winter, John Strange [Mrs Arthur Stannard, 1856-1911], The Binks Family, (London: F.V. White and Co., Ltd.)
—, [Mrs Arthur Stannard], A Magnificent Young Man, (London: F. V. White and Co., 1896)
Wood, Mrs Henry, Lady Adelaide, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1896 [pre-1887])
Wynter, Andrew, *The Borderlands of Insanity*, (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1875)
—, *The Clever Woman of the Family*, (London: Virago, 1985 [1865])